

Spring Meeting Focuses on Challenges

The keynote speaker at the EMBRACE Spring Meeting on 15 May was Philip Marshall, PSNI, who spoke about the evils of human trafficking in Northern Ireland.



PSNI Detective Superintendent of Philip Marshall
Photograph courtesy of the PSNI

He gave a graphic account of how modern slavery involves millions throughout the world, as a high yield, relatively low risk part of organised crime. The exceptionally strong demand for sexual services locally has fuelled a booming internet-led 'escort' industry that feeds off people who have been deceived or coerced and entrapped. While drugs can only be sold once, human beings can be moved on and sold again and again. Other forms of trafficking such as domestic servitude and forced labour (mostly in the agriculture and fishing industries) are also found here and may become more significant in the future. The PSNI is now better equipped to deal with trafficking. They welcome people reporting their suspicions and give priority to the recovery of victims. Some people are being charged and convicted.

(For more news about action against trafficking locally see Page 2.)

Trafficking leaflet for Churches

The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.

Psalm 146:8

EMBRACE has prepared an information sheet, *Opening Our Eyes to the Reality of Human Trafficking*, for use by the Christian community so that people are more aware of the signs and know who to contact for help. Download copies from www.embraceni.org/category/about-us/embrace-resources/

Focus on Pastoral Care at Larne House

Former Chairperson of EMBRACE and minister of Templepatrick Presbyterian Church, **Richard Kerr**, addressed the Spring Meeting on the subject of the UK Border Agency's Short Term Holding Unit in Larne, Co. Antrim. He outlined the history of immigration detention and how Larne House is a staging point for people who are being removed directly from the UK or moved on to detention centres in Scotland or England. His discussions with the UK Border Agency about chaplaincy led to their agreement to a Religious Advisory Service. This is open to other faiths but currently comprises eight local Christian ministers from a range of denominations who visit the centre on a rota basis. Richard outlined the challenges for Christians in providing meaningful pastoral care for people in transit and operating within a controversial detention system. For more information on the enforcement of immigration legislation and about Larne House see www.embraceni.org/category/information/immigration-detention/

The third speaker at the Spring Meeting was **Aneta Dabek**, EMBRACE Development Worker and some extracts from her talk are included on page 3. AGM news is on page 4.

Racial Justice Sunday 2012

The theme for this year's Racial Justice Sunday is 'Being an Inclusive Church ... and Not an Exclusive Club' and materials are available to order or download at www.ctbi.org.uk/588

- Have you ever felt really left out or unjustly treated?
- In your church or community, are there individuals or groups who feel excluded or on the fringes?
- As Christians do these situations matter to us and if so, why?

A Prayer of Thanks from the CTBI Worship Resources

Loving God

We are all wonderfully made in your image.

Help your world to see You in each face

To see that each person has value

Each person has a heart

Each person has a name

We thank You for all your people who work tirelessly to bring racism to an end.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Contact us:

EMBRACE

48 Elmwood Ave, Belfast BT9 6AZ

Tel: 028 9066 3145

Email: info@embraceni.org

Web: www.embraceni.org

EMBRACE is a group of Christians from different denominations working together to promote a positive response to people who are seeking asylum, refugees, migrant workers and people from minority-ethnic backgrounds living in Northern Ireland.

REFUGEE & IMMIGRATION ISSUES

Combatting Human Trafficking (See also page 1.)

In March the South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP) hosted a conference on human trafficking in Dungannon. One of the speakers, Marie Brown of Women's Aid described the fear and trauma faced by the women they seek to help. Read about this at www.newsletter.co.uk/news/local/crime-gangs-broke-the-soul-of-young-woman-1-3666243

Justice Minister David Ford welcomed the formation of a Stormont **All-Party Group on Human Trafficking** on 15 May and is currently consulting on two new proposed offences which are needed so that NI will comply with the European Directive on Human Trafficking. See www.dojni.gov.uk/index/media-centre/ford-welcomes-all-party-group-on-human-trafficking.htm **Amnesty** will be providing secretarial and advisory services to the All-Party Group.

The **No More Traffik on Our Streets** campaign held an awareness-raising festival in the Belfast area between 12 and 21 May. A number of the events were held in churches, including Glenmachan Church of God, Orangefield Presbyterian Church and several in the Dock Café in the Titanic Quarter, which is part of the Dock Church initiative. The festival ended in a candlelit vigil at the City Hall.

Support for Some Victims of Domestic Violence

People whose immigration status, right to work and access to funds depends on their spouses or partners are in trouble if that relationship breaks down, and especially if there is abuse. Following a pilot run by the **Sojourner Project**, www.eaves4women.co.uk/Sojourner/Sojourner.php, from April 2012 some victims of domestic violence who came into the country on spouse visas are able to access public support for 10 weeks, while they apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain under the Domestic Violence Rule. See www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/while-in-uk/domesticviolence/

News in Brief

Refugee Week in Belfast starts 17 June

Some event details can be found at www.refugeeweek.org.uk/Events/northern-ireland

Destitution among migrant children

The Children's Society has reported an increase in homelessness and destitution among migrant and refugee children in the UK. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-17148759

Local Crisis Fund for Migrants

A report on the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) pilot crisis fund for migrants will be published shortly and it is envisaged that funding will be extended until September.

Minority Ethnic Development Fund

Following delays in advertising this OFMDFM fund for 2012, groups (including EMBRACE) who are already in receipt of a grant have been given an extension of their funding until September.

Racial Equality Strategy

OFMDFM hopes that the revised strategy will be available for consultation in late summer 2012.

The NI Strategic Migration Partnership Conference

On 19 April the first NISMP conference was held in Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey, with the title 'Localism and Migration'.

Derek Mitchell of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) Strategic Migration Partnership explained that while migration was often seen as a negative issue in UK terms, Scotland needed more people and the experience of immigration was much more positive.

Ben Gidley of the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) also spoke about negative attitudes, not so much where there were the largest numbers of migrants but where sudden change had impacted on services, and people had yet to see the benefits. 'The myths drown out the positive messages.'

The Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) will be undertaking research to ensure that the NISMP website carries all the appropriate data. John Bell of ICR stated that the 2011 census data would be useful but acknowledged the difficulties in accessing and standardising information. He will rely on others in the sector to co-operate in filling in the gaps.

Respect Programme in Co.Antrim

When EMBRACE facilitated workshops for churches in Antrim town (see page 3) they were hosted by the Respect/Engagement and Diversity Programme, which will be delivering and encouraging activities and events in the Carrickfergus, Antrim and Newownabbey (CAN) area. Activities will include cultural diversity programmes; the challenging of myths, sectarianism and racism; and promoting inclusion. Small grants are available. To find out more contact Lynda Kennedy, RESPECT Project Office (028) 9446 3113 (ext 1322) or Mobile 07587887400, E-Mail lynda.kennedy@antrim.gov.uk.

Research Overview on Recent Immigration

Raymond Russell of the NI Assembly Research Service has produced an important research paper, *Migration in Northern Ireland: An Update*. Dr Russell concludes that around 122,000 long-term migrants arrived between 2000 and 2010, while 97,000 left. He describes three recent phases. The population dropped in the 1970s and 1980s. In 2000 and 2001, while many people were still leaving, the food processing industry began to recruit workers from Portugal and the health service recruited nurses from S Asia and the Philippines. From 2004 eight Central and Eastern European countries joined the European Union and their young people began to come here as our economy expanded. The recession reversed this trend and Dr Russell predicts that inward migration will fall to zero by 2016. He concludes that there has been increased pressure on public services but this must be set against the economic and cultural benefits.

The various migrant populations who have arrived in Northern Ireland since the millennium have brought with them, not only their skills and experience, but also their traditions, music, food and language. Ten years ago, Northern Ireland was a relatively insular and inward-looking country. Today, it is a vibrant and culturally diverse society. Our new residents deserve credit for contributing to this transformation.

The paper can be downloaded from www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaSe/Publications/2012/general/3112.pdf

CHURCHES NEWS

Workshops for Churches

Participants from churches in seven areas have now had a chance to explore welcoming initiatives in an informal atmosphere. In her end of year report, Denise Wright, EMBRACE Chairperson, said of the workshop events:

We have ... heard many stories of hope and witnessed the inspiring work which is taking place across many of the churches in Northern Ireland.

At recent events in Derry/Londonderry, Craigavon and Antrim the local authority good relations officers were present and participants had the opportunity to hear about their initiatives and about the potential for advice and support.

Some people come with previous experience of running language classes or acts of generosity and friendship such as helping migrant workers with transport to training courses or inviting people to meals in appreciation for their work with elderly parishioners in care homes. Feedback from participants is appreciative. A couple of examples of what people found most valuable:

'Encouraged by the work going on and the opportunity to make contact and get support from EMBRACE'

'Hearing how others do it. Meeting other like minded local people.'



Tom Andrews and Pastor David Olphert from the Olivet Apostolic Church at the Antrim Workshops

Being Welcome in the Churches

At the AGM and Spring Meeting (See also pages 1 and 4) Aneta Dabek, EMBRACE Development Worker spoke enthusiastically about her work.

Last year ... we visited many churches with workshops, migration awareness trainings, and talks. *We met people who encouraged us so much!*

We were in places where Embrace's work is well known, in places where Embrace has some connections and links and has been before, but also in places where not many people had heard about Embrace's work.

In all these places we could see people who were open and eager to welcome strangers. They were grateful to see others who cared about newcomers living among us here in Northern Ireland. Each place, each church, is unique, with different resources, opportunities and in different situations.

Porvoo Churches Discuss Migration

Representatives from Churches in the Porvoo communion (mainly northern European Anglican and Lutheran churches including the Church of Ireland) met for consultation in March to discuss issues relating to migration and diaspora. When the Churches signed the Porvoo Declaration in 1996 it included the commitment to

welcome diaspora congregations into the life of the indigenous churches, to their mutual enrichment

At the consultation there was discussion as to how the stories they had shared could reach a wider audience and recommendations were made to member Churches about further theological reflection and the development of resources for member churches, the sharing of church buildings with diaspora congregations, encouraging clergy to become competent in dealing with cultural difference, and encouraging the sharing of gifts for 'mutual enrichment'. Read more at <http://ireland.anglican.org/news/4079>

Church of Ireland Workshop Event at Belvoir

EMBRACE usually hosts events for all the churches in a geographical area but were pleased to be asked to provide workshops as part of a Church of Ireland Diocese of Down and Dromore Mission Council 'And You Welcomed Me' event in Belvoir Parish Halls, Belfast, on 19th May. There was an inspiring welcome from Revd Canon Tom Keightley, rector of Belvoir, who issued the challenge to see newcomers to parishes not as a threat but as bringing 'new energy, new life, and new possibilities'.

Revd Canon Jerome Munyangaju of the Mission Council reflected on the generosity of welcome he had seen in African villages and the Bible passage about the troubled disciples on the road to Emmaus where Jesus was recognised in the context of hospitality. 'When we welcome visitors we will welcome the Lord himself.' He also read a letter home from an African minister in Ireland who spoke of the acute loneliness of his wife and how newcomers to his church were not welcomed. 'Tribalism is not only an African problem.'

The Down and Dromore Mission Council is fortunate to have other members who came here from overseas, including Revd Canon Raj Sathyaraj, curate of Seagoe and David Maganda who carried out research in 2005 for the Church Mission Society Ireland on how incoming migrants were welcomed here. They found a very mixed picture concerning welcome at parish/congregational level with some people frustrated because their gifts were unappreciated.



A Workshop Group at the Church of Ireland Event at Belvoir Hears about Challenges Experienced by Migrants

EMBRACE NEWS

EMBRACE AGM

In her Chairperson's Report, Denise Wright thanked funders and acknowledged the work of staff, committee members and volunteers during a busy year. Workshops were taken to a wide range of venues (see also page 3), helping to build relationships with churches across the country. She continued:

... This has afforded us greater opportunities to hear about the issues and challenges facing the churches and has allowed us to develop new resources in response ...

As EMBRACE seeks to reflect the gospel values of compassion, hospitality and justice we recognise that there have been many new challenges – the issue of human trafficking has come more to the fore and we are seeing churches keen to be equipped to deal with the presenting issues. The economic downturn has seen financial hardship among migrants increase in the same way in which it has within our local communities. For migrants social networks, which can help during such times, are often absent and churches can find themselves the first, and sometimes only, port of call for individuals who find themselves in difficult situations. In such times racism can increase and myths and misinformation become very damaging. We hope that the Migration Awareness training, which EMBRACE can provide, will equip individuals and groups with the knowledge and skills to address these and be salt and light within their communities. ...

The opportunity to have a BBC appeal was a great learning experience for EMBRACE as well as a very welcome opportunity to highlight the issue of destitution and poverty as experienced by some migrants in Northern Ireland. We are grateful to Gerry Anderson who gave of his time to work with us on this project.

Denise also stressed the importance of publications, resources and the monthly prayer letter, all of which are available on the website. She also mentioned important partnerships and networking with a range of agencies and statutory bodies. She concluded

we seek to bring gospel values and a servant heart to the table as we meet with those who are also working to support migrants and minority ethnic people here in Northern Ireland.

Treasurer's Report

Scott Boldt (Treasurer) reported that the group's finances were healthy, with contributions from the Churches especially appreciated. The continued grant aid from the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) Minority Ethnic Development Fund has enabled development work to increase and grants from Belfast City Council have supported some projects.

Committee Elections

Eight current committee members were re-elected: **Scott Boldt, Paddy Donnelly, Perry Gildea, Dan Healy, Richard Kerr, Margaret McNulty, Ruth Watt** and **Denise Wright**. They are joined by a new committee member, **Helen Delahunty**, who has personal experience as an immigrant to the USA, and experience of working with minority groups.

EMBRACE Activities

Staff, committee and volunteers continue to network and undertake engagements. These are some examples. Jenna Liechty Martin delivered migration awareness training to volunteers at the Meeting Point drop-in for migrant people on the Lisburn Road, Belfast. Ashleigh Hunter and Margaret McNulty spoke about the work of EMBRACE to people from different denominations in the Carnlough Methodist Fellowship. Scott Boldt, Jenna Liechty Martin and Peter Martin spent a day with Methodist ministers on a programme entitled 'Working with Racist Attitudes'. Scott also spoke about diversity and reconciliation to a group in Tandragee.

EMBRACE On the Street

This project responds to requests from organisations which support people who are destitute or homeless. Items which are needed, such as men's clothing, foodstuffs, toiletries and sleeping bags are requested from a rota of churches. Between April 2011 and March 2012 the following churches made contributions: Fitzroy Presbyterian, Crescent Church, Lowe Memorial Presbyterian (Finaghy), St Jude's Parish, Cooke Presbyterian, Good Shepherd, Ballynafeigh Methodist, Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian, Portaferry & Glastry Methodist, Templepatrick Presbyterian and Carnlough Methodist Fellowship. Project co-ordinator **Ashleigh Hunter** writes:

For the past year, I have been volunteering with an organisation in Belfast which provides a drop-in centre and outreach service to those who are destitute or homeless. It has been invaluable to see first-hand how donations of goods are being put to such good use, getting directly to those individuals who are most in need of them. The practical need for the On the Street project has been highlighted as a result. On behalf of all which have benefitted from goods donated through this project we would like to express sincere thanks.

If you would like to know more about the project and how to make a contribution please contact Ashleigh by E-mail ahunter@edgehillcollege.org or call 028 9068 6933.

Emergency Fund

During the year the fund assisted individuals and families and covered the cost of travel, flights, accommodation, bedding, food, fuel and heating costs, and accessing documents.

Thinking of Joining Us or Making a Donation?

Continue to support the EMBRACE Emergency Fund and if you are not already a member of EMBRACE please consider joining us. Subscriptions are £10.00 annually per person and £20.00 for groups. Please write to us at the address below. If you would like to make a donation towards our work please send a cheque, payable to EMBRACE.

Your support is greatly appreciated.

EMBRACE

48 Elmwood Ave, Belfast BT9 6AZ

Tel: 028 9066 3145

Email: info@embraceni.org

Web: www.embraceni.org



European Union

European Regional Development Fund
Investing in your future



Office of the

First Minister and Deputy First Minister

www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk

Supported by funding from the European Regional Development Fund under the Peace III Programme; the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM); Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Racial Justice; and the Churches.