

Looking Beyond our Borders

European Theme for the EMBRACE Spring Meeting

The Northern Ireland 2011 Census revealed that over 45,000 people living here had been born in European countries other than the UK or the Republic of Ireland. Europe has come to us. As churches here consider how to respond they can look to Europe to see what churches there are doing about community integration and in challenging the injustices that can accompany migration. EMBRACE is privileged to have as guest speaker at their spring meeting, **Dr Torsten Moritz**, Executive Secretary for the **Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)**. The meeting is entitled **'Migration: it's about Europe, it's about you'**.

CCME provides a space for churches and Christian agencies to share their experiences in ministry among migrants, refugees, and minority-ethnic people and is part of the wider ecumenical networks of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC). They network with European institutions and encourage the implementation and harmonising of the highest international standards in the treatment of migrants and refugees. <http://ecumenicalvoices2014.eu/a-europe-union-which-welcomes-and-protects-migrants-and-refugees/>

Dr Moritz will share something of the emerging issues relating to migration in Europe and some of the experiences and good practice of local churches as they respond to the issues and welcome newcomers.

(For a perspective on European immigration and asylum policies and practice see also the extract from a speech by **Stefan Kessler** of the **Jesuit Refugee Service** on page 3.)

EMBRACE Co-opts New Committee Members

The EMBRACE committee has been refreshed and strengthened by three new members, **Patricia Carty**, who works in the Law Centre. **Irene Jovaras** of Focolare (pictured below) and **Noel McCune** of Contemporary Christianity. (For more see page 4.)



New EMBRACE Committee Member Irene Jovaras

Pope Francis Addresses Vatican Conference on Human Trafficking

A conference was held at the Vatican in April 2014, at the instigation of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and in collaboration with law enforcement agencies from the UK. In his address the Pope acknowledged that the conference drew upon the expertise of the law enforcement authorities, but also noted the presence of

humanitarian and social workers, whose task it is to provide victims with welcome, human warmth and the possibility of building a new life. These are two different approaches, but they can and must go together. ...

Human trafficking is an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ. It is a crime against humanity. The very fact of our being here to combine our efforts means that we want our strategies and areas of expertise to be accompanied and reinforced by the mercy of the Gospel, by closeness to the men and women who are victims of this crime.

Nigerian Cardinal John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan, the Archbishop of Abuja has worked against human trafficking for decades, along with fellow Christians, missionaries, religious and lay activists whom he calls the real 'foot soldiers'. He said 'The Gospel of God's mercy, freedom and love, preached by the Church, is rejected in practice, with human beings being treated as slaves.' [www.catholic-ew.org.uk/Home/News/Pope-on-Trafficking/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/Home/News/Pope-on-Trafficking/(language)/eng-GB)

At the end of the conference senior police officers from around the world promised to fight to end human trafficking. Their pledge included the following words: 'I make a personal commitment to developing partnerships with the Church and civil society to bring to justice those who are responsible for these horrendous crimes and to alleviate the suffering of the victims.' <http://catholic-ew.org.uk/Home/Special-Events/Combating-Human-Trafficking-Rome-Conference/Trafficking-Commitment>

(The NI figures for trafficking referrals are on page 2.)

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. ... 'You call me "Teacher" and "Lord", and rightly so, for that is what I am.' Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. *John 13*

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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

'No Place To Go': BBC Radio Ulster Documentary

Destitution within the asylum system was highlighted in a Radio Ulster programme, aired in February 2014. People who have been refused asylum but are unable to go home are not allowed to work and are without state support. Some people who are in that situation expressed gratitude for the generosity of local people, such as members of the Belfast Friendship Club, and churches and charities such as St Vincent de Paul. Radio Ulster presenter Chris Page said 'It's a limbo-like life with churches and charities filling the gap.' Background material and interviews can be viewed online at www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-26189348 and www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03vphn5

Women on the Move Honours Lilian Seenoi

Lilian is a refugee from Kenya who was honoured in March 2014 as Woman of the Year for setting up and running the North-West Migrants Forum in Derry~Londonderry. Lilian sought asylum here after her work rescuing young girls from early marriage put her life in danger. She now helps to bring together people from migrant groups and established communities. Speaking at the awards ceremony in London Lilian quoted from the Migrant Manifesto:

I have witnessed how fear creates boundaries, how boundaries create hate and how hate only serves the oppressors. I do understand that migrants and non-migrants are interconnected. When the rights of migrants are denied, the rights of citizens are at risk. Dignity has no nationality.

See Lilian's video at <http://womenonthemoveawards.org.uk/women-on-the-move-awards-ceremony-2014/>

Award for Justin Kouame, Chair of NICRAS

Chair of the NI Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Justin Kouame from Côte D'Ivoire, who is claiming asylum here, is one of two people to win the NI Community Foundation's Stephen Pittam Social Justice Award for 'outstanding work in lobbying and advocacy for little-known but vital causes', for his voluntary work on behalf of the refugee community. www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/he-fled-here-from-the-ivory-coast-now-justin-kouame-is-helping-other-refugees-to-build-a-new-life-in-northern-ireland-29743000.html

Women's Aid Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline

This helpline, **0808 802 1414**, is free from all landlines and mobiles and open to all women and men affected by domestic and sexual violence. A translation service is available and there are information leaflets in 12 languages. This service can also be accessed by E-mail: 24hrsupport@dvhelpline.org or Text: **07797 805 839**

Between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013, the 24-hour helpline received 272 calls from foreign nationals and black and minority-ethnic people from 34 countries or nationalities. The largest number were 64 calls from Polish women.

(In the same period, 132 minority-ethnic women stayed in Women's Aid refuges. A further 224 minority-ethnic women accessed Floating Support outreach services.) www.womensaidni.org/themainevent/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Womens-Aid-Annual-Report-12-13.pdf

Northern Ireland 2013 Human Trafficking Figures

In 2013 there were 1,746 referrals of potential human trafficking to the National Referral Mechanism in the UK, of which 41 were referred from N Ireland, 25 female and 16 male: a 173% increase on 2012. Of the female referrals, 10 of the adults were referred for sexual exploitation and 1 for labour exploitation and 10 of the minors were for sexual exploitation and 4 for an undefined exploitation type.

8 of the adult male referrals were for labour exploitation, 1 for sexual exploitation, and 1 other. The one minor male referred for sexual exploitation was from the UK.

The top countries of origin for referrals were: Romania 12; UK 11; China 5; Republic of Ireland 5; Nigeria 3; and Egypt, Guinea Bissau, Philippines and Poland 1 each. www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/139-national-referral-mechanism-statistics-2013/file

News in Brief

Online Benefits Guide 2014

The Law Centre NI online guide, *Migrants and Benefits, an Advisers Guide* has been updated. www.lawcentreni.org/publications/migrant-workers.html

Tax advice for migrants

Until July 2014, Advice NI, in partnership with the Low Incomes Tax Reform Group, offer a free email help service for migrants with an annual income of less than £15,000. For a free tax guide, and information visit www.litr.org.uk/Migrant or E-mail migrantstax@advice.ni.net

New Home Office web site

The area of work formerly undertaken by the UK Border Agency (abolished in 2013) is described as the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). Read more on the new Home Office web site. www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration

Stronger Together Conference

The Stronger Together network of minority-ethnic support groups and individuals www.strongertogetherni.org gathered for a conference in February 2014 which explored 'The Changing Role of Leadership in Black and Minority-Ethnic Communities'. Over 50 groups were represented. <http://www.strongertogetherni.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/here.pdf>

Numbers of Reported Racist Attacks Rise

The *Belfast Telegraph* has reported a surge in racist attacks in N Ireland with an overall rise of 43% in the last year, with at least two occurring each day at present. 70% of attacks are in Belfast. www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/two-racist-attacks-every-day-in-northern-irelands-racehate-crime-surge-30202329.html

Sad News

The refugee and minority-ethnic support communities have been shocked by the sudden death of two people who worked on behalf of others with care and respect. One was **Joe Donnelly** of the NI Housing Executive who looked after the housing needs of people who seek asylum here with great sympathy. The second was **Margaret Donaghy**, whose work within Bryson Intercultural promoted the wellbeing of Irish Travellers and members of the Roma community and who was manager for the asylum advice team. They are both remembered very fondly by all who knew them.

CHURCHES NEWS

'Journeying Together' Conference on Migration

In February 2014 the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants (IECE) joined with the Council for Immigrants of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference (IECE) to organise a conference, Journeying Together – Challenges Facing the Migrant Today, to explore both emigration and immigration and offer a platform to discuss the effects of migration on undocumented people, families, prisoners and victims of trafficking.

Migration is an intrinsic part of the DNA of a globalised economy and a globalised world. Do we really accept this and what are the consequences? ... At the root of this affirmation is the fundamental principle of the interdependence of all of us as members of the one human family. When God created humankind he created us as a family, with obligations and responsibilities toward each other.

Keynote speaker, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin

The main speeches are available online. www.catholicbishops.ie/2014/02/19/speeches-conference-journeying-together-challenges-facing-migrant-today/

Meaningful Welcome

During the Journeying Together conference, **Cecilia Taylor-Camara**, now a senior policy advisor on migration for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, told delegates how it took some time before she felt fully welcome in the Catholic parish her family joined after they were forced to flee from Sierra Leone to England. Being given even small responsibilities were very important.

One morning I was asked to do the First Reading at Mass. Shortly afterwards, I responded to a call for volunteers to staple the booklets for Holy Week. I began to feel a sense of purpose and belonging in the parish community. A few weeks later the parish priest asked to see me in the sacristy after Mass. It was the first day I entered the sacristy and he asked if I would like to become a Catechist for the Saturday class. ... This was a breakthrough. My reply was an emphatic 'Yes Father'.

(For the full text see web link above.)

'Race for Stinginess or Competition for Hospitality? The European Experience'

Europa, the patron of the continent, was a princess from what is today Turkey who came as a migrant to Greece. The Apostle Saint Paul, on one of his many journeys, came to Malta as a castaway, as one of the very early 'boat people'. These stories remind us that civilisation in Europe has always been dependent on immigration, on the influence from outside, on people bringing their culture and knowledge to this continent. In times of rising xenophobia, of attempts to close the European borders against migrants, we should remind ourselves and everybody else about these facts.

From a speech by **Stefan Kessler**, Jesuit Refugee Service Europe, about European immigration and asylum policies at the Journeying Together Conference. (See web link above for his full text.)

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.'

John 13:34

Hear My Voice Refugee Leaflet

The sixth Hear My Voice leaflet, *Somewhere Safe; Refugee Stories*, contains the stories of some people who have been forced to flee to Northern Ireland and facts about people who seek safety here and throughout the world. This leaflet, and the other resources in the Hear My Voice series are available from the EMBRACE office or to download. www.embraceni.org/category/about-us/embrace-resources/

Cultural Experience in Newry on 26 April

At the first of a series of events to be organised jointly by the Irish Churches Peace Project and EMBRACE NI, participants gathered in the Canal Court Hotel, Newry, for an informal morning of music and conversation, including a panel session highlighting the experiences of migrants. A course will follow.



Aneta Dabek (Back), EMBRACE Development Worker, and Others Attending the Cultural Experience in Newry, Including Members of Newry Salvation Army

EMBRACE Workshops

Partnership with the Rural Community Network (RCN)

RCN has partnered with EMBRACE to organise three workshops for local churches in **Markethill**, Co. Armagh; **Enniskillen**, Co. Fermanagh; and **Newtownards**, Co. Down. These informal sessions allowed people an insight into the effect of recent migration in their local area and an opportunity to hear about church initiatives in nearby localities and elsewhere.

Belfast Bible College Gospel of Welcome Seminars

On Friday 11th April EMBRACE led a seminar on **Refugees and People Seeking Asylum** at the Bible College. It provided an overview of the local situation including the number of people who come here to seek sanctuary and the countries they come from. Participants heard a first-hand account from someone who had been forced to flee for safety to N Ireland. They also learned about practical Biblical responses from local Christian groups.

A second seminar, **Stories of Migration**, will be held on 2nd May. It will provide background information and the opportunity to discuss what the Church's role and response might be to newcomers from other countries.

Faith Groups and Refugee Week 15–22 June 2014

The UK charity **Refugee Action** has compiled a Faith Groups' Pack with prayers, sermon notes and access to podcasts which give a chance to hear the voices of people who are seeking sanctuary, including those who experience rejection and destitution. You can sign up for a pack at the bottom of this web page: www.refugee-action.org.uk/churches

EMBRACE NEWS

AGM and Spring Meeting Thursday 15 May 2014

These events will take place at Edgehill Theological College, 9 Lennoxvale, Belfast. The programme includes a meal at 6pm. The AGM will take place from 7pm to 7.30pm. The Spring Meeting is titled **Migration: It's about Europe, it's about you** and will run between 7.30pm and 9pm. The guest speaker is **Dr Torsten Moritz**, Executive Secretary of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME). (See also page 1.) All are welcome to share this time of food and fellowship.

New committee members (See also page 1.)

EMBRACE is delighted that three new people have agreed to join the committee. **Irene Jovaras** (see also page 1) is a retired teacher who has come here from Scotland and is a member of the international, interdenominational, Focolare movement. www.focolare.org/en/ **Patricia Carty** is a solicitor and works as a social security advisor and trainer in the Law Centre NI and worships in St Bridget's Catholic Church, Derryvolgie Ave, in South Belfast. She is the principal author of the Migrants and Benefits Guide (see page 2). **Noel McCune** was formerly a consultant psychiatrist, is a member of Riverside Church, Newry and is currently Chairperson of Contemporary Christianity. www.contemporarychristianity.net/joomla/



Patricia Carty



Noel McCune

Some EMBRACE Activities (see also page 3)

The **Hear My Voice DVD** (see Building a Welcoming Community 27) was launched at Clonard Monastery in January as part of the interdenominational Four Corners Festival. In January and February Development Worker, Aneta Dabek spoke to a women's group at Fisherwick Presbyterian Church, Belfast; WAGS (Women Altogether Growing Stronger) women's group in West Belfast; and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Lisburn. With Ashleigh Hunter, she led a migration awareness session at a Carrickfergus YMCA youth group. Denise Wright provided migration awareness training for Street Pastors from Belfast and Newtownabbey. Scott Boldt spoke on 'Encountering the Other', at the Church of Ireland Theological College in February and on 'Mission is where you are' to a group at Greencastle Methodist Church.

Emergency Fund

We are grateful for the continued giving of EMBRACE supporters to the Emergency Fund. Donations are used to stand in the gap of provision for people seeking asylum, refugees and migrant workers. We are now able to receive gifts online through the give.net button on our website.



President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Rev. Dr Heather Morris (left) presents Jill Marrs (right), EMBRACE Administrative Assistant with a gift for the Emergency Fund from the St Anne's Cathedral Sitout.

A total of £1,834.70 was expended from the Emergency Fund between October and March through the following organisations: Educational Welfare, Belfast Education and Library Board; NI Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers; Migrant Help; Belfast Migrant Centre; South City Resource Centre, Belfast; Bryson Intercultural; Horn of Africa People's Aid NI; Homeplus; and Barnardos. The nature of the support was as follows: £480 for school uniforms and bus fares for five families who were ineligible for state support; £798.72 for flights home – one to Canada and three to Romania; £50 towards emergency; accommodation for one person £155 towards food and basic needs in six cases; and £193.98 for electricity and heaters for four families.

EMBRACE On the Street

Ashleigh Hunter is grateful to all those who donate goods which support people in great need. The following churches are regular donors: Portaferry & Glastry Methodist, Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian, Fitzroy Presbyterian, Crescent Church, Lowe Memorial Presbyterian and Templepatrick Presbyterian. The interdenominational Carnlough Fellowship Group also makes regular donations. If your congregation or group would like to join the rota of donors please contact Ashleigh at Edgehill College. Tel. **(028) 9068 6933** or contact the EMBRACE office.

Thinking of Joining Us or Making a Donation?

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.

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