

## Celebrating the First Ten Years

### EMBRACE AGM and Spring Meeting, 16 May 2013

In welcoming people to the AGM, **Fr Perry Gildea** of the Conference of the Religious in Ireland (CORI), spoke of the founding of the group and how, by the time he joined the committee in 2007, 'it had already taken a firm sense of purpose and identity, and importantly, secured funding to enable it to work effectively'. He led the meeting in prayer:

Dear Lord, we are gathered this evening to give thanks for the movement of your Spirit which bore fruit in this organisation EMBRACE, dedicated to providing a Christian response, and resourcing that response for our Churches. May we always be open to the movement of your Holy Spirit and ever more clearly see the face of Christ in all our neighbours and treat them with the same love and respect that He treats us. ...

(For the business of the AGM see page 4)

### Spring Meeting

Before introducing the speakers **Margaret McNulty**, a member of the original steering group, described how EMBRACE began when members of CORI invited members of Protestant churches to join an initiative to encourage welcome for people seeking asylum here. The group then went on to have a wider remit in encouraging respect and welcome for migrant and minority-ethnic people.

Long-term member and supporter **Rev Jim Campbell** described how he first came into contact with EMBRACE when he met a woman and child who needed assistance and how valuable the group was in resourcing churches. (Read more, page 3.)

Keynote speaker **Dr Duncan Morrow**, former Chief Executive of the Community Relations Council, was called away at the last minute on urgent business and so video-recorded a powerful speech describing how our world has changed, how migration is normal and diversity is not out there; it is part of our lives. The rise in racist crime has led to a feeling that migrant people have to justify why they are here and needing permission to be in areas that we feel belong to us. He felt that instead we should see incomers as a gift that has opened us up and stopped us looking inward. The work of creating relationships is 'really important moral work'. It is not short-term work. It is 'How do we meet? and how do we become part of one another? ... As Christians, do we meet as brothers and sisters or strangers?' This is not a peripheral activity.

He described how democracy has ended some of the arbitrary nature of power but it has flaws because politicians are interested in majorities. It is difficult for incomers to have access to politics. The search for justice can be difficult and churches can be a block, often preferring order to justice. Dr Morrow said that we need to offer sanctuary to each other. When one member of a group is attacked the whole group shakes.

Churches and small groups can be places where people make relationships. He concluded by saying that EMBRACE could be seen as a symbol of a new identity.

The full talk can be viewed as a video at: [www.embraceni.org/category/about-us/embrace-news/](http://www.embraceni.org/category/about-us/embrace-news/)

## Hospitality at the Heart of EMBRACE

Since EMBRACE began, the group has shared food together during meetings and offers refreshments at all events. At the AGM and Spring Meeting, following a meal together, a cake was shared to celebrate the first ten years. Afterwards, there was general agreement that it was important for a group that was formed over a meal and incorporating the spirit of hospitality to continue to eat together and meet informally. The incoming committee has decided that for at least the next two years there will be a meal before the AGM and Spring Meeting.



*Among those enjoying group discussion at the Spring Meeting is Steven Foster (centre), who was a member of the original EMBRACE steering group.*

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying,

'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!'

Revelation 7: 9–10

Biblical text used in the 2013 Racial Justice Sunday resources  
[www.ctbi.org.uk/644](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/644) (see also page 3).

### Contact us:

EMBRACE  
48 Elmwood Ave, Belfast BT9 6AZ  
Tel: 028 9066 3145  
Web: [www.embraceni.org](http://www.embraceni.org)  
Email: [info@embraceni.org](mailto:info@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

### The Future of Refugee Action Group (RAG)

Members of Belfast-based RAG have been discussing the future direction of the group and hope that in future there will be a greater concentration on campaigning and advocacy on behalf of individual asylum applicants. On 11 June the group is hosting a workshop on campaigning to stop unjust deportations. The National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC) will facilitate the workshop as part of Refugee Week (see below).

### Refugee Week

The theme for Refugee Week this year is 'Different Pasts, Shared Future'. See [www.refugeeweek.org.uk/](http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk/) Events in Belfast will include Refugee Awareness and Drama workshops and flash mob dancing.

### NI Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) Concerns

In April 2013 the NIHRC published its submission to the UN Committee Against Torture. The chapter on immigration detention expresses concern that, in spite of the opening of the Larne House Short-Term Holding Unit, some people are still being detained for over six days in police custody suites that are unsuitable for this purpose. They are also unhappy that detainees must self-identify if they are victims of torture, rather than being identified by medical professionals. There was further anxiety that speed and secrecy of removals may prevent the identification of victims of trafficking. There was concern that Larne House was not being inspected frequently enough by the UK Border Agency and the NIHRC wanted more information about oversight by the Independent Monitoring Board in Glasgow. No permanent arrangements have been put in place for lay custody visitors to inspect Larne House.

These concerns about human rights should not reflect negatively on the staff at Larne House. Detainees report fair treatment while they are there. Read the full report: [www.nihrc.org/index.php/publications](http://www.nihrc.org/index.php/publications)

### Belfast Inclusion and Participation Project (BIPP)

The BIPP Peace III Project involving the South Belfast Roundtable, GEMS and the Law Centre is now drawing to a close. It has included 'myth-busting' training sessions to counter negative stereotyping and rumours concerning foreign nationals and minority-ethnic people. Training has included volunteer leadership training and an accredited OCN course for emerging minority-ethnic leaders.

The Law Centre has also provided valuable training for advice workers so that they are competent to assist on issues concerning rights, benefits and healthcare for people from other countries.

Patricia Carty of the Law Centre is preparing an on-line guide on the impact of welfare reform on migrants. There have also been regular focus group meetings and the final one will be held in June to cover the implications of the accession of Croatia to the EU in July. (Croatian nationals will be subject to similar restricted access to our job market and benefits as was the case for Bulgarian and Romanian nationals when they joined the EU. See [www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/newsarticles/2012/october/39-croatia](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/newsarticles/2012/october/39-croatia)) A BIPP final celebration event will take place on 18 June during Refugee week.

### Change in Support Service for Hate Crime Victims

Until spring 2013, the Polish Association and then the Chinese Welfare Association hosted a bi-lingual advocacy service for victims of race hate crime and harassment.

The Belfast Migrant Centre (**Tel: 028 9043 8962**) now runs the regional support project. Two bi-lingual support workers provide a service for victims of racist hate crime, whether they are settled minority-ethnic people, migrant workers, refugees, or people who are seeking asylum. Support includes encouragement through the process of reporting to the police or taking a complaint to other agencies, liaison with the PSNI, assistance with housing and other problems and referrals to other support groups and public agencies. The posts are funded by the PSNI and the project supplements the services available from Victim Support NI and other organisations. They hold monthly outreach clinics for victims of race hate crime. The service covers all of Northern Ireland with one worker for Belfast and Mid-Ulster (Aleksandra Lojek-Magdziarz), and another based in Derry~Londonderry to cover the Northwest (Agnieszka Luczak). Contact the support workers by E-mail [bilingualsupportworker@nicem.org.uk](mailto:bilingualsupportworker@nicem.org.uk)

Read more about the support services:

<http://belfastmigrantcentre.org/>

### Report on the Deployment of Migrant Labour

The NI Strategic Migration Partnership (NISMP) has published *Mapping the Deployment of Migrant Labour in Northern Ireland*. The authors state that

In Northern Ireland the agriculture, food processing, hospitality and private healthcare sectors rely disproportionately on a migrant labour workforce. Non-skills related reasons such as low pay, unattractive work and shift work may go some way towards explaining why there are large numbers of A8 [central and eastern-European] migrants rather than indigenous workers employed in these sectors.

There is anxiety that as European economies expand it may be difficult to continue to fill job vacancies. Among the recommendations, the authors suggest that employers and government departments should develop strategies to address factors other than skills, such as low pay and difficult working conditions, while continuing to counter skills shortages through education and training. Read the report at [www.migrationni.org/DatabaseDocs/new\\_6420381\\_\\_mapping-the-deployment-of-migrant-labour-in-ni.pdf](http://www.migrationni.org/DatabaseDocs/new_6420381__mapping-the-deployment-of-migrant-labour-in-ni.pdf)

### New Ireland Poland Business Magazine

In 2011 the three Honorary Polish Consuls in the island of Ireland based in Cork, Limerick and Northern Ireland (Jerome Mullen) established the Ireland Poland Chamber of Commerce to foster and develop business relations. A new magazine aims to encourage business opportunities for the members of Ireland Poland Chamber of Commerce to promote their businesses to a targeted audience. See [www.irelandpolandchamber.com/magazine/](http://www.irelandpolandchamber.com/magazine/)

### Increase in Intimidation

The NI Housing Executive reported in May that the number of cases of homelessness caused by intimidation had risen by 25% in the past year. This includes the intimidation of minorities, including minority-ethnic people. [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-22550490](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-22550490)



## CHURCHES NEWS

### Racial Justice Sunday 2013 Theme: Dreams of the 'Beloved Community'

August 2013 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr Martin Luther King Jr's 'I have a Dream speech' which is the focus of the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) resources for Racial Justice Sunday on 8 September. The Gathering Prayer:

Father of 'every nation, tribe, people and language', we stand before your throne saying:

Praise the Lord, for the beauty of your diverse creation.

Heavenly father, we thank you for those brave men and women who, armed only with a faith in a God of truth and justice, stood up for equality and human rights.

By the power of your Holy Spirit help us to become change makers who courageously work to transform your world into one where all are afforded the dignity, respect and worth deserving of those made in your image. Amen.

Download the 2013 Racial Justice Sunday resources:  
[www.ctbi.org.uk/644](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/644)

### Rev Jim Campbell Reflects on the Work of EMBRACE

At the EMBRACE Spring Meeting (see also page 1) retired Presbyterian Minister and Secretary of the Board of Overseas Affairs of the Irish Council of Churches, Jim Campbell, spoke about how the work of the group assists the Christian community.

He praised the printed resources, and in particular the annual information update, *Embracing Diversity* (see also column 2), which he distributes to colleagues.

Jim felt that the opening of the office on Elmwood Avenue had been a significant step. Getting EMBRACE 'out there' is one of its biggest challenges and he praised the work of Development Worker, Aneta, and the way she has empowered people (especially in more rural areas). She has 'won the hearts of many people' through her story and her smile. It was notable that the slow, steady work of EMBRACE had all been achieved with minimal expense.

The EMBRACE On the Street project had been important in supporting people's needs (see also page 4).

Jim noted how a sense of Christian unity has been maintained throughout the ten years. EMBRACE should look back with a sense of 'pride and satisfaction', giving thanks to God for all that has been done and look forward to continuing the role that it has played among the churches, and grow increasingly effective in meeting the needs of 'strangers'. He concluded by thanking EMBRACE for its work and encouraging the group in the years ahead.

### 'and You welcomed Me' Presbyterian DVD

The Presbyterian Church's Race Relations Panel has produced a DVD featuring the stories of people from Lithuania, Russia, Malaysia, the Philippines, India, Nigeria and South Africa. It reflects on welcome and acceptance into congregational life. An accompanying resource includes Bible-study material, suggestions for engagement and sources of further information. Copies are available from Rev. Richard Kerr [rkerr@presbyterianireland.org](mailto:rkerr@presbyterianireland.org) for £5.

## New EMBRACE Resources

### Information Update 2013

The ninth annual information update, *Embracing Diversity*, is now available. It makes use of newly available 2011 census figures, outlines changes in legislation and practice and has an increased section responding to the negative stereotyping of minority-ethnic people. The book can be read on the EMBRACE resources web page [www.embraceni.org/category/about-us/embrace-resources/](http://www.embraceni.org/category/about-us/embrace-resources/) or you can obtain copies from the office.

### Who's Who: Who's Here? 2013

This leaflet, containing simple facts about migrants, people seeking asylum and refugees, has been updated.

### Language Cards

There are now eight small cards available with greetings in the following languages: Arabic, Lithuanian, Mandarin, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian and Somali.

### Fish Out of Water Cards

In addition to the 'Stitch in Time' series of cards helping people to engage with the issues of racism, designer Anna Wherrett has worked with EMBRACE to produce cards encouraging groups to reflect on how it feels to be an incomer. 'A Fish Out of Water: Exploring the Impact of Migration at a Personal Level' is comprised of six thought-provoking cards and notes for group leaders.

There was a varied display of printed materials available at the AGM so look at the resources page on the web site (see above) and feel free to ask for copies from the office.

## EMBRACE Engages with Young People



Jenna (Left), Aneta and Marie (Fourth and Fifth Left) with the TEAM Group

Development Worker, Aneta Dabek and volunteer Jenna Liechty Martin facilitated four sessions with the TEAM group of teenage girls and their leaders Marie Farry and Cathy Fitzpatrick. The group met in the Parish Centre at the Cathedral of St Patrick and St Coleman, Newry, Co. Down. The sessions included 'Migration and Us', the 'Stitch in Time' cards on responding to racism and material on migrants and refugees.

EMBRACE has been engaging with some youth organisations to see how the group might help to encourage a greater understanding of complex issues such as migration and racism among young people in a rapidly changing society. Aneta and Jenna were encouraged by how well the TEAM group engaged with the topics.

## EMBRACE NEWS

### EMBRACE AGM 2013 (See also page 1)

#### Annual Report

Scott Boldt presented Chairperson Denise Wright's annual report, as she was recovering from planned surgery. In her report she reviewed 10 years of progress and said that

As EMBRACE seeks to embody the gospel values of compassion, hospitality and justice we are keen to remain responsive to the changes in the society in which we aspire to be both salt and light. ... We are blessed with dedicated staff, our thanks go out to Jill [Marrs], Aneta [Dabek] and Jenna and Peter [see opposite] who embody in their work the values that EMBRACE seeks to display.

The report concluded with thanks for personal and church donations and grant aid from funders and gratitude for the valued support of both Edgehill Theological College and the Irish Council of Churches.

#### Treasurer's Report

During 2012–13, a total of £13,000 had been received from the Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church and the Church of Ireland Dioceses of Down & Dromore and Connor. Support from the Minority Ethnic Development Fund of the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister has been confirmed for the next two years. Because of this healthy position it was agreed at the AGM that membership subscriptions will be allocated to the Emergency Fund for the foreseeable future.

#### Committee Elections

Thanks were extended to **Ruth Watt** and **Perry Gildea** who left the committee. The following were elected: **Scott Boldt**, **Helen Delahunty**, **Paddy Donnelly**, **Dan Healy**, **Ashleigh Hunter**, **Richard Kerr**, **Margaret McNulty** and **Denise Wright**. At a meeting following the AGM the committee elected the following office bearers: **Richard Kerr**, Chairperson; **Denise Wright**, Vice Chairperson; **Helen Delahunty**, Secretary; and **Scott Boldt**, Treasurer.



**Ruth Watt and Perry Gildea who Stepped Down from the EMBRACE Committee**

#### EMBRACE On the Street

**Ashleigh Hunter** reported to the AGM that this year had seen a greater number of requests from destitute families with children. She expressed gratitude to the churches who had contributed during the year: Fitzroy Presbyterian, Crescent Church, Lowe Memorial Presbyterian (Finaghy), St Jude's Parish, Cooke Presbyterian, Church of the Good Shepherd, Ballynaveagh Methodist, Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian, Portaferry & Glaslough Methodist, Templepatrick Presbyterian, and Carnlough Methodist Inter-Church Fellowship.

### Jenna and Peter Say Goodbye at the AGM

Extracts from Mennonite Volunteers Jenna Liechty Martin and Peter Martin's reflections on their time here, as they prepare to return to the USA.

One of ... [the] lessons for us has been that being a guest and being open to the hospitality of others is often just as important as being a host and offering others hospitality. ... But being a guest is a humbling experience. ... As a guest we must be open to experiencing their world and their reality, willing to listen and to learn.

Since we decided to stick around for several years, we began to encounter times and places where we were not sure if we were the host or guest. ... For us, being a *host* meant others had empowered us to share who we are and to contribute our gifts. You made room for us to express things we value and to share parts of our culture. Being a *guest* meant we needed to open ourselves up to new ways of seeing things, learning new cultural norms and accepting people along with their varied histories and cultures. ...

We would like to end ... by ... thanking you, especially the EMBRACE committee and staff. ... [T]he work of EMBRACE is not simply a cause taken up as a 'job' or a meeting once a month, but it is also a lifestyle and a way of being in this world. In exchange for the opportunity to work with you, we hope to be as generous and hospitable in the communities we live and work in the future.

The full reflection is available at [www.embraceni.org/category/about-us/embrace-news/](http://www.embraceni.org/category/about-us/embrace-news/)

### Emergency Fund

During 2012–13, £4,437 was paid to support 52 requests for help for minority-ethnic people, including transport, clothing, food, heaters, accessing emergency documentation, school uniforms, support following hospital discharge and prescription glasses. A big thank you to all who made this possible.

### 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

Web: [www.embraceni.org](http://www.embraceni.org)

Email: [info@embraceni.org](mailto:info@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](http://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.