

# Get Involved: Pray

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**EMBRACE Prayer Group**  
**November 2013**

## Reunion

In September 2013 a number of people met in Kircubbin and Greyabbey in Co. Down. Most were direct descendants of James and Hannah Boyd my great grandparents. Many live in Ireland north or south but others came from New Zealand, the USA, South Africa, Spain and England.

Many were the descendants of people who left here in the nineteenth century to try to make a better future for themselves and their families. Those of us who came together to look at cottages and farmsteads that had been family homes and the gravestones which marked the passing of local and migrant ancestors; and to chat and eat together, were the successful survivors of a past that had been difficult for some. But, at home there were early deaths, often caused by tuberculosis. Many of those who left also had short lives and there were sad endings: death following a mining accident in South Africa; a painful lingering end from wounds received in the American Civil War, just months after leaving home; and one probable suicide. My mind turned to the experiences of emigrant family members in other branches of my family. These included death from fever in West Africa, the drowning of a whole family on their way to a better future, as well as others who led happy lives in their new countries. The reunion also caused me to reflect on my grandmother Hannah Boyd, who, little more than a child herself, taught other youngsters a bit of reading, writing and arithmetic in the kitchen of her home in Greyabbey, in order to improve their chances in the New World. Her father, James was a grocer and emigration agent, so she also made up boxes of necessities for the long voyages.

These stories are in the distant past but migration to Northern Ireland today can also bring a variety of experiences. Most people will lead happy lives but others experience difficulties. Some people bring their families with them or contribute to their financial well being back home. Others may lose touch completely. It took the loving tenacity of one family member to bring us all together over a century after the scattering of Boyds. It will take the love and perseverance of all of us to ensure that people from other countries have the opportunity to feel truly at home here.

Contributed by Margaret McNulty

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### This month we give thanks for:

- For people here who can provide welcome and replace family connections that have been lost
- For churches which are places of sanctuary for people who are homesick or lonely
- For organisations like the British Red Cross who facilitate family reunion across the world

### Please pray for:

- Families who are apart from their loved ones
- Families divided by family disagreements or war, or who have just lost touch with each other
- That people who suffer from poor working conditions, exploitation, or suicidal thoughts will find assistance and healing
- For the many migrants and refugees who risk death at sea when they make the perilous journey from North Africa to Europe and for the families of those who have died
- For European politicians and other people in authority who search for positive solutions