

‘The command to love your neighbour extends to everybody who lives near you and everybody you meet in the six days between attending church. ... We should avoid thinking of ‘church’ as simply a ‘church’ building and instead think of ourselves as the active, committed people of God.’

[\*Welcoming Angels\*](#), Dublin 2005, p. 40.

‘People deprived of familiar rootedness in family, culture, tradition and geography deserve the next best thing, which is welcome, hospitality and compassionate concern in their new environment.’

Paul Surlis, ‘Exile’, *The Furrow*, April 2000, (reproduced in [\*Inter-Cultural Insights\*](#)).

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Extracts from some suggestions by Rt Rev. Dr Ken Newell, former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland on the subject of racism:

Refocus on the life God calls you to live in your community: ‘live a life of love’.

Assess your emotional involvement with the issue: ‘Before Hlaleleni from Zimbabwe described the hell of racist abuse she had been put through in an estate in East Belfast, I felt emotionally detached from the problem of racism. After hearing her story of windows smashed, doors kicked in and dog’s dirt shovelled in piles on her doorstep, I changed.’

Change your lifestyle: ‘Become more socially inclusive. If you rarely have people from a different ethnic, religious or cultural backgrounds to your home for a meal, why not adopt a different approach? Open your heart and your home. ... There is nothing more powerful than your neighbours seeing you enjoy the friendship of people from different ethnic and racial backgrounds.’

Open up the issue in your church: ‘Compile a dossier of racial attacks in your area. Share this material with your friends in church. Present it to your minister and church leaders. Ask them to discuss it and initiate a positive response in your area. ... Would Jesus be passive if he lived in your neighbourhood? He does!’

From *lion & lamb: racism and religious liberty*, Autumn 2004.

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Some of the strangers we welcome will eventually go home and, depending on the welcome they receive from us, will become involved in the life of the churches in their own home areas. ... But some of those strangers will stay on in Ireland, and will contribute greatly to the social, cultural, political, economic and religious life of this island, their children will marry our children, and their grandchildren will be our grandchildren. In welcoming strangers we will soon discover we are bringing angels into our churches and into our families.

Patrick Comerford, [\*Embracing Difference: the Church of Ireland in a Plural Society\*](#), p.80.