

But the Lord looks on the heart

***Report of a 2020 study of cultural and ethnic diversity
in the parishes of the United Dioceses of Dublin &
Glendalough.***



*Anne Lodge
October 2020*

***But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart'.
(1 Samuel 16:7)***



Celebrating our Global Parish Family

Saturday 9 November, 6-8pm

Over the past few years our parish has become wonderfully diverse with members from all around the world. This Pot Luck Supper will include food and music and a chance to celebrate our unity in Christ and to stand up against racism or xenophobia. Admission is free but everyone is asked to bring food to share from their country of origin - including Ireland!



Photographs on front cover and above from parish cultural evening in late 2019.

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I am very grateful to the staff of the diocesan office for their support and to Dr. Maria Feeney who read an earlier draft of this report. I am also very thankful to the archbishop for enabling me to undertake this study as part of my self-supporting ministry in the diocese so that this research was undertaken at no cost to the United Dioceses.

Anne Lodge

Foreword

... but the Lord looks on the heart ... is a phrase that asks of us the direct question: ... but where do we look? This Report is contemporary and analytical of our contemporary situation. Dublin and Glendalough Dioceses have been enabled to move beyond the idea of The Other – whether neighbour or stranger – being a novelty. The research demonstrates, time after time, the opportunities for integrating people of different ethnicities and nationalities into the one Anglican diocesan family. The map shows that the world is awakening in Dublin and Glendalough. The analysis shows that our parishes are today keeping pace with the national average in percentage terms regarding international membership.

Pivotal to the admirable initiatives taken by a broad spectrum of parishes in relation to the integration of people of a wide range of nationalities in parochial life has been the spirit of The Five Marks of Mission brought to earth for the people of Dublin and Glendalough by the *Come&C* initiative. No opportunity should be missed to present the composite whole of these Five Marks: *Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform, Treasure*. This Report celebrates Mark Four in particular, the dynamic of transforming unjust structures. The Report brings us into the real response to the positive impacts and the potential challenges of globalization. It charts a way forward for all of us in offering two definitions of blessing as given to everyone through the inclusive participation of everyone in church life, irrespective of race or colour. One blessing is the broadening of perspectives and outlooks impacting our faith. Another blessing is the increased gifts serving the congregation.

The Report does not shirk the darker side of who we are. For example, we hear the voice of those who describe themselves as all for diversity so long as it doesn't mean change. It also charts the prophetic and practical need to move from a mindset of: they need to change to join ... to: we need to change to welcome ... Both the sharing of culture and the sharing of Scripture and prayer are encouraged. These two perspectives work together because the identity of all of us is personal, national and, as St Paul says 'in Christ.'

All who have engaged with the research that has gone into the Report by the honesty of their responses to the questions asked of them, together with the Reverend Professor Anne Lodge who of her own volition carried out the research, are warmly to be congratulated.

... but the Lord looks on the heart ... harvests good practice and honest difficulties, sows seeds of grace and of hope from the perspective of today's incumbents. The work, as the Recommendations in Section 7 show, is ongoing. We look forward to more exploration and more adventure. My thanks and appreciation go to everyone for a very clear re-introduction to the perennial question: *Who, then, is my neighbour?*

+Michael

Section 1 – Background and context

2020 continues to be a challenging year. We have been made keenly aware of the evil of racism, and the pain it causes, both globally and locally in the last number of months. It is challenging to hear people tell stories of their experiences of racist bullying, exclusion and abuse. It is particularly difficult to hear such stories told about their own negative experiences by children and young people. It has drawn our attention to an uncomfortable reality, namely that some in our own society do not wish to welcome and include those who belong to various ethnic minorities experience in our own society. People of colour can be targets of cruel and thoughtless racial abuse from strangers on the street as well as from the people known to them in their neighbourhoods, workplaces or schools. Unpleasant treatment can also be meted out to those whose first language is not English and whose accent marks them apart. Similarly, those who dress differently from the majority in Ireland, who belong to a range of world faiths and are visibly different can experience alienation and ignorance rather than respect and inclusion.

The increased awareness of the problem and sinfulness of racism is a timely reminder to us that, as Christians we are called to see everyone as children of God – all are one in God’s sight, whether Greek or Jew, slave or free, male or female (Gal 3:28). Scripture also reminds us to be wary of the shallowness of a human focus on outward appearances: ‘the Lord does not see as mortals see. They look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.’ (1 Samuel 16:7). Scripture repeatedly reminds those who profess belief in God to welcome and include, rather than ill-treating the stranger, the newcomer, the foreigner (e.g. Exodus 22: 21; Deuteronomy 10: 19; Psalm 146: 9; Jeremiah 7:5-7; Zechariah 7: 9-10; Hebrews 13: 1-3). The great commandment of Jesus, that we love God and love our neighbour as ourselves (Luke 10: 27), does not differentiate between those neighbours based on skin colour, language, culture or belief, just as God does not differentiate (Acts 10: 34).

Reflecting on racism in the Church of England

In the last six months, the Church of England has been confronted by arguments that it is institutionally racist and has a history of exclusion rather than inclusion of some church members based on skin colour, country of origin, culture and ethnicity. Individual clergy who belong to ethnic minorities have spoken about their concerns about institutional racism in the Church (e.g. the recently retired Archbishop John Sentamu). Others have written describing their experiences of ill-treatment or exclusion by the Church of England (e.g. France-Williams 2020).

The Church of England has been challenged to respond adequately to stories of historic as well as recent or current exclusion and racism directed at lay people as well as those who are ordained. There have been a slew of articles in the *Church Times* since the start of 2020

focusing on the broad problem of racism in the church, reflecting the evolving nature of public discourse on this subject (e.g. 'The Roots of Racism in the Church are deep and thick' 10th June 2020) while others record reflection and action by the Church in response to reported and acknowledge racist behaviour (e.g. 'Synod apologises to Windrush generation for C of E racism' 11th Feb 2020) and others again acknowledge the potentially problematic nature of some memorials and statues in churches 'Anti-racism focus turns to church statues' 19th June 2020).

Reflecting on racism in the Church of Ireland

The issues for our neighbouring Anglican church encourage us to reflect on our own experiences as a church community. First, we have to acknowledge that we share a certain history with the Church of England up to the time of disestablishment in 1869 and that issues of historic racism embedded in empire impact us in complex ways. This includes the engagement by Irish people in the apparatus of empire such as army, civil service and a range of companies (e.g. the East India company) operating in parts of the empire. Mission activity by the established church (which also involved Irish people) across the countries colonised by the British can be perceived as part of the apparatus of empire.

However, we must also acknowledge that Ireland had a complex relationship with empire as it was England's first colony. The established church was Anglican, although the majority of Irish people were never its adherents. Nonetheless, they were required to pay tithes that benefited the established church. Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, Society of Friends and other non-conforming Protestants were subject to the penal laws which afforded them less favourable legal status and disadvantaged them economically and politically. The established church may be understood as having been a part of the apparatus of empire and colonisation in the Irish context. Gladstone, when prime minister, viewed the disestablishment of the Anglican church in Ireland as an essential part of creating a peaceful society on this island. The Church of Ireland was created in 1869 as a result of disestablishment which was strongly resisted by many Anglicans in Ireland at the time.

In thinking about the Church of Ireland's relationships with the wider community in Ireland, as well as with those who have arrived to make Ireland their home from across the globe, it is helpful to be aware of the complex history of our church. Some of the past relationships in Ireland or overseas that individual historical members of our church (lay and ordained) had with others may have been unjust viewed through today's lens and understanding. It is also important to bear in mind that the current make-up of our congregations includes people who are not cradle Irish Anglicans. Therefore, aspects of the unique history of the Church of Ireland may be obscured for them or may seem of little relevance to them. They have chosen to worship with us because of their faith in Christ and their affiliation with our style of worship rather than because of an attraction of our history.

Origins of Racism

The focus on racism in the Church of England has included consideration of the active role Britain played in the slave triangle from the late 16th to the early 19th century, and has begun to acknowledge that many individuals, families and institutions built up their significant wealth on the basis of the trade in people. There were some wealthy Irish individuals, families and institutions who also benefited financially from the slave trade at that time. It is worth remembering that neither the poor of Ireland nor Britain shared the benefits accrued by the very wealthy minority through that trade.

There has also been a reflection by the Church of England on the treatment of those who arrived in the post-war years when Britain opened up to the immigration of people from across colonies and former colonies needed for the rebuilding and servicing of the country after the devastation of World War 2. Those migrants include the Windrush generation from the Caribbean as well as immigrants from south-east Asia and Africa. These newcomers worked side-by-side in construction, heavy industry, hospitals, transport and a range of services with immigrants from Ireland as well as from many parts of continental Europe which were also devastated by conflict. These more recent arrivals (or their children and grandchildren) have reported experiencing both institutional and individual racism in many parts of their lives, including in church.

Our Irish experiences of the post-war era differ considerably to that of our immediate neighbour. Noticeable levels of inward migration to Ireland only began in the 1990s, as part of a wave of global migration (McGrady 2005). As noted earlier in this section, we have evidence from research and individual testimony of racism towards newcomers. We are also well aware of the institutional scandal of the Direct Provision system for those seeking asylum. In spite of the problems that are well documented, Ireland has benefited from being able to draw on a more reflective international climate. This has provided insights into the existence of racism and ways of addressing it for those interested in welcoming and including newcomers from across the world who move to Ireland. This has meant that there is an awareness of the rights of all to fair and respectful treatment, regardless of their nation of origin, their skin colour, their culture and ethnicity. Noting that there is greater awareness of the wrong of racism and exclusion, however, does not detract in any way from the reality that many newcomers to Ireland, as well as many Irish citizens, experience racism. The issue is that a great many of us are aware of the unacceptability of this situation.

The Hard Gospel project and 'Welcoming Angels'

The stories of individual and institutional racism and exclusion that we have heard from around the world are not the first time our awareness has been raised in the Church of Ireland to the problem of racism. The initial report of the *Hard Gospel* project was presented to the

General Synod in 2004. It found that there were racist attitudes on the parts of some in the Church of Ireland. The report made it clear that skin colour could have a negative impact on whether new people were welcomed to, or included in, the parish. It reported that many people, especially in rural areas, assumed that including ethnic diversity in the parish was solely an urban issue, and nothing to do with them. On the plus side, the report indicated that many lay people and clergy felt that there was an obligation on the Church of Ireland to do more to welcome and include people belonging to ethnic minorities, to challenge racism in Irish society and in the Church itself.

In response to the first report of the *Hard Gospel* project, a Working Group on Combating Racism was established in Dublin and Glendalough by Archbishop John Neill in response to the *Hard Gospel* project report. This group, chaired by Rev. Sandra Pragnell, published a report entitled *Welcoming Angels* in 2005 (click [here](#) to download report). The report was based on the responses to a survey of clergy across the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough.

The report indicated that most parishes, especially those in suburban areas, had experienced new arrivals from all around the world, though only a handful of parishes were truly international in their congregations. People from across the globe now lived in Ireland so the origins of the newcomers was very varied. The profiles of these newcomers to parishes varied widely. Newcomers included students, health-sector employees, diplomatic families, asylum-seekers and refugees. Survey responses focused on both the challenges the incumbents, the parishes and the newcomers faced as well as emphasising the blessings the changes brought, as outlined by the responding incumbents.

The report concluded with a list of recommendations to support parishes to be more inclusive of its newcomer members (p.57-58 of the attached report). Parts of the report focused on the provision of information about asylum seekers and refugees with particular recommendations on how to welcome, include and support these very marginalised people.

2020 follow-up to the 'Welcoming Angels' survey

It is 15 years since *Welcoming Angels* was published. In light of the heightened awareness of racism across the globe, this is a good time to revisit and update the information that was sought for the *Welcoming Angels* report of 2005. It is also a good time to reflect on, and to update its recommendations to focus less on the welcome of newcomers (although acknowledging that welcome of newcomers remains important) and more on ensuring that all aspects of life in our parishes reflect the diversity of the congregations and draw fully on the shared gifts that the blessing of parish diversity brings.

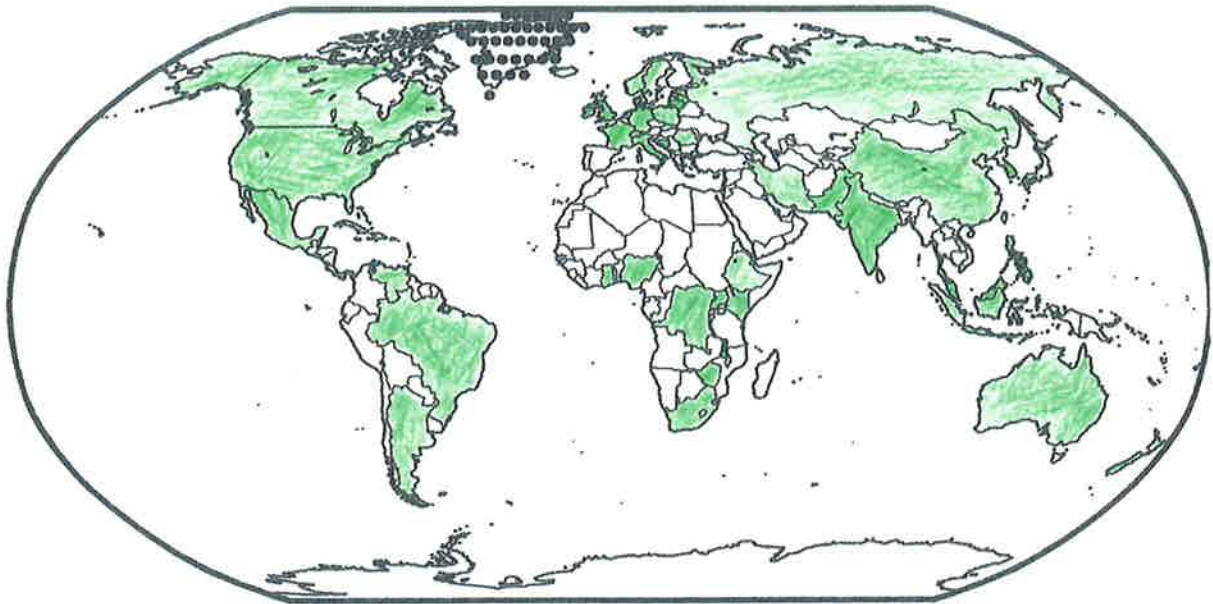
The outcomes of the follow-up survey to parish incumbents across the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough are reported on in Sections 2 to 6 of this report. The findings indicate that the profiles of many parishes have changed in that time, with a majority reporting that they have either remained stable in their diversity or have become more ethnically and culturally diverse. It is also clear from the follow-up 2020 survey that the people who contributed to that cultural and ethnic diversity reported in 2005 are no longer newcomers to their parishes. Many are now well-embedded as part of the life and structure of their congregations, along with their children. Some churches are sharing space with a second congregation of Christians of other nationalities and cultures that are in communion with the Church of Ireland and this is an additional feature of welcome and inclusion in the life of our Christian community in Dublin & Glendalough.

The United Dioceses of Dublin & Glendalough engaged in a discipleship project entitled *Come&C* from 2014 until 2019. This project drew on the five marks of mission of the Anglican Communion as a way of understanding the discipleship activities of individuals, parishes and the dioceses themselves. This is also a good time to reflect on the ways in which our parishes and our United Dioceses are engaging with the fourth mark of mission of the Anglican Communion – *To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation* – in guiding how we deal with racism both as a structural reality in our world as well as reflecting on and challenging its potential contribution to the life of our parishes and our United Dioceses. This recognises that hospitality and the scriptural imperative to welcome the stranger or newcomer among us is at the heart of the Gospel (Pohl 2005).

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Section 2 Cultural and ethnic diversity in the parishes of Dublin and Glendalough in 2020



This green-shaded areas on the above map of the nations of the world indicate how globalised our Church of Ireland dioceses of Dublin & Glendalough have become in the last 15 years. The table on pages 12 and 13 gives a detailed breakdown of the ethnic and cultural diversity to be found across many of our parishes, both urban and rural. It is very interesting to read the range of locations of origin of people who now worship with us and are a very welcome part of our diverse Anglican family here in this diocese.

It should be noted that incumbents were not specifically asked to name the countries of origin of their parishioners – some provided general information by continent, others specific information by country and the shaded map above reflects the latter more detailed response.

What the table presented on pages 12 and 13 also tells us is about the range of diversity as a percentage of the typical Sunday congregation pre-COVID. The most recent census (CSO 2016) reports that 11.6% of all those living in Ireland are overseas nationals. Half of all reporting parishes stated that their typical congregation had a minimum of 12% of people belonging to ethnically and culturally diverse categories on a typical pre-COVID Sunday. These include inner-city churches, established and growing suburban parishes as well as rural parishes.

There was a total response rate of 61% from parishes with incumbents in place across the United Dioceses (with a 55% response rate from Dublin parishes and an 82% response rate from Glendalough parishes).

The table on the following two pages shows the ethnic & cultural percentage of each responding parish congregation along with an anonymised description of the parish and regions of origin of parishioners.

Key to assist reading the table:

In the case of two different parishes in the table on pages 12 and 13, two clergy apiece responded.

One Glendalough parish* has an incumbent and a vicar where each leads his/her own congregation.

In the case of the rural part of that shared parish, the growth described was the result of the relatively recent arrival of a Direct Provision Centre nearby. The parish made a decision to engage with those in the Direct Provision Centre and to make them welcome as part of their congregation.

One Dublin church** has two separate congregations, one of which is an Indian church group with its own priest-in-charge.

This respondent wrote very warmly about being part of a parish but also maintaining the CSI congregation's cultural integrity:

While cherishing the Irish culture, we uphold our ethnic cultural and spiritual vibrancy. The Parish avail us the freedom to celebrate our diversity.

The incumbent who shared this church building with the CSI congregation said that he was 'glad to be able to provide space for a congregation of the Church of South India'. This incumbent also reported that the church was made available for services for the Estonian Lutheran Church from time to time.

A number of other churches in the diocese also reported such shared space arrangements with congregations in communion with the Church of Ireland. Some of these are long-standing arrangements. For example, one church has an arrangement with the Syrian Orthodox community which holds services there twice monthly and also facilitates an African Church Community in its hall. Another church shares its building with the Mar Thoma community which has held services there for two decades.

Parish	% of congregation	Changes since 2005	Regions of origin
Inner City Dublin south (shared church)**	100	Stable	India
Outer suburb Dublin north	60	Increase	African countries, Asian countries, European countries
Outer suburb Dublin west	50	Increase	India (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Northern India), Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa
Inner city Dublin	35	Increase	India, Brazil, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Iran, New Zealand, North America, Poland, range of African countries with biggest number from South Africa, the Philippines, UK
Inner city Dublin south	33	Stable	International visitors (cathedral)
Established suburb Dublin north	30	Increase	Brazil, China, India, Latvia, Nigeria, Poland, South Africa, the Philippines
Rural Glendalough (1/2 parish)*	30	Increase	Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe
Inner city Dublin south (shared church)**	30	Increase	Range of African countries
Established suburb Dublin north	25	Increase	Australia, Balkans, Eastern & Western European countries, India, Iran, New Zealand, Nigeria, Philippines, South Africa, Uganda, Venezuela, UK
Outer suburb Dublin north	25	Slight reduction	Asian countries, India, Eastern European countries, Nigeria
Rural Glendalough	20	Stable	DCR, Kenya, Indonesia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe
Established suburb Dublin south	20	Increase	Asian countries, South Africa, South American countries, USA
Rural satellite town Glendalough (1/2 parish)*	20	Increase	Asian countries, Eastern & Western European countries, India, USA
Outer suburb Glendalough	20	Increase	Range of African countries
Rural Glendalough	12	Stable	France, Germany, Poland, South Africa, Switzerland, USA, Zimbabwe

Parish	% of congregation	Changes since 2005	Regions of origin
Outer suburb Dublin south	12	Increase	Denmark, India, Korea, Malaysia, Poland, Zimbabwe
Established suburb Dublin south	10	Stable	Asian countries, Canada, India, Nigeria, South Africa, UK
Inner city Dublin	10	Stable	African countries, India
Established suburb Dublin north	10	Slight reduction	African countries including Ethiopia, China, Eastern European countries including Estonia, India, Scandinavia
Outer suburb Dublin south	10	Increase	African countries, Eastern European countries, Malaysia
Outer suburb Dublin south	10	Increase	African countries, India
Established suburb Dublin west	10	Stable	African countries, Eastern European countries
Established suburb Dublin south	5	Stable	Germany, Malaysia
Established suburb Dublin south	5	Stable	Asian countries, Eastern European countries, South Africa
Outer suburb Glendalough	5	Increase	Argentina, Germany, Latvia, Mexico, the Netherlands
Outer suburb Glendalough	5	Reduction	African countries
Established suburb Dublin south	4	Stable	Australia, Holland, Italy, Lithuania, Nigeria, UK, USA
Established suburb Dublin south	2	Stable	Uganda, USA
Rural Glendalough	2	Stable	India, Russia, USA
Established suburb Dublin south	2	Increase	India, Korea, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Scandinavia
Outer suburb Glendalough	0	Stable	None
Rural Glendalough	0	Stable	None

Most parishes report either an increase in the ethnic and cultural diversity of their parishes since 2005 or that the ethnic and cultural diversity in their congregation has remained stable. One incumbent explained:

All or most of the above have joined the parish in the last 10 years.

Only a handful of responding parishes reported a reduction in their diversity since 2005. In some growing outer suburbs with a very diverse population, African-led churches have been established since 2005. Some of those who had originally worshipped in the Church of Ireland parish moved to one of the newly established African-led churches. There are other areas with a lot of rental properties available, and, as an incumbent explained: *'migrant workers (who) stay for a few years and then buy elsewhere'* resulting in that parish experiencing the arrival of new parishioners who move again once they purchase a permanent home.

Much of the reported diversity across the responding parishes is in the younger part of the congregation – younger adults, families and children. Individual clergy commented that, while there was limited cultural and ethnic diversity in the congregation itself, much greater diversity was evident in the parish primary school population, e.g.:

Parish primary school displays more ethnic diversity than the church-going community.

One respondent, who noted that they had no ethnic or cultural diversity in the parish, reported that such diversity was present in their primary school:

Ours is a rural parish which does not have any immigrant families connected with the parish. There are several families attending the parish school however from a variety of different religious and ethnic backgrounds.

A respondent from a growing outer suburb explained how the increasing cultural and ethnic diversity had given a new generation of families to that parish:

I arrived 20 years ago to a new town of the 1970s whose adult children had moved out, so I now have a retired Irish congregation with anyone younger being either African or Indian and therefore my 25 Sunday School students are almost exclusively New Irish.

The following two sections explore the positive impacts and the potential challenges that the globalisation of many of our parishes in Dublin & Glendalough has brought from the perspective of the responding incumbents.

Section 3 How parishes have benefited from cultural and ethnic diversity

The word *blessing* was used repeatedly by responding incumbents about the benefits that increased cultural and ethnic diversity has brought to many of the parishes. The blessings outlined by the respondents included:

- (a) A broadening of perspectives and outlooks which impact positively on faith
- (b) Increased gifts serving God and the community

Blessings: changed and broadened perspectives, deepened faith

The focus for some was on the benefit of the broadening of horizons and outlooks for the parish as a whole:

Ethnic diversity has brought the blessing and enrichment of new mutual friendships and broadening of local vision.

The different ethnicities involved have been welcomed and invited to share their ethnic and cultural identities with us. There is no doubt that this has been a blessing.

Wider perspective on life, lack of baggage of a minority Irish past, greater feeling of being more representative of the population at large.

One incumbent talked about how the visibility of difference reduced the tendency to view newcomers as exotic or 'the Other':

Greater awareness of a variety of folk: less tendency to see them as exotic (our churchwarden is Estonian, one member of the SV is Ethiopian and another Anglo-Indian, another USA).

Another incumbent noted how familiarity and friendship breaks down potential prejudice, even where numbers of newcomers are small:

Although the experience of ethnic diversity has been sporadic and limited, it has helped our parish to broaden its outlook as parishioners get to know and befriend people from different background and culture. It has helped breakdown stereotypes and prejudice.

For others, the focus was on how the presence of diversity in the congregation had deepened faith and understanding:

Difference is a blessing as we learn from different cultures and understand better that Christ came for all and that all are children of God.

(Diversity has given us) an understanding of the universality of the Christian church.

One respondent expressed the view that increased cultural and ethnic diversity in the parish was one of a number of factors that had broadened congregational outlook in a way that positively impacted on, and deepened their life of prayer and study of scripture:

Whether it is the ethnic diversity or the involvement of the parish in partnership with mission organisations has led to the blessing of a wider perspective on world matters I cannot tell. Or it could be that many parishioners have seen family members emigrate to many countries and are therefore aware of global concerns, interdependence and the value of cultural diversity. This informs our prayer life and bible discussion.

Blessings: increased gifts serving God and the community

Others noted how growth in diversity in the parish had also meant a growth in the available gifts serving the congregation:

We have a few Venezuelan families and some have musical gifts, they have led us in worship a few times.

Fresh perspectives of newer members grow into leadership.

The international community has brought many blessings – bringing life and colour. Many have become involved in leading Sunday Club. Some have become Select Vestry members. Many are very committed to worship and to the work of the church.

Some incumbents focused on the social and cultural benefits of increased diversity as part of the ministry of the parish:

It has been a great blessing to have a varied mix of people. We have had food culture evenings, sporting events and craft sales that represent some of the different cultures in the community. Also having different cultures represented 'up-front' in vocal ministry not just behind the scenes.

Positive comments were made about the active engagement with worship and the visible faith of newcomers to the parishes:

There has been the active engagement in worship by our overseas parishioners bringing enthusiasm, colourfulness, spontaneity and a different world view.

Their enthusiasm, dedication and commitment to Sunday worship and their very joyful and positive attitude is so refreshing.

For some incumbents, their focus was on how diversity had positively impacted worship in their parish:

Some of the blessings have been uplifting praise and worship.

New communities have encouraged us to engage in new forms of worship, liturgy and prayer.

A few incumbents talked about how the enthusiasm of the newcomers to the parish was a motivation for longer-standing members to positively change their behaviour or engagement in worship, e.g.:

During the pandemic the immigrants typed religious responses into my 32 recent Facebook live services which encouraged the Irish to respond!

A handful of incumbents admitted that the changes in styles of worship or engagement may not always have been met with universal positivity and that the parish has not fully worked through how to handle such unease.

However, there might have been some resistance to changing the way we worship! We have not formulated any sort of policy or agreed strategy. We need to be thinking about this.

They [the congregation] have a paternalistic attitude, they like having diversity as long as it doesn't mean change!

However, another stated that the opposite was the case – because of new arrivals and their impact over time, the congregation has grown in its openness to change:

A challenge to the traditional expectations that new members would change to join us, now we change to welcome.

In conclusion

Most of the reports from incumbents comment on the multiple blessings brought by newcomers who are described by one respondent as *'having a desire to be spiritually and practically involved in the life of the parish'*. A few incumbents note that the enthusiasm of newcomers, their willingness to participate, wish to worship in their own idioms and to engage joyfully with their faith can present challenges for an incumbent to manage as well as bringing many blessings.

The next section considers the challenges some incumbents reported in managing change in a parish context where the congregation has moved from only being indigenous Irish, mainly cradle Anglicans, to a more global community.



Posters advertising Sunday School Virtual Summer Camp, Women's World Day of Prayer and Carol Service

Section 4 What parishes have learned through their cultural and ethnic diversity

One respondent reported that the cultural and ethnic difference now in the parish is part of the broadening of the congregational base beyond what that incumbent described as *'the traditional parish DNA'*. This broadening brings challenges as well as blessings because it represents change and, as was noted at the end of Section 3, while many parishioners are delighted to welcome newcomers, not everyone is as comfortable with the changes that new arrivals to the parish may bring. Four aspects of parish learning through changing congregational profile emerged from the responses:

- (a) Indigenous responses to increasing diversity
- (b) Racism and suspicion of difference or change
- (c) Examples of misunderstandings or biases
- (d) Managing linguistic differences

Indigenous responses to increasing diversity

I'm always mindful that different ethnicities bring different traditions in worship, even if they are Anglican. This is something to celebrate, but sometimes more traditional members may find this difficult to accommodate.

Another incumbent noted that the changes brought about by a broadening of the diversity of the parish may impact especially on older members of the congregation – in other words that this is an issue that is experienced differently by the generations in church.

It has been a challenge for some of the older generation to accept ethnically diverse people as part of the worshipping congregation.

However, one incumbent noted that when the parish took cognisance of the change in its population profile, they were encouraged to consider new forms of worship in response:

Traditional Col models sometimes do not meet the needs of ethnic communities attending worship. This has caused the parish to consider new forms of fresh expression.

Changes to the make-up of a parish that had been very traditional and static in its population can give rise to uncertainty in how to engage with and welcome newcomers:

Many parishioners are uncomfortable approaching people they don't know, be the new parishioners 'Irish' or otherwise. We haven't gone down the road of 'if you are

visiting with us today please stand up and introduce yourself' as some mainland European and wider world parishes in tourist locations do.

Another incumbent explains how long-standing parishioners can make social mistakes in their attempt to include. The incumbent believes that these gaffes are more likely to arise out of genuine misunderstanding rather than any intent to offend. These include uncertainty which can lead to unintended misunderstandings on all sides:

An initial hesitancy among some older members had been voiced in earlier years. A habit among some to use condescending tone and language when trying to affirm newer members.

Another incumbent with experience from rural England and Ireland of leading culturally and ethnically diverse parishes prior to taking up his/her current role in these United Dioceses outlined how, in a previous parish, well-intentioned misunderstanding lead to unintended offence and upset:

We shouldn't assume people from different ethnic groups have little or no English. Or indeed that they have no understanding of Irish or western culture. My (spouse) and I were extremely embarrassed on the night that I was instituted as Rector in (parish outside Dublin & Glendalough) when (my spouse) had invited some colleagues and friends (originally from overseas) to the service. Afterwards a few of my new parishioners came up to them at the reception and were very patronising, commenting on their (cultural) attire and speaking very slowly so they could understand!

Such gaffes, if not managed sensitively, can lead to newcomers moving away from a parish. In at least one case, the incumbent reported that new arrivals to her/his parish were initially reticent to get involved because of a bad experience and lack of welcome in another parish:

In the case of [newcomers], they were very shy about involvement due to fears they will not be accepted. Two of our families came from neighbouring parish where they did not feel accepted.

Racism and suspicion of difference or change

There were only two specific reports of racist incidents by incumbents. However, there were concerns expressed by others about underlying negative attitudes or suspicions both within the parish and beyond it. One incumbent noted a concern that the attitudes of some older parishioners to newcomers was *'still suspicious and might be a little racist'*. Two others noted their willingness to 'call out' racism should they see or hear anything they deem to be inappropriate. One of these incumbents (who leads a parish with significant ethnic and

cultural diversity) described how *'on one occasion we had to stand up to racist comments'* that arose out of someone walking into church ten minutes after the service had started.

There was an awareness reported by a couple of incumbents with culturally and ethnically diverse parish profiles that individual parishioners experienced exclusion and racism beyond the parish, e.g.:

One Confirmation candidate (in a local secondary school) told of a hierarchy of bullying which exists (in the school) – whites, Travellers and Africans at the bottom.

One incumbent, who reported limited ethnic and cultural diversity in her/his parish, was of the view that *'there is an expectation that new ethnic diverse parishioners will assimilate into the parish'* indicating an unwillingness that the parish itself would adapt to include and respect everyone.

Another incumbent, with significant, long-term cultural and ethnic diversity in the parish, saw the responsibility for inclusion as being one for the parish itself to address in multiple ways through outreach and invitation to engage, to participate and to lead:

The challenges are still trying to integrate (newcomers) more – visiting them in their homes – involvement as Parish readers.

Examples of misunderstandings and biases

A handful of incumbents talked about some of the cultural differences that can give rise to misunderstandings and unease if not managed properly by the incumbent in the context of the parish environment. Some of the examples given here focus on cultural differences that are associated with some African parishioners in particular parishes and may reflect broader negative social stereotypes:

A general tendency of the African people not to be punctual which has to be considered.

The issue of how children are disciplined and parented, which often happens with African families. I would informally work with the older (indigenous Irish) people to educate them on the cultural differences and work with the families to make them aware of the issues. To be honest, our older people love children and are very tolerant but boundaries have been crossed at times.

Interestingly, another incumbent with significant ethnic and cultural diversity in her/his parish, regarded the issue of punctuality and noisy, active children during worship as an

intergenerational as well as a cultural difference. This is an important consideration, bearing in mind that some parishes' cultural and ethnic diversity is only visible among the younger generation in attendance:

Intergenerational clashes tended to happen with noisy children, people arriving late and making noise, etc.

Managing linguistic differences

A number of incumbents made reference to the challenge of managing language differences, especially when new-comers to the parish have little or no English. Again, there is an important role noted here for those in leadership positions in the parish to manage and support a multi-lingual environment. Many of these in leadership roles in parishes are volunteers working with limited (if any) access to resources and training. We also have limited experience in this regard in Ireland. Respondents noted how they and others working with them took on additional work to ensure inclusion, and how people learned what worked through experience.

A lot of the Venezuelans didn't speak English, we use a lot of visual aids in the service which help this, also over time, we put Spanish lyrics below the English ones for all our songs. This was a huge blessing for the Venezuelans. I also think it was difficult for some of the children attending Kids' ministry as they didn't really know what was going on but with patience and encouragement there are other ways to communicate and this was learned by everyone.

A Chinese lady from mainland China used to attend our services in (previous rural Irish parish). She had absolutely no English whatsoever. I translated the services for her in Mandarin and also many hymns so she could follow what was happening and participate. This also is something that could be done if people have very little English. She took her two grandchildren to our services because we had a Sunday School and there was great fellowship after the services with tea/coffee and lots of cake! She absolutely loved the fellowship with the other ladies and enjoyed helping with the tea and washing up, even though she didn't know what anyone was saying. Ultimately she felt included, appreciated and sincerely loved.

One incumbent was concerned that the attempts to include newly arrived linguistic diversity could impact negatively on our ability to make space for the Irish language in services:

Harder to promote the Irish language, as English is already a second language for some.

Another incumbent summed up the challenges and responses described in this section by acknowledging that there are challenges and that dealing with change is always a learning process. This incumbent also noted how the experiences of the parish primary school in including diversity has assisted that learning in the parish:

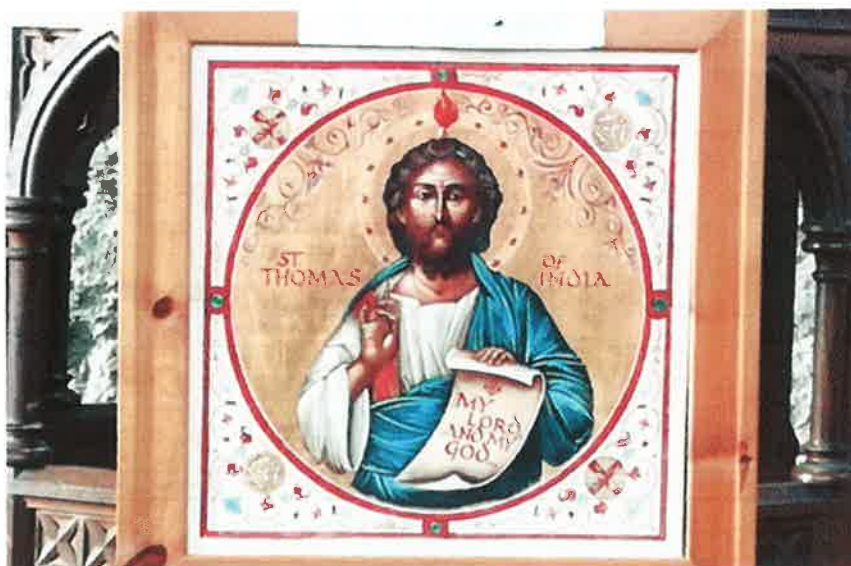
We have been blessed with not having too many challenges as having a connect to the (primary) school is of great benefit. Communication sometimes has been difficult for understanding why certain things may be done or not but it is all part of the learning process that we are involved with.

In conclusion

It was clear from the responses received that changes at parish level which expanded the congregation beyond what one incumbent referred to as the *'traditional parish DNA'*, brought challenges that incumbents needed to recognise and to address. It also emerged that some of these changes were as much about generational cultural changes as they were about ethnic cultural differences.

Two incumbents reflected on what they have changed in response to greater cultural and ethnic diversity in their parishes. One talked about changes to preaching style - *I take more account of the diversity of hearers when I preach.* Another explained that he/she *builds on listening to the concerns of overseas parishioners and Irish parishioners alike.*

The next section looks at specific experiences of change at parish level and reflections by incumbents on these new approaches.



Icon of St. Thomas of India on display in church shared with Mar Thoma congregation

Section 5 Advice from the parishes on inclusion of cultural and ethnic diversity

Respondents were asked to outline the good practice that they had put in place in response to the ethnic and cultural diversity in their parishes and to describe what they had learned as a consequence of managing that diversity. In response, one incumbent drew attention to the biblical imperative that underpins their welcome for all newcomers to the parish, regardless of where they have come from:

Welcoming the foreigner is a biblical imperative. We do not have a specific ethnic welcome policy but we try to place primary importance on welcoming newcomers to the parish – be they from down the road or a different continent.

This same scriptural commitment to welcome was evident in the kinds of ways in which incumbents reported on the good, inclusive practices they had put in place. Three aspects of the celebration, engagement and management of cultural and ethnic diversity in the parish emerged from the responses:

- (a) participation in worship;
- (b) taking on leadership and support roles in the parish / organisations associated with the parish;
- (c) holding of cultural and social events

Participation in worship

Many incumbents described various ways in which newcomer parishioners (along with all the longer-standing members of the congregation) are included in liturgy and worship:

We have sought to be intentional by encouraging other voices and ethnicities to participate in liturgy, readings, music, prayers, etc.

Those from other backgrounds have been encouraged to lead worship through prayers at services and readings.

During lockdown there was a specific focus to include all ages and all nationalities in our Sunday services online, many read scripture or prayers.

Incumbents are using a variety of approaches to worship that celebrate cultural diversity. Some parishes have focused on annual occasions such as the World Day of Prayer to highlight their own connection through parishioners with the chosen country for that liturgy, e.g.:

Anytime we get an opportunity to celebrate their culture, which happened recently

with the World Day of Prayer 2020 where Zimbabwean culture was celebrated. In our parish we hosted this annual event for the local churches and a Zimbabwean family who attend our church decorated the church with Zimbabwean symbols and they sang Zimbabwean songs and spoke about life there and its cultural aspects. Everyone found this extremely interesting and we found ourselves dancing in the pews whilst singing the songs and hearing the music played.

Two incumbents intentionally use forms of service from across the Anglican Communion:

We have a slot on the 5th Sunday where we use a Eucharistic service from somewhere else in the Anglican communion. This has helped prevent our worship becoming parochial in the worst sense.

On the 5th Sunday we have a Holy Communion Service from another Anglican church.

One respondent describes how their parish services ‘use different languages at Pentecost’ in order to include the range of first languages of their parishioners as part of that celebration.

Leadership and support roles

As well as including a range of people as readers, participants in liturgy, music and prayers, many parishes try to include everyone who is willing and available in the range of leadership and support roles both in the parish and in organisations linked to it (e.g. Girls’ or Boys’ Brigade, Scouts, Girls Friendly Society, badminton or other sports clubs).

Engagement in leadership roles includes facilitating newcomers to: ‘...be church wardens and join select vestry’ or to ‘... serve as Sunday Club leaders’. One incumbent explained that ‘we have tried to involve our new parishioners in every aspect of the parish – on select vestries, church warden, in Sunday Club and Youth organisations.’ Another incumbent described how one of their youthful newcomers, who is Zimbabwean, frequently writes for the parish magazine, sometimes addressing issues about cultural and ethnic difference as part of that contribution.

Other incumbents reported that:

We include everyone on the Reading Rota, and on the Coffee after Church Rota, and on the technology side. And of all of these, the Coffee after Church works best for integration, as it involves being interactive, technology is next. Reading doesn’t go down well with older parishioners as they find it hard to understand other accents.

Some leaders of organisations linked to the parish have invited newcomers to become involved in assisting in their organisation.

The parish which had engaged with residents of a local Direct Provision Centre encouraged those newcomers to be involved in the parish and to volunteer in the parish shop in order to build relationships with local people. The respondent noted that *'this has worked well for all'*. Not only does it build friendships within the parish community but it also has the potential to provide a sense of productivity and connectivity for people who are waiting in a Direct Provision Centre to be allowed to be fully participant in Irish life.

Cultural and social events

Some respondents focused their responses on the social and cultural activities organised in the parish that assist inclusion and recognition of the congregation's diversity.

We ran a series of Culture Nights in the rectory where newer members could celebrate, show and share their cultural and religious origins.

Last November we had a major celebration of our ethnic diversity with a Global Pot Luck Supper attended by over 80 people, which featured music and cuisine from 15 countries, shared among all attendees. The night was one of the most successful events I have ever been involved in and we planned to make it an annual event, until coronavirus intervened! I cannot recommend 'culture nights' highly enough for people to get to know each other. As part of ours, we had a large map of the world and one-by-one all the representatives of the various countries went up and peeled off the covering of their country of origin. The spontaneous applause which broke out for each one warmed my heart. We also involved our parish school whose pupils painted the maps and produced fact sheets of the various countries involved.

We hold Culture/International nights when our parish families get to perform, sing and share amazing things they love about their country.

One incumbent described how her/his parish has a welcoming policy where a small group from the congregation looks out for newcomers or isolated people in order to engage with them:

We have a small group of 'unofficial welcomers' who quietly move alongside those who do not appear to be engaging with others – especially in after-church social activities such as teas and coffees.

A handful of parishes had put education or outreach activities in place to heighten awareness about global issues and about racism. Comments from the second incumbent hint that these issues are not of equal priority for all:

We initiated a 'take the knee' initiative where we asked the congregation and community via our online networks to take the knee and pray for racial justice. We also had a take the knee prayer meeting. We offer resources to young families to talk to their children about racial justice. As part of this we had a YouTube session on Racial Justice.

We have a SMSI link with the Shyogwe Diocese in Rwanda and we have also committed to the links with the Diocese of Jerusalem. However, these links are not a high priority for some.

What underpins the variety of responses

The responses from participating incumbents demonstrate that there is a broad diversity of types and levels of engagement with issues of cultural and ethnic diversity in individual congregations. Some parishes have set up formal structures, others are more informal in their response. One incumbent said *'I can't say the parish has put anything formal in place yet to draw on the ethnic diversity and celebrate it'* while another noted *'I try to highlight and celebrate our ethnic members and provide pastoral support but, I must confess, that I haven't been proactive in programmes to actively integrate'*. Another incumbent had a preference for an informal approach, saying *'I am happier with the informal education and I believe that is has been reasonably successful'*. One incumbent made the following very important point: *'a lot of developments happen by accident rather than by design. It is about being open to what is working and keeping it up.'*

What these comments highlight is that different parish communities and different incumbents have their own style of engagement and that they deal with change in a variety of ways. The responses also stress the varied levels of experience that different incumbents and parishes have gained in dealing directly with a changing profile of their congregation – some have had large numbers for at least the last decade and a half, others have had much more limited or more recent experience of that diversity.

The incumbents who are more experienced with managing cultural and ethnic diversity in their congregations were open about the challenges they had grappled with, and recognised the reality that their approaches continue to evolve.

The rigid nature of our liturgical tradition and music tradition can make

improvisation difficult. We have learned that it is difficult. The difficulty is made more so by the age profile of the core congregation.

In our own context we have to be honest and recognise that we do not have minority ethnic representation within our leadership or decision-making structures. This is something we must continue to work towards.

One respondent had over two decades of experience of managing a culturally and ethnically diverse congregation as well as having built relationships with other congregations sharing their church building. This incumbent stressed that teaching by good scripturally-based example, and living respect for all members of the community are at the heart of positive parish experience. Another incumbent, who reported lengthy experience of managing cultural and ethnic diversity across three different parishes, saw the building of trusting relationships with all members of the congregation as fundamental:

Relationships are very important and help to build trust. You have to speak to people individually and visit them in their homes and get to know them personally.

Another said: *'a smile is always helpful and universal. Ethnic diversity is a wonderful opportunity to learn and to practice loving others'*. Intentional listening to the voices of all was singled out by another respondent. Self-reflection on the part of the incumbent underpins positive engagement and is very important in building those positive, trusting, listening relationships. One incumbent explained:

It has challenged me as Rector to make sure everyone is included and made welcome. It has made me see the latent racism in all of us. And it has made me aware not to patronise people but to accept them.

Two incumbents separately made reference to their own learning and how this has led them to be able to challenge individual indigenous members of the congregation when they were heard to make racist remarks:

On one occasion we have had to stand up to racist comments.

I have learned to protest as soon as I hear inappropriate language used of ethnically diverse people. An adopted African child was described as originating in the jungle, and it was said of a black African man that he should not have a leadership role in church because he knew nothing.

Two incumbents summed up the responsibility that the whole parish carries in response to the blessing of greater diversity as follows:

It is both an opportunity for mutual enrichment and a responsibility to be visibly inclusive to parish life.

As rector I strive to have a welcoming, caring, understanding and open parish to all, regardless of nationality or creed and I feel that I am supported in this by the parishioners.

It is clear from the responses of parish incumbents that successful inclusion of a more diverse congregation requires work, on the part of the incumbent and on the part of the whole parish. This includes careful listening to all, the building of good relationships between leaders and all parishioners and among the parishioners themselves. It requires intentional structuring of engagement by laity in worship and parish structures so that all are invited to engage according to their gifts and willingness to participate. It requires leadership in the parish that is open to changing hearts and minds about issues where there is fear, mistrust, misunderstanding, uncertainty. The incumbent and others in leadership positions in the parish need to be able to recognise and reflect on their own biases and prejudices and to challenge those. Parish leaders are called to be prophetic leaders who can challenge negative or prejudiced ideas in those around them with firm gentleness. Ultimately, it requires scripturally-based practice that is rooted in love of God and love of neighbour, and responds to the call to welcome the newcomer.

The next section presents the advice given by respondents to the United Dioceses and to the wider church, based on their own experiences and reflections.



Posters for social and faith educational events during 2020

Section 6 Diocesan considerations

The extensive advice given by incumbents to the diocese and to the wider church fell into four main categories:

- (a) Listening, communicating and sharing
- (b) Encouraging participation
- (c) Teaching and preaching welcome, inclusion and respect
- (d) Structural response

Listening, communicating and sharing

Incumbents emphasised the importance of communication. This included providing opportunities for newcomers to the parish and the diocese to share their stories with long-standing members as well as thinking beyond parish boundaries and into the wider community.

Provide opportunities for diverse people to share their story with the rest of the congregation – it is our story that makes us human and that makes racism more difficult to sustain.

Hearing the stories of those who came and stayed as well as those who came but did not remain should be an important aspect of such listening.

Hearing the stories of strangers who have joined parishes or perhaps better still – hearing the same from those who have joined but have not remained or been peripheral to inner workings and regular activities of the parish.

One incumbent very wisely pointed out the importance of all voices being included and heard in any discussion about cultural and ethnic diversity:

We must do this with those of ethnic diversity present – not talk about them if they are not in the room.

One incumbent suggested that, alongside local listening and engagement, diocesan publications and online platforms could be utilised to share experiences and perspectives more widely:

Articles in the Church Review focusing not just on parishes with lots of diversity but

also those like mine with one a few. Maybe a regular feature of profiles of people involved in parishes which would sometimes include those of different ethnic backgrounds.

One respondent reminded us that *listening* is at the heart of good communication and is a key factor in building positive relationships.

Listen. Listen. Listen. Get to know people and the cultures that are represented. Don't be fearful of the questions you may have. See and look for ways to involve all in community activities, not just within the church but within the local community too.

Encouraging participation

A range of suggestions about social and cultural gatherings at both parish and diocesan level were made.

We have to celebrate the diverse eclectic range of nationalities that make up the Anglican community in our United Dioceses. Having intercultural events, I think would be a positive, exciting and fun way for us to look at the wonderful diverse cultural heritage of some of the members of our congregations.

Other incumbents suggested providing spaces where people can hear and listen as part of worship as well as social engagement. These opportunities for shared activities help to develop mutual understanding and respect.

Build social and liturgical opportunities for awareness and friendship to develop organically.

Create space for worship and forums where Christian diversity can be celebrated and explored.

Celebrating diversity might give rise to developing specific focuses for worship enabling people to explore issues of justice for example. One incumbent suggested that we might '*consider a Racial Justice Sunday*' as a theme for worship, preaching, reflection and prayer.

However, another incumbent with lengthy experience of managing a diverse congregation advised against token gestures. This flags for us that care needs to be taken with regard to the type of events planned to bring people together and celebrate diversity:

Not to be involved with 'token' gestures, but to have a desire to see and

communicate a full flow of active participation for all that want to be involved. Not everything has to be upfront but where the culture around our churches is diverse in the community, that must be reflected with our churches too.

Teaching and preaching welcome, inclusion and respect

A number of respondents highlighted the scriptural imperative to welcome the stranger, the newcomer in our midst. Individual respondents highlighted the call to the church to be a prophetic voice that responds honestly and vigilantly to racism and injustice as well as teaching the need to love, to include and to welcome through word and example. One incumbent warned against the danger of assuming unreflectively that we are measuring up to the commandment to love:

We might say with some pride 'thank God we are not racist' and this might be true... But below the surface there might equally be a nuanced (even genteel!) suspicion or intolerance towards the foreigner, stranger, newcomer in our midst. In order to overcome this we need to have the courage to set standards which encourage the flourishing of the foreigner in our midst along with our regulars – treating all people as equal is a lot more difficult than simply saying 'thank God we are not racist'...

As individual respondents who were quoted in earlier sections indicated, some used their preaching to teach the importance of welcome and inclusion, underpinned by that scriptural imperative to welcome to newcomer. They saw the focus on love, inclusion and care as foundational in helping to address racism and injustice in the church and in our wider society.

A key direct of the Old Testament insists that we care for the widow, orphan and foreigner (Zechariah 7:10). Perhaps our preaching needs to emphasise that the Father heart of God is particularly tender towards those who have come to live among us. Indeed, that we are not only responsible for them, but, also, accountable for them.

To adopt an open-door strategy of inclusion in what is preached from the pulpit is a beginning step in combatting racism

Individual incumbents indicated that they preferred not to address the issue of racism head-on in their preaching, perhaps alluding to it obliquely rather than directly at a time when there was heightened public awareness for example. They preached scripture, focusing on God's call to love and care for one another. They also felt that their lived example of respect for all parishioners was an important support to their preaching. However, one incumbent described the positive impact on a parishioner because of something that she/he had said as part of a series of talks in the parish that addressed the issue of racial equality openly:

I think saying something matters. We sometimes hide our lack of courage under a veneer of civility – as if we shouldn't really speak about such things. But if we don't speak we give the impression that these things don't matter. We had a series in our church where we chose to speak. I received this in an email from a parishioner of African descent: 'I wanted to send you a quite note to say thank you very much' or as we say in Swahili 'Asante Sana!' Thank you for addressing the topic of racial justice/racism. It is a complex and sensitive topic that is very rarely addressed in Ireland. People tend to shy away from the topic or avoid it altogether. The Wednesday Zoom prayers and theology YouTube message last week really touched me. I am honoured to have you as my rector and I feel proud to be a member of your parish. Your actions made me feel welcome and at home within the parish. I can join the congregation with my head held high'.

One incumbent noted the importance of senior church leaders taking a public stance on the range of issues and speaking out prophetically with willingness to condemn racist commentary, behaviour or structures either in the church itself or in Irish society. It is also important that senior church leaders make publicly clear that there is a welcome for, and genuine integration of newcomers into our church structures (local and diocesan).

I think it has to come from the Bishops and Clergy so that parishioners are very clear that as a church we stand for acceptance and integration and that there is no place for racism or derogatory remarks. And that we see our new parishioners as a welcome shot in the arm for our church community.

Structural response

In earlier sections, respondents talked about the importance of ensuring that all members of the congregation at parish level feel that they are welcome to contribute to the various activities of the parish, including offering themselves for leadership and support roles. Incumbents also stressed the importance of the range of voices being heard at diocesan level as well as at local level. Changes at diocesan level (and across the wider church) are slower than those that may be possible locally, in part due to the complex organisation of democracy outlined in the Constitution of the Church of Ireland. However, that complexity is not an excuse for inaction.

Encouraging people from different backgrounds to put themselves forward for Select Vestries, Diocesan Synod.

We seem to virtually no ethnic representatives on Church Committees, Diocesan or Central Church. This is not a positive sign.

Part of the role of church leaders at all levels, according to another incumbent, is to: *'change the culture of the Church of Ireland from its tradition-centred priority to become a community of complete equals. Gently challenge and identify tone and language that inadvertently lessens the value of newer members'*. There is an onus on all those in leadership positions in the church, lay and ordained, to reflect on existing structures and work within the Constitutional framework to create change and increase diversity of engagement and participation.

The minister with the care of the Church of South India congregation noted their gratitude for the establishment by the archbishop of a joint committee to oversee the sharing of the church where they worshipped. This committee included representatives from both the Church of Ireland and CSI congregations. This is an example of a structure established at diocesan and parish levels that esteems a range of voices and cultures. It is an example of a creative response to the emerging needs both for governance and esteeming of all participants.

In conclusion

Respondents recognised the importance of ensuring that all voices are heard in the range of aspects of parish and diocesan life. This means that there needs to be a reflection on both the formal and informal aspects of parish and diocesan life in order to ensure that the more diverse range of voices that now makes up the Anglican community of these United Dioceses is heard. Such reflection can also assist in the wider sharing and harnessing of the range of expertise and insights so that all can contribute equally to thinking, planning and decision-making.

There was also a recognition that specific discussion about inclusion of cultural and ethnic diversity needs to include the voices of those who are the focus of those conversations – the phrase used in other aspects of research and policy is 'nothing about us without us'. That is one of the potential weaknesses of a survey of incumbents which does not include the voices of the laity, including those from a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. It is worth noting that this survey is not intended to be an end in itself, but rather to provide the groundwork to enable a wider listening activity across the United Dioceses.

The importance of flexibility in worship was recognised in terms of content, focus and contribution. Particular importance was given by a number of contributors to the preaching and teaching of parish and diocesan leaders. There were a range of views expressed about this. Some felt strongly that preaching and teaching should focus on the love, care and respect for all that underpins Christian discipleship, and that this teaching should be supported by the lived example of the incumbents' own actions. Others felt that preaching and teaching should directly address the range of issues that are pertinent in our ethnically

and culturally diverse United Dioceses rather than shying away from topics such as racism that may make us uncomfortable. It was felt that there is a particular onus on senior church leaders to speak out prophetically in this regard, but there is also a role for prophetic speech on the part of parish leaders.

It was also felt that those in leadership roles need to be proactive both in making statements about welcome, inclusion and in creating structures and spaces that make that welcome and inclusion real in practice. There was a recognition by respondents that ensuring the involvement of newcomers in parish and diocesan committees and other formal roles is more easily said than done and that it will require creative, insightful solutions in order to bring about change.



Syrian Orthodox priest worshipping in church shared with the Syrian Orthodox community

Section 7 Recommendations

A key purpose of this study was to update the data and recommendations contained in *Welcoming Angels* in 2005. Six of the following recommendations emerge out of the data collected, analysed and reported in Sections 2 to 6. The final recommendation arises out of a related issue that emerged over the summer after the data had been gathered.

RECOMMENDATION 1 As noted in Section 6, the gathering of data and insights from parish incumbents is a first phase in this updating process. Therefore, I recommend that there is an extension of this study to seek the views on this subject of a representative sample of:

- (a) lay & parish readers, Sunday School teachers, youth leaders and others providing leadership within individual parishes to glean their experiences

- (a) lay adults of different age groups

- (c) young people and older children so long as appropriate parental/guardian permission is given in the case of those under the age of 18

The second phase of data can be collected using focus groups and inviting individual responses from those unable to participate in the focus groups. A further report can be written based on this second round of data and shared with all in the United Dioceses.

RECOMMENDATION 2 As outlined in Sections 2 to 6, there is considerable expertise among many incumbents based on the cultural and ethnic diversity in their current parishes as well as in previous placements in some cases. I recommend that a committee of incumbents with range of experience in welcoming and managing cultural and ethnic diversity be created to work for a set period of time to collate support & advisory material for sharing with all clergy plus others in a leadership position in parishes across the United Dioceses.

RECOMMENDATION 3 There is a wealth of scripture that addresses the call to welcome and include the stranger and those who are seen as being on the margins of our society. I recommend that a series of four bible studies (two using Old Testament readings, two using New Testament readings) be collated for use with parish groups.

RECOMMENDATION 4 There are several diocesan advisors who assist the archbishop and the clergy across a range of areas already in place. I recommend that a diocesan advisor with a cultural and ethnicity welcome and inclusion brief be appointed to ensure that this issue continues to be highlighted.

RECOMMENDATION 5 I recommend that there be conversations with those who hold media and communications briefs in the United Dioceses to encourage the diocesan website and Church Review to explore how to highlight the cultural and ethnic diversity that makes up our United Dioceses. This might include the possibility of featuring a range of individuals from a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds talking about some aspect of their own activities in the parish, drawing on their culture of origin etc as appropriate in order to foster listening and learning at diocesan level for example.

RECOMMENDATION 6 It was noted in Section 6 that there is very little evidence of cultural and ethnic diversity or representation on diocesan committees or in other structures beyond the United Dioceses. I recommend that the archbishop and senior colleagues (lay and ordained) investigate workable and constitutional ways of broadening representation and widening the range of voices feeding into decision-making at all levels in parish & diocese.

RECOMMENDATION 7 I recommend that the practice of sharing church buildings with other Christian congregations in communion with the Church of Ireland be continued and supported. Good practice in place in individual parishes should be collated and shared.

RECOMMENDATION 8 After the survey had been circulated to incumbents, a further issue came to light both internationally and in Ireland, namely the conundrum of buildings, statues and other memorials to people now deceased who were involved in the slave trade a few centuries ago. In light of the controversy internationally about statues, memorials etc. connected with historical slave-ownership, I recommend that consideration be given to:

- (b) conducting an audit across the United Dioceses to ascertain whether any memorials, statues etc. in church buildings are linked with historical persons who were slave-owners.
- (c) Should such articles be found, further consideration needs to be given to how best to deal with the moral complexity to which this gives rise. The issues that arose over the removal of the decorative statues of African princesses at the front of the Shelbourne Hotel in the summer indicate that the planning authorities do not take well to interference with the fabric or appearance of historical buildings. It also indicated that public opinion can clamour loudly even where there is an absence of accurate information. Should any memorials or statues be located in church buildings across the United Dioceses, consideration might be given to the option of having an explanatory notice regarding the article(s) in question.

APPENDIX 1: 2020 SURVEY OF INCUMBENTS RE CULTURAL & ETHNIC DIVERSITY

Please give as much, or as little, information below each of the questions as is appropriate.

Please underline the correct descriptor.

1. My parish is: City centre Suburban city Large town Rural

2. What if any, is the international and ethnic mix in your parish in 2020?

(Give an idea of the range of ethnicities in your parish and what proportion this represents of your typical attendance on an ordinary Sunday)

3. Has the ethnic profile of your parish changed since 2005?

(If you were not in the parish at that stage, you might check with a church warden or other long-standing member of the parish)

4. (a) What blessings has ethnic diversity brought to your parish?

If you identified blessings:

(d) What good practice have you or the parish put in place to celebrate and draw on the ethnic diversity of your parish?

5. (a) What challenges, if any, has managing the ethnic diversity of your parish given rise to?

If you identified challenges:

(b) What have you and the parish learned from managing the ethnic diversity of your parish?

6. What suggestions do you have for the sharing of good practice in the celebration and management of ethnic diversity in Church of Ireland parishes in our united dioceses?

7. What suggestions do you have for the combatting of racism in the life of the Church of Ireland in our United Dioceses?

***Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.
(Hebrews 13:1-3)***



Mothers Union parish lunch, members of the MU serving parishioners