



**IRISH
CHURCHES**
PEACE
PROJECT

ADDRESSING THE LEGACY OF THE TROUBLES

DIALOGUE RESOURCE

The Irish Churches Peace Project is a collaborative partnership between the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Irish Council of Churches.

Copies of this resource may be requested from the Irish Council of Churches and are available for download through their website, as detailed below.

Address: Irish Council of Churches
48 Elmwood Avenue
Belfast
County Antrim
BT9 6AZ

Phone: +44 (0)28 9066 3145

Website: www.irishchurches.org

Email: info@churchesinireland.com

June 2015

How can clergy address the legacy of the Troubles?

Reflection and Discussion Guide

This guide explores the key themes discussed at an Irish Churches Peace Project (ICPP) conference entitled "Go, and Do Thou Likewise". This event, delivered in February 2014 to local clergy in Coalisland, asked the question "How can clergy address the legacy of the Troubles?"

The conference was delivered by a local Parish Priest and a Church of Ireland Rector in partnership with ICPP and local councils in Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt.

The necessity for the conference and the need to lay down a challenge to the churches was expressed in the following joint statement issued by the two clergy representatives:

"As clergy living and ministering in the town, we are faced with the challenge of addressing the impact of these visible and invisible wounds ... We are living and working, like many clergy in Northern Ireland, in the valley of the shadow of death ... The biggest enemy is fear. It prevents us following the example of the Good Samaritan and responding to the command: 'Go, and do thou likewise.' Let's overcome fear by walking together."

Using this Guide

This guide is to be used in conjunction with the series of film clips recorded at the “Go, and Do Thou Likewise” conference. It contains a number of suggested questions for facilitators that can be used as a basis for stimulating group discussions, or for individual reflection.

The guide is divided into four themes:

1. The impact of the Troubles
2. The role of clergy and churches in Addressing The Legacy of The Troubles
3. How can churches support people living with trauma from the Troubles?
4. Personal stories of ministering through the Troubles

If this resource is being delivered to a larger number of participants it may be worth considering the involvement of additional facilitators to manage individual group discussions.

The success of individual discussions is closely linked to how well participants know each other. Therefore, if participants are meeting each other for the first time, it is recommended that there are some initial group exercises and icebreakers to help participants build up a level of familiarity and trust.

One practical approach to building up trust amongst participants is to ask each person to write down what they hope to get out of the exercise and to detail what fears or anxieties they have regarding the event. These comments can then be used as the basis for agreeing the boundaries around the subsequent conversations, thereby ensuring that participants are not pushed into discussing issues that they are not comfortable with.

The Keynote Speakers

Professor Brandon Hamber is Director of the International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE), an associate site of the United Nations University based at the University of Ulster. He is a Mellon Distinguished Visiting Scholar in the School of Human and Community Development at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He has undertaken consulting and research work, and participated in various peace and reconciliation initiatives in Northern Ireland, South Africa, Liberia, Mozambique, Bosnia, the Basque Country and Sierra Leone, among others. He has written extensively on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the psychological implications of political violence, and the process of transition and reconciliation in South Africa, Northern Ireland and abroad. He has published some 40 book chapters and scientific journal articles, and his latest book *Transforming Societies after Political Violence: Truth, Reconciliation, and Mental Health* was published by Springer in 2009.

Dr Gladys Ganiel lectures in Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation at the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin at Belfast. Her books include *Evangelicalism and Conflict in Northern Ireland*, Palgrave, 2008, *Evangelical Journeys: Choice and Change in a Northern Irish Religious Subculture*, (co-authored with Claire Mitchell), UCD Press, 2011, and *The Deconstructed Church: Understanding Emerging Christianity*, (co-authored with Gerardo Marti), Oxford University Press, 2014.

Professor Peter McBride is the Chief Executive of Niamh (the Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health), the largest voluntary sector organisation in Northern Ireland specialising in the provision of locally based community mental health services. Peter has degrees in Science and Divinity and at Masters Level in Social Work, alongside further qualifications and experience in counselling and the management of psychological trauma. He has been involved for over 15 years in the Victims and Survivors Sector in Northern Ireland, leading and consulting on a variety of different projects. Peter is Visiting Professor at the University of Ulster Bamford Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Theme 1

The impact of the Troubles

Watch clip 1 from the presentation by Professor Brandon Hamber

Key point from the clip:

Professor Hamber argues that, *“The impact of the conflict is huge in this very small place ... there is no single day that is not the anniversary of someone’s death.”*

Questions for discussion:

What have been the most noticeable impacts of the Troubles on individuals, on churches and on communities?

Watch clip 2 from the presentation by Professor Brandon Hamber

Key point from the clip:

Not only does Professor Hamber discuss the impact of conflict on language, but he also examines how language can fuel conflict. He describes how language can be used to dehumanise and inflame violence. It can be used to exclude individuals but, conversely, it can also be used to create social belonging.

Question for discussion:

How do participants feel whenever they hear language being used in this way?

How can the manner in which church and religion is discussed in our society contribute to feelings of social belonging or exclusion?

Key point from the clip:

Professor Hamber also discusses how language and its meaning change as we move from conflict to peace, and that this can lead to a sense of insecurity and betrayal.

Question for discussion:

What challenges does this present for clergy and others trying to push boundaries within the church and wider community?

Watch clip 3 from the presentation by Professor Brandon Hamber

Key point from the clip:

Professor Hamber discusses the psychological effects of conflict. Referring to Galtung, he examines the “paradox of security and insecurity”. This highlights the fact that in times of conflict and stress, people tend to retreat to those with whom they feel safest. However, in doing so they begin to distance themselves from others around them. The more people do this, the more they create a void between themselves and their neighbours. Therefore an action that creates the perception of an increased sense of security actually leads to further insecurity through the alienation of others.

Question for discussion:

Discuss in more detail the “paradox of security and insecurity”. Are there examples where participants can see this paradox being acted out in their respective communities and churches?

Watch clip 4 from the presentation by Professor Brandon Hamber

Key point from the clip:

In this clip, Professor Hamber talks about the “profound morality of violence” and the “sacred bonds with the dead”.

Questions for discussion:

How do participants feel about each of these statements?

What implications do each of these statements have for us as Christians?

Watch clip 5 from the presentation by Professor Brandon Hamber

Key point from the clip:

Professor Hamber states that, "The conflict has undermined our sense of belonging and our sense of inter-connectedness." He argues that this is one of the most profound impacts of conflict on a community.

Questions for discussion:

Do participants agree with Professor Hamber's statement on the impact of conflict on inter-connectedness? If so, how is this fragmentation manifested within people's everyday lives?

How can participants, as Christians, reconnect with people and communities from whom they have become segregated?

Theme 2

The role of clergy and churches in addressing the legacy of the Troubles

Watch clip 1 from the presentation by Dr. Gladys Ganiel

Key point from the clip:

Dr. Ganiel quotes Luke 10:3, "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves." She argues that clergy who take proactive steps in seeking to address the legacy of the Troubles exist as a minority. In trying to tackle the challenges associated with the conflict they face obstacles that are "wolf-like".

Questions for discussion:

What have churches and clergy done to actively address the legacy of the Troubles?

What examples are there of local churches pushing the boundaries?

Are there any examples of 'wolf-like' behaviour in our churches and communities? How can we address this?

Watch clip 2 from the presentation by Dr. Gladys Ganiel

Key point from the clip:

In this clip, Dr. Ganiel outlines the need for clergy and churches to prioritise victims and survivors.

Question for discussion:

How do participants feel about the suggestion that victims and survivors should be given priority when addressing the issues left by the Troubles?

Ask participants to consider the practical actions that both clergy and the wider church can take to support victims and survivors.

Key point from the clip:

Dr. Ganiel goes on to discuss the associated impacts of drug and alcohol abuse and suicide, asking what Christians can do to support people affected by these issues.

Questions for discussion:

Ask participants to think of examples in which support is currently being offered in their church and/or local community to those who are suffering from the effects of addiction or suicide/depression.

Do participants believe that they, their church or the wider community, could be doing more to address the issues of substance abuse and suicide? What are the limitations on what the church can offer?

Watch clip 3 from the presentation by Dr. Gladys Ganiel

Key point from the clip:

This clip focuses on the need for public acknowledgement of the legacy brought about by the Troubles. She argues that religion has contributed to violence and division. In response to this Christians should acknowledge and even repent for past transgressions.

Question for discussion:

Do participants agree that religion has contributed to violence and division? If so, what actions should clergy take to remedy the scars left by past events?

Watch clip 4 from the presentation by Dr. Gladys Ganiel

Key point from the clip:

Dr. Ganiel discusses the need for reconciliation amongst those caught up in the Troubles. She suggests that most Christians do not see reconciliation between different church traditions as being an essential part of living out their faith.

Question for discussion:

What are the views of participants towards the suggestion that most Christians do not believe that reconciliation between different church traditions is an essential part of living out their faith?

Following on from the question above, how should reconciliation feature in the life of a Christian?

Do participants believe that joint worship is necessary for reconciliation? If not, are there ways in which people who do not agree with joint worship can contribute to reconciliation?

Theme 3

How can churches support people living with trauma from the Troubles?

Watch clip 1 from the presentation by Professor Peter McBride

Question for discussion:

What strikes participants about Professor McBride's explanation of trauma and its impact at a personal and community level?

Watch clip 2 from the presentation by Professor Peter McBride

Key point from the clip:

Professor McBride suggests that clergy and churches can help break down the stigmas associated with trauma by talking publicly about trauma and suffering and giving it full recognition as a serious issue that needs to be addressed.

Questions for discussion:

What are the views of participants in respect of the role of clergy and churches in helping people overcome trauma?

What practical steps could clergy and churches take to tackle the issue of trauma?

What are the challenges facing those who seek to provide help to individuals suffering from trauma?

Key point from the clip:

Professor McBride also examines the role of churches in "providing safe spiritual space for process", i.e. to facilitate people's process and journey in dealing with trauma.

Question for discussion:

What do participants think it would mean in practice for churches to facilitate people's process and journey in dealing with trauma?

Key point from the clip:

Professor McBride makes reference to “having the patience to love”, and finding a way to love our enemies.

Question for discussion:

How do participants feel about this specific challenge which is at the heart of the Christian message?

Theme 4

Personal stories of ministering through the Troubles

In the clips relating to this particular theme two clergy tell their own stories of personal loss and how they have ministered to others.

Watch clip 1: Rev. David Clements (15 mins)

Questions for discussion:

What were the key points which struck participants? What comments particularly stood out for participants?

Did any of the comments from Rev. Clements surprise or challenge participants?

What are the key learning points on how churches have dealt with the legacy of the Troubles? What actions need to be taken going forward?

Watch clip 2: Fr. Stephen Kearney (35 mins)

Questions for discussion:

What were the key points which struck participants? What comments particularly stood out for participants?

Did any of the comments from Fr. Kearney surprise or challenge participants?

What are the key learning points on how churches have dealt with the legacy of the Troubles? What actions need to be taken going forward?

Reflection

After discussing each or all of the above themes, it is important to allow participants some time for reflection on what they have learned.

The following are suggested ideas for exercises that can be used for this purpose.

Reflection wall

Provide participants with post-it notes and pens. Ask individuals to write down things that they have found helpful, challenging, or which they will continue to reflect on.

Invite participants to stick their notes on a “reflection wall”. Encourage everyone to spend time looking at the notes that have been posted.

What next?

Encourage participants to think of practical actions which could be taken in response to issues identified and discussed during the series. Ask people to consider the things they could do personally, things that could be done by their church and things that could be done by the wider community.

The best approach is to allow people to create their own ideas in small groups. However it is recommended that the facilitator has a list of potential ideas on hand to prompt discussion, if required.

Prayers for Peace

Read the following prayer and ask the participants to consider their response to the following question: “What are your prayers for peace?”

Peace Prayer

(Compiled by the Cookstown District Clergy Forum)

Eternal God, this is your world,
And we are all your children.
We admit that, too often,
We are not at peace.
We are too busy, too stressed,
Too selfish, too indifferent,
Too greedy, too ambitious,
Too hurt, too bereaved,
Too divided, too rejected.
Grant us peace
In the river of your truth,
And in the ocean of your love.
Give us the grace to accept peace,
And the courage to speak for peace,
On behalf of all those
Who have suffered, are suffering,
And need peace:
In our homes, in our schools and
Workplaces, in our communities
And in our world,
Following the example
Of Jesus Christ,
The Prince of Peace. Amen

Additional Resources

Publications

Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children Who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles by Chris Thornton, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney, David McKittrick, David McVea (2001)

Reconciliation After Violent Conflict - A Handbook edited by David Bloomfield, Teresa Barnes and Luc Huyse (2003)

The Trouble with Suicide: Mental Health, Suicide and the Northern Ireland Conflict
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/suicide-mental-health.pdf

Websites

Healing Through Remembering
www.healingthroughremembering.org

The Legacy of the Troubles Project
www.legacyofthetroubles.qub.ac.uk/

Ulster University – Conflicts and Politics in Northern Ireland
www.cain.ulst.ac.uk



The Irish Churches Peace Project (ICPP)

Who are we?

The ICPP is a collaborative partnership between the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Irish Council of Churches.

What are we about?

The vision of the ICPP is to deliver a series of initiatives throughout Northern Ireland and the Border Region to support *"a peaceful and stable society, with a shared and better future for all"*. Its work is accordingly focused on promoting reconciliation and the emergence of a shared and peaceful future.

How are we funded?

Funding for the ICPP in the period July 2012 to June 2015 has been provided by the European Union's PEACE III Programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body.





IRISH
CHURCHES
PEACE
PROJECT



ICPP is supported by the European Union's PEACE III Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body