

Surveying Religion's Public Role: Perspectives on Reconciliation, Diversity and Ecumenism in Northern Ireland

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Introduction

The role of religion in public life in Northern Ireland is changing as society moves through its current, post-conflict phase. There is increasing ethnic diversity within Northern Ireland's Christian denominations, and there is increasing religious diversity in the form of 'non-Christian' religions. At the same time, the 2009 Report of the Consultative Group on the Past,¹ calls on the Christian churches to make a unique contribution to dealing with Northern Ireland's troubled past.

This article draws on new survey data from faith leaders and laypeople in Northern Ireland to begin to answer questions about how churches and other faith communities are addressing issues related to reconciliation, diversity and ecumenism. Among the main findings of the surveys are:

- Faith communities place more importance on individual forms of reconciliation (reconciliation between individuals and God and reconciliation between individuals) than on social forms of reconciliation (reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, or reconciliation between people of different ethnicities).
- Only 35% of laypeople believe that their denomination has provided them with adequate training for promoting reconciliation.
- 55% of faith leaders in Northern Ireland have taught or preached on immigration, diversity, or 'welcoming strangers' in the last 12 months, but 41% have never done something out of the ordinary to accommodate ethnic minorities.

- People tend to think of ecumenism in terms of Catholics and Protestants, rather than including Other Religions under the ecumenical umbrella.

This article reports on these and other findings. It builds on earlier research on these areas reported in *Shared Space*.² The survey data also feeds into a larger research project, which addresses questions about how churches and other faith communities are (or are not) contributing to harmonious social and political relationships on the island of Ireland.³ As such, this article uses data from the surveys to identify directions for future research.

Methods

We conducted two internet-based surveys from April to July 2009. Both surveys were island-wide in scope (i.e. the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland). In this article we focus primarily on the responses from Northern Ireland, but data from the island as a whole is presented when appropriate. One survey was designed for faith leaders, including Christian clergy, pastors, ministers, and leaders from other faiths. The other survey was designed for laypeople.

The survey questions explored what faith leaders and laypeople think about diversity and immigration, reconciliation and ecumenism. The surveys included open-ended questions, one-answer multiple choice questions, and questions where respondents could choose more than one option. The surveys also included demographic questions and open-ended questions where people could identify what they thought were the most important issues facing faith communities. These surveys were the first of their kind on the island to pose questions about these issues, and to attempt to canvas all faith leaders.

Our goal for the faith leaders' survey was to reach as many clergy, pastors, ministers, etc, as possible. We compiled a database of email and postal addresses of faith leaders from denominational directories, websites, and telephone directories.⁴ Out of 4,005 direct requests via email or post, we received a total of 710 usable responses (response rate 18%). The total number of responses from Northern Ireland was 267, with a response rate of 17%. Response rates varied by denomination, ranging from 33% for Methodists, to just 13% for both Catholics and Other Christians.⁵

The layperson's survey was designed to be exploratory, and we did not make any direct requests for responses via email or post. In Northern Ireland, the survey was publicised through reports in the *Irish News* and *Belfast News*,

a speaking slot on Radio Ulster's Sunday Sequence, and postings on websites like Slugger O'Toole and the Ikon list-serve. We did not anticipate that this survey would yield a representative sample. Rather we thought that those who would be likely to hear about it and respond would be interested in religion and probably sympathetic to ecumenism, given that the survey was being conducted by a school within Trinity College Dublin called the Irish School of *Ecumenics*. We received 910 usable responses from laypeople on the island as a whole, 165 of which were from Northern Ireland.

Of the 267 responses we received from faith leaders in Northern Ireland, 34% were from Church of Ireland clergy, followed by Presbyterians (28%), Catholics (16%), Methodists (13%), Other Christians (7%) and Other Religions (2%). Of the 165 responses we received from laypeople in Northern Ireland, 26% were Catholic, followed by 25% Presbyterian, 21% Other Christian, 11% Church of Ireland, 8% Atheist/No Religion, 7% Methodist, and 3% Other Religions.

Table One compares these percentages to Northern Ireland's religious demography, as indicated by the 2001 Census Data. The purpose of this is to provide context. This also should alert readers to the fact that when data from our surveys is presented for Northern Ireland faith leaders as a whole, it is largely based on responses from *Protestant Christian* clergy (82% of all responses from faith leaders in Northern Ireland were from Protestant groups).⁶

Table 1: Comparison of Census Data⁷ and Survey Responses

	Percentage of Northern Ireland Population by Religion (2001 Census)	Percentage of those in NI who responded to faith leaders survey	Percentage of those in Northern Ireland who responded to lay survey
Catholic	40.3%	16.4%	25.9%
Presbyterian	20.7%	27.9%	24.5%
Other Christian	6.1%	6.7%	21.0%
Church of Ireland	15.3%	34.2%	10.5%
Atheist/Not Stated	13.9%	N/A	8.4%
Methodist	3.5%	13.0%	7.0%
Other Religions	0.3%	1.9%	2.8%

Given the response rates, actual numbers of respondents, and other considerations outlined here, it is best to say that our survey results are indicative, rather than representative, of the thoughts, beliefs, and practices of faith leaders and laypeople in Northern Ireland.

Results: Reconciliation

With the Report of the Consultative Group on the Past there has been a call for the churches to play a public role in dealing with the legacy of conflict. The Report's observations on the role of religion included:

The Christian churches carry a particular historical responsibility, for they not only gave the language which both shaped and fuelled division, but often gave sanction to those who exploited theological disputes and differences for political and territorial gain. ...

Any move by the churches to acknowledge and respect the integrity of each other's tradition does make a significant impact on the context in which wider society can address the legacy of sectarianism. There is a strong Christian tradition in Northern Ireland. *Therefore Christian churches have a particular responsibility to take a leading role within communities for addressing the destructive presence of ongoing sectarianism.* (my emphasis)⁸

The Report also recommended that a proposed Legacy Commission 'engages specially with the Christian churches in Northern Ireland to encourage them to review and rethink their contribution to a non-sectarian future in the light of their past, particularly in the area of education.'⁹

Since the Report was published in January 2009 there has been little indication from the British government if or when any of the recommendations will be implemented. But even in the absence of government action, the report's call to the churches has raised questions about what churches are doing to address issues related to the Troubles. Our surveys dealt with this through questions about reconciliation.

Given that reconciliation is a contested term, we first asked people to define what reconciliation meant to them. We received a variety of responses, including definitions that focused on reconciliation between individuals and God, promoting mutual understanding, unity amid diversity, forgiveness, repentance, apology, restitution, healing and restoring relationships. Indicative

of such responses is this Methodist minister from Belfast, who defined reconciliation as:

‘Living or reconnecting with people who worship, vote or see things differently to oneself. It means taking the initiative as God in Christ has done with us. It requires insight, hard work and patience.’

Other definitions could be described as negative, such as this Presbyterian man from Co. Londonderry/Derry: ‘It means giving up your principles and beliefs to appease others,’ or this Free Presbyterian man from Armagh: ‘A large-scale repentance for one’s sins, though popularly and improperly equated with a need to compromise religious principles often out of reckless pandering to the whims of others.’

To discern how prominent the theme of reconciliation is in Northern Ireland’s faith communities, we asked a series of questions about how often leaders preached and taught on reconciliation, including which groups they emphasised. We found that over the last 12 months, leaders were most likely to say they had preached or taught on reconciliation between individuals and God (87%), and reconciliation between individuals (86%). The results from the lay survey confirmed this. 89% reported that their faith leader had preached or taught on reconciliation between individuals and God in the last 12 months, and 78% reported that they had heard preaching or teaching on reconciliation between individuals in the last 12 months.

After this, the next most popular categories for preaching and teaching about reconciliation, as reported by both leaders and laypeople, were: Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, people of different ethnicities/nationalities, Catholics and Protestants on the whole island, people of different religions, and different religions. Table Two summarises the results.¹⁰

Table 2: Preaching & Teaching on Reconciliation over the last 12 months

	Individuals & God	Individuals	Catholics & Protestants in NI	Different ethnicities/nationalities	Catholics & Protestants whole island	People of different religions	Different religions
Leaders	86.6% n=224	85.6% n=222	66.1% n=215	53.1% n=179	51.0% n=192	41.4% n=210	29.1% n=213
Lay	89.0% n=118	77.6% n=107	48.7% n=115	36.6% n=112	33.3% n=108	25.9% n=108	19.8% n=111

These results seem to indicate that faith communities place more importance on individual forms of reconciliation (reconciliation between individuals and God and reconciliation between individuals) than on social forms of reconciliation (reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, or reconciliation between people of different ethnicities).

Another question asked leaders how much time, as a percentage per year, they thought appropriate to spend teaching and preaching on reconciliation. The choices were less than 10%, 11-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, More than 75%, and Unsure. The most popular category chosen was 11-25%, with 31% of leaders choosing it. This also was the most popular category for laypeople, with 25% selecting it. A close second for laypeople was 'unsure', with 22% selecting it. Leaders also were asked how much time they *actually* spent teaching and preaching on reconciliation, and again, 31% chose this category. These results differed from the Republic, where leaders reported that they did not actually spend as much time on reconciliation as they thought appropriate.

People were able to write in examples of resources on reconciliation which they had accessed. Responses included the Church of Ireland's Hard Gospel Project, the Irish School of Ecumenics, Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland/Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland, the Presbyterian Church's Peacemaking Programme, the Catholic Church's Justice and Peace resources, and the writings of Pope John Paul II, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Miroslav Wolf, John O'Donohue, and others. 51% of leaders and 39% of laypeople reported that they had accessed resources on reconciliation in general. 56% of leaders and 41% of laypeople said that they had accessed resources on reconciliation in Northern Ireland. While 56% of leaders reported that their denomination or wider religious community had provided them with adequate training for promoting reconciliation, only 35% of laypeople said that this was the case.

In sum, leaders and laypeople alike think that a significant chunk of time should be spent preaching and teaching on reconciliation – 11-25% could be considered quite a large percentage of time to spend on reconciliation given people's other religious and spiritual concerns. But preaching and teaching about individualistic forms of reconciliation outweighs preaching and teaching about social forms of reconciliation. It cannot be assumed that social forms of reconciliation are an urgent priority for people of faith, even though reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland ranks third on the list of reconciliation between various groups. Further, laypeople were much less likely than faith leaders to have accessed resources on

reconciliation, or to think that their denomination had provided them with adequate training on promoting reconciliation. Only a slim majority of faith leaders thought they had been adequately trained. When it comes to reconciliation, it seems that quite significant work remains to be done to engage both laypeople and leaders about its importance, especially about how reconciliation might be worked out at a social level between Catholics and Protestants, between people of different ethnicities and nationalities, and between people of different faiths.

Results: Immigration and Diversity

Immigration into Northern Ireland has increased since the signing of the 1998 Agreement. There is a sense that there is now greater awareness of other 'groups' in the midst of Northern Ireland's traditional Catholic and Protestant blocs. For example, Fran Porter has explored the 'values, attitudes and practices of the majority churches sector' towards minority ethnic populations, minority religious populations, and 'populations with minority status because of their sexual identity.'¹¹ Porter found that half of church leaders thought that Northern Ireland's history of sectarianism 'has led to a lack of constraint in voicing of negative views about minority populations'¹² and that 40% of church leaders believe that 'The Troubles have meant we have little awareness of the presence and needs of people from minority populations.'¹³ Our research builds on Porter's findings.¹⁴

First, 93% of the leaders who responded to our survey reported that less than 10% of the people in their congregation or faith community had immigrated in the last ten years. In the lay survey, 62% of the respondents said there were some immigrants or ethnic minorities in their faith communities. This indicates that while immigrants and ethnic minorities are certainly part of Northern Irish society, the vast majority of faith communities remain largely composed of people born in Northern Ireland. On the other hand, people responding to our surveys likely have had some opportunities to engage with issues about diversity within their faith communities.¹⁵

Research on multiethnic congregations in various contexts has found that faith communities can promote harmonious relationships between different groups through preaching and teaching about diversity, including minorities in leadership positions, and incorporating minority languages and styles of worship into their services.¹⁶ Accordingly, questions in this section of the survey focused on finding out what faith communities are doing to

accommodate ethnic minorities. Faith leaders reported that over the last 12 months, 27% of them had done something out of the ordinary to accommodate ethnic minorities. 14% had never done so, and 37% had never done so but would consider doing so. We also asked faith leaders if they had preached or taught on immigration, diversity, or 'welcoming strangers' over periods of time. 55% had done so within the last 12 months, 5% had never done so, and 16% had never done so but would consider it. Among laypeople, 56% reported that they had heard preaching or teaching on these topics in their congregation within the last 12 months, with 26% saying that they had never heard preaching or teaching on them. We are not claiming that the figures from faith leaders and laypeople *should* match, especially since we collected the survey data in such different ways. But with the percentages so close, it seems to indicate that the results provide insight on current practice. We also asked about the use of minority languages in religious services over time. Here, 11% of clergy reported using minority languages, and 19% of laypeople indicated that minority languages had been used in services they attended.

This indicates that there is at least *some* effort being made to welcome the perspectives of immigrants and ethnic minorities. When asked to provide examples, leaders named a rich range of stories that they had preached or taught on, including St Patrick as an immigrant to Ireland, Jesus 'the stranger' on the road to Emmaus, the Good Samaritan (in the Church of Ireland's Lenten series), the Holy Family as refugees in Egypt, Philip and the Ethiopian, Moses in Egypt, and the book of Ruth (Ruth as a foreigner), among others. Leaders also revealed an array of activities with which they assisted immigrants and ethnic minorities, including language translation, financial support, transportation, and helping children settle into schools. As a Baptist man from Belfast concluded:

'Immigrants give us a global perspective on our faith and remind the church of our underlying unity in Christ. ... Immigrant brothers and sisters from other nations give us a healthy international perspective. A church composed of such people is a foretaste of heaven which will consist of people of every race, tribe and language.'

But other responses revealed a different picture, confirming Porter's findings about wariness of and a lack of meaningful engagement with minorities. For example, a Church of Ireland woman from Belfast noted that immigrants are 'perceived to be getting housing "owed" to local very disadvantaged families.' A Presbyterian/Catholic woman from Belfast said:

'We don't seem to acknowledge that they [immigrants and ethnic minorities] are there in any meaningful way – a disappointment. But then, in a Catholic mass there is not a lot of audience participation anyway.'

And a Church of Ireland minister from Co. Antrim reported a negative experience:

'After using our premises it took two dozen people several hours to clean up and the church committee will not have them back.'

Immigrants and ethnic minorities are a part of religious life in Northern Ireland. Our surveys identify different ways in which they are being welcomed and incorporated into faith communities. But they also revealed that this is an uneven process, with much indifference or hostility towards the perspectives of immigrants and ethnic minorities. As Porter has recognised, 'Past and present realities of living in a context of sectarian conflict may well absorb the energies of those in the churches sector.'¹⁷ But she also suggests that the churches' experience of dealing with conflict between Catholics and Protestants could be adapted to promoting more harmonious relationships between different ethnic groups. It seems there remains work to be done on dealing with immigration and diversity within Northern Ireland's faith communities.

Results: Ecumenism

The ecumenical movement has been controversial in Northern Ireland. For example, ecumenism was one of the major targets of the Rev. Ian Paisley during his career. Indeed, one of the reasons why he formed the Free Presbyterian Church was that he thought the Presbyterian Church was becoming too ecumenical and watering down the gospel.¹⁸ Given the Troubles' religious overtones, there also has been an expectation that the ecumenical movement could or should somehow contribute to better relationships between Catholics and Protestants.¹⁹ Accordingly, our surveys sought to understand how faith leaders and laypeople think about ecumenism, including whether they know what it is, have a positive or negative conception of it, and if they include non-Christian faiths under the ecumenical umbrella.

Mindful that ecumenism is a contested term, we first asked people to define it in their own words. Among the laypeople, some admitted having no idea what ecumenism meant. Others said the only time they had heard the word was during episodes of the sitcom *Father Ted*, which included the

catchphrase ‘that would be an ecumenical matter!’ Others expressed negative views, such as a Church of Ireland man in Co. Fermanagh who said: ‘Diluting the Protestant faith. Going back on what the Reformation was all about’; an Independent Evangelical man from Co. Down who said it is: ‘Religious political correctness;’ and a Free Presbyterian minister from Co. Tyrone who defined it as: ‘an effort to bring different faiths together and thus a departure from the truth of the Gospel.’

On the other hand, 58% of laypeople in Northern Ireland reported that they had a positive conception of ecumenism. This contrasts to the Republic, where 70% of laypeople reported a positive conception. Within Northern Ireland, 14% of laypeople reported a negative conception of ecumenism, 16% were indifferent, and 13% were unsure. Some people expressed positive conceptions of ecumenism when they defined the term. For example, a Presbyterian woman from Belfast said: ‘[Ecumenism is] being exposed to other traditions. Making friends with people from other faiths’; a Church of Ireland man from Co. Down said: ‘A joyous and positive thing! I believe that there is more to unite all Christians of all persuasions than there is to divide’; and a Catholic priest from Co. Armagh who said: ‘Getting to know people of other Christian faiths; and their beliefs. Discovering truths about the beliefs of people from other World religions.’

After asking people to define ecumenism, we asked them to indicate what they thought ecumenism included by providing them with a list of 13 options. They could tick as many options as they liked. Table Three records the frequencies of all the options as they were chosen, comparing the results of leaders and laypeople in Northern Ireland with those in the Republic. Options that included ‘Other Religions’ are recorded in bold type in the table, so it is easier to discern where people see non-Christian religions fitting in to the ecumenical picture.

The options that were chosen most frequently by laypeople and leaders in Northern Ireland and the Republic were inter-church dialogue between Catholics and Protestants, followed by Good Civic Relations between Catholics and Protestants, and Shared Social Action between Catholics and Protestants. Laypeople in both Northern Ireland and the Republic rated Good Civic Relations with Other Religions more highly than the leaders. Faith leaders in Northern Ireland were the least likely to prioritise Good Civic Relations with Other Religions, while laypeople in the Republic were the mostly likely to prioritise a variety of relationship with Other Religions, including Interfaith Dialogue with Other Religions and Shared Social Action with Other Religions. These results seem to indicate a predominantly Christian interpretation of ecumenism. Further, for our respondents

ecumenism is more likely to include what might be considered polite activities such as dialogue and good civic relations, rather than activities that could require intense personal interaction, such as shared social action, prayer or worship.

Table 3: Ecumenism Includes? Frequencies by Geographical Location

Lay, Northern Ireland	Leaders, N. Ireland	Lay, Republic	Leaders, Republic
Inter-church dialogue, Catholic / Protestant (103)	Inter-church dialogue, Catholic/ Protestant (189)	Inter-church dialogue, Catholic/ Protestant (341)	Inter-church dialogue, Catholic / Protestant (275)
Good Civic Relations, Catholic / Protestant (95)	Good Civic Relations, Catholic / Protestant (184)	Shared Social Action, Catholic / Protestant (332)	Good Civic Relations, Catholic / Protestant (268)
Shared Social Action, Catholic / Protestant (94)	Shared Social Action, Catholic / Protestant (179)	Good Civic Relations, Catholic / Protestant (322)	Inter-church Prayer, Catholic / Protestant (267)
Good Civic Relations, Other Religions (93)	Inter-church Prayer, Catholic / Protestant (170)	Good Civic Relations, Other Religions (321)	Shared Social Action, Catholic / Protestant (264)
Inter-church Prayer, Catholic / Protestant (90)	Inter-church Worship, Catholic / Protestant (154)	Interfaith Dialogue, Other Religions (312)	Good Civic Relations, Other Religions (321)
Inter-church Worship, Catholic / Protestant (88)	Good Civic Relations, Other Religions (145)	Shared Social Action, Other Religions (307)	Shared Social Action, Other Religions (230)
Interfaith Dialogue, Other Religions (84)	Interfaith Dialogue, Other Religions (132)	Inter-church Prayer, Catholic / Protestant (294)	Inter-church Worship, Catholic / Protestant (228)
Shared Social Action, Other Religions (84)	Shared Social Action, Other Religions (121)	Inter-church Worship, Catholic / Protestant (252)	Interfaith Dialogue, Other Religions (219)
Shared Missionary, Catholic / Protestant (66)	Shared Missionary, Catholic / Protestant (110)	Shared Missionary, Catholic / Protestant (236)	Shared Missionary, Catholic / Protestant (184)
Inter-church communion, Catholic / Protestant (57)	Inter-church communion, Catholic / Protestant (73)	Interfaith Prayer, Other Religions (209)	Interfaith Prayer, Other Religions (163)
Interfaith Prayer, Other Religions (54)	Interfaith Prayer, Other Religions (66)	Inter-church communion, Catholic / Protestant	Interfaith Worship, Other Religions (116)
Interfaith Worship, Other Religions (47)	Interfaith Worship, Other Religions (53)	Interfaith Worship, Other Religions (160)	Shared Missionary, Other Religions (103)
Shared Missionary, Other Religions (39)	Shared Missionary, Other Religions (45)	Shared Missionary, Other Religions (150)	Inter-church communion, Catholic / Protestant (101)

Another question asked people how much time, as a percentage per year, they thought it was appropriate to devote to ecumenical activities. The category that laypeople (30%) and leaders (45%) in Northern Ireland chose most often was less than 10%. This contrasts to the Republic, where the most popular category among laypeople (28%) was 11-25%. For clergy in the Republic, less than 10% was the most popular category, with 38% choosing it. Laypeople and leaders, then, were more likely to want to spend more time on reconciliation (see above), than on ecumenical activities.

Finally, we gave people an opportunity to write in what they thought should be the priorities for people involved in the ecumenical movement in Northern Ireland. Some objected to the movement itself, like a Methodist woman from Belfast who simply said: 'Shouldn't be doing it!'; or the Presbyterian minister from Co. Armagh who said: 'your interpretation of ecumenism is not one I share. ... This survey is not interested in the Truth of God's Word. ... READ YOUR BIBLE!!!' In contrast, there were a range of suggestions such as:

'Think about and create a word other than ecumenical to describe collaborative working among faith communities. I think the word ecumenical creates fear within some people who, if this was described differently, may well be enabled to come on board.' – Quaker, Co. Armagh

'From personal experience the issues (and forms of words) of mixed marriages, women's issues, and integrated education are some of the elephants in the room.' – Male, Hindu/Non Subscribing Presbyterian, Belfast

'I feel there should be more meeting face to face of those from North and South. ... Both Protestants and Catholics in the North can have a siege mentality and I think contact with others from the South would help dispel it. There is too much history here at times. In understanding each other, I hope we can understand strangers who come to live among us.' – Female, Presbyterian, Co. Down

In sum, our surveys reveal that both leaders and laypeople tend to think of ecumenism in terms of Catholics and Protestants. There is some willingness to include Other Religions within ecumenism, but this sentiment does not seem well-developed, especially among faith leaders in Northern Ireland. People do not prioritise ecumenism as much as reconciliation, although responses to

open-ended questions reveal that they are passionate about pursuing a range of issues under the auspices of ecumenism, including promoting reconciliation in Northern Ireland, mixed marriages, integrated education, and cross border relationships. But despite most laypeople reporting a positive conception of ecumenism, there is also hostility and confusion about the term and the movement. It remains unclear if or how leaders and laypeople might be better engaged in the ecumenical movement to address a range of issues, including relationships between Catholics, Protestants, *and* Other Religions.

Directions for Future Research

These surveys provide a contemporary snapshot of the thoughts and practices of people of faith in Northern Ireland about reconciliation, immigration and diversity, and ecumenism. The results indicate that some faith communities are deeply engaged and passionate about these issues. But evidence of faith communities' *lack* of engagement raises questions about their ability to participate in public deliberation in these areas. For example, faith communities do not prioritise *social* forms of reconciliation, and most laypeople do not feel adequately prepared to promote reconciliation. How then can churches answer the call to participate in addressing the legacy of the Troubles? Many faith communities have not attempted to include the perspectives of immigrants and ethnic minorities, or directly address the unique problems they face. Some people seem confused about ecumenism, its priorities, whether it does or should include Other Religions, and what direction(s) the movement should take. How then can faith communities participate with integrity in an increasingly diverse public sphere? What perspectives can they be expected to bring from their experiences of ethnic and religious diversity?

Our research aims to answer these questions, building on the results of these surveys with in-depth social research on at least eight faith communities on the island of Ireland. These case studies will begin early in 2010, focusing on examples of good practice. We are especially interested in how good practice can be evaluated and disseminated. The social research will be accompanied by theological analysis of opportunities and challenges related to reconciliation, diversity and ecumenism. Such theological resources can enrich the debate within Northern Ireland's faith communities, as well as provide ethical and moral perspectives with relevance in the wider public sphere.

Notes

- 1 Report of the Consultative Group on the Past, 2009. Available at: <http://www.cgpni.org/fs/doc/Consultative%20Group%20on%20the%20Past%20Full%20Report.pdf>, retrieved 2 December 2009.
- 2 Porter, 2009; Radford and Templer, 2009; Delargy, 2008; Odhiambo, 2008; Hamilton and Camplisson, 2007.
- 3 This project, 'Visioning 21st Century Ecumenism: Diversity, Dialogue and Reconciliation,' is funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences. More information about the project, including comprehensive reports on the surveys (Ganiel 2009a, 2009b) and papers from a workshop about the surveys, can be accessed on <http://www.ecumenics.ie/research/visioning-21st-century-ecumenism/>.
- 4 Research Assistant Therese Cullen conducted this part of the work.
- 5 Response rates by denomination (on the island as a whole): Methodist 33%, Other Religions 24%, Church of Ireland 21%, Catholics 13%, Other Christians 13%.
- 6 Our comprehensive reports on the surveys break the data down by geographical location and denomination/faith community. Ganiel, 2009a, 2009b.
- 7 Source: CAIN, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/ni/popul.htm#3>, retrieved 31 August 2009.
- 8 Report of the Consultative Group on the Past, 2009: 78.
- 9 Report of the Consultative Group on the Past, 2009: 78.
- 10 In tables, the letter 'n' indicates the actual number of people who answered the question.
- 11 Porter, 2009: 5-6, Porter 2008.
- 12 Porter, 2009: 10.
- 13 Porter, 2009: 11.
- 14 Like Porter, we asked questions about immigration and ethnic diversity, as well as religious diversity. Unlike Porter, we surveyed people from 'non-Christian' faiths. Unlike Porter, we did not ask specific questions about sexual identity. That said, a Unitarian minister from Belfast commented: 'Regret so far you make no reference to the inclusion of gay people, it is a serious gap in your survey.' Others mentioned engaging with LGBT people as one of the major challenges facing the churches.
- 15 These figures do not necessarily provide an accurate representation of the ethno-religious demography of Northern Ireland.
- 16 Ganiel, 2008, 2007; Emerson and Woo, 2006; Christerson, Edwards and Emerson, 2005; DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey and Kim, 2003.
- 17 Porter, 2009: 18.
- 18 Bruce 2007: 91.
- 19 Power, 2007.

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