21st Century Faith
Results of the Survey of Clergy, Pastors, Ministers and Faith Leaders

By Dr Gladys Ganiel, Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin
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Stained Glass Window, ISE Belfast. Photo by Brian O’Neill.

You can keep up-to-date on our research project via our website, [www.ecumenics.ie](http://www.ecumenics.ie).

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.................................................................................................................. 2  
Table of Contents..................................................................................................................... 3  
List of Tables ............................................................................................................................. 4  
Introduction ................................................................................................................................ 5  
Summary of Key Findings........................................................................................................ 6  
  Immigration & Diversity........................................................................................................... 6  
  Reconciliation........................................................................................................................... 6  
  Ecumenism............................................................................................................................... 7  
  Other Issues ............................................................................................................................. 8  
About the Survey ....................................................................................................................... 9  
Opportunities and Challenges for Churches and Faith Communities.................................... 12  
Immigration and Diversity...................................................................................................... 17  
Summary of Findings on Immigration & Diversity and Questions Raised.......................... 23  
Reconciliation............................................................................................................................ 24  
Summary of Findings on Reconciliation and Questions Raised........................................... 32  
Ecumenism............................................................................................................................... 33  
Summary of Findings on Ecumenism and Questions Raised.................................................. 43  
Next Steps ................................................................................................................................ 44
List of Tables

Table 1: Survey Response Rates ........................................................................................................................................... 9
Table 2: Comparison of Census Data and Responses, Republic of Ireland ........................................................................... 10
Table 3: Comparison of Census Data and Responses, Northern Ireland .................................................................................. 10
Table 4: Congregation/Faith Community: % Immigrated in the Last Ten Years ........................................................................... 17
Table 5: Action to Accommodate Ethnic Minorities, By Denomination or Wider Faith Community ........................................... 18
Table 6: Frequency of Positions Held By Ethnic Minorities ....................................................................................................... 19
Table 7: Percentage preached or taught on immigration, diversity or welcoming strangers ......................................................... 20
Table 8: Percentage used native languages of ethnic minorities .................................................................................................. 21
Table 9: Percentage preached or taught on reconciliation within the last 12 months ................................................................. 26
Table 10: Percentage Who Thought it is Very Important to Preach & Teach on Reconciliation Between ....................................... 27
Table 11: Percentage accessed Resources on Reconciliation ...................................................................................................... 29
Table 12: Denomination or Religious Community has provided adequate training for promoting reconciliation ....................... 30
Table 13: Time Appropriate to Preach & Teach on Reconciliation ............................................................................................. 31
Table 14: Time Actually Preach & Teach on Reconciliation ....................................................................................................... 32
Table 15: Ecumenism includes? Frequencies of Options .............................................................................................................. 36
Table 17: Self Evaluation of Level of Ecumenical Activities ....................................................................................................... 39
Table 16: Involvement in Ecumenical Activities ........................................................................................................................... 38
Table 18: Time Appropriate to Devote to Ecumenical Activities? ............................................................................................... 40
Table 19: Time Actually Devoted to Ecumenical Activities ........................................................................................................ 40
Table 20: Denominational & Congregational Perceptions of Ecumenism .................................................................................... 41
Introduction

This report presents the findings of a survey entitled, ‘21st Century Faith,’ which was distributed to more than 4,000 clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The survey is part of a wider research project undertaken by the Irish School of Ecumenics (ISE), Trinity College Dublin, entitled: ‘Visioning 21st Century Ecumenism: Diversity, Dialogue and Reconciliation.’ This project is funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS).

The research project was inspired by ISE’s desire to mark the centenary of the 1910 Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, which is regarded as the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement. We saw the upcoming 100th birthday of ecumenism as an opportunity to ‘audit’ or ‘take stock’ of religious diversity on the island of Ireland, including (but not limited to) perceptions of ecumenism and levels of ecumenical activity. We wanted to think about how ecumenism has moved on from its origins – both internationally and on the island of Ireland – and to identify its current priorities. Given the changing contexts in both the Republic and Northern Ireland, we were in search of insights around what we consider core questions, put simply as: How are churches and faith communities responding to increased immigration and ethnic and religious diversity? Ten years after the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, do churches and faith communities see ‘reconciliation’ as a priority and if so, what are they doing about it? And, finally, does ecumenism matter today?

The information presented in this report sheds some light on what clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland think about those core questions, and raises new ones besides. (We also conducted a companion survey of laypeople, the results of which are presented in a separate report.) We see this information as a starting point for discussion – with people of all faiths and none – about these questions. We are grateful to the leaders who took the time to take our survey for getting that discussion started.

We posted our survey online and we prioritized asking clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders to complete it online. It went live on 15 April 2009 and was closed on 31 July 2009. It was supported with 4,005 direct email or postal requests, of which we received 710 usable responses (overall response rate 18%). We sent 2698 requests via email and received 555 usable responses (email response rate 21%) and 1307 requests via post and received 155 usable responses (postal response rate 12%). The response rates will be discussed in more detail below. Here we say simply that the response rates were highest among Methodists (33%), Other Religions (24%) and Church of Ireland clergy (22%).

We open this report with a short summary of the key findings. This is followed by sections with more detailed analysis of the data.
Summary of Key Findings

Immigration & Diversity

- 79% of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole (70% in the Republic and 93% in Northern Ireland) reported that less than 10% of their religious community had immigrated within the last ten years. Those in the category of ‘Other Christians’ were most likely to have immigrants within their ranks – 8% of Other Christians reported more than 90% of their faith community had immigrated in the last ten years.

- 29% of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole (32% in the Republic and 27% in Northern Ireland) have done something to accommodate ethnic minorities in the last 12 months.

- 44% of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole (38% in the Republic and 41% in Northern Ireland) have never done something to accommodate ethnic minorities.

- 54% of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole (53% in the Republic and 55% in Northern Ireland) have preached or taught on immigration, diversity, or ‘welcoming strangers’ in the last 12 months.

- 15% clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole (19% in the Republic and 11% in Northern Ireland) reported using the native languages of ethnic minorities in the last 12 months.

Reconciliation

- Clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole (as well as in the Republic and Northern Ireland) think it is most important to preach and teach about reconciliation between individuals and God; and reconciliation between individuals.

- Clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole and in the Republic are more likely to preach and teach about reconciliation between people of different ethnicities or nationalities than on reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants.

- Clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole (as well as the Republic and Northern Ireland) were least likely to preach and teach about reconciliation between people of different religions and reconciliation between different religions. But 78% of those from Other Religions had preached or taught on those themes in the last 12 months.

- 50% of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole had accessed resources on reconciliation in general. The most likely to have done so were Church of Ireland (59%) and Methodist (58%) ministers.

- 52% of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole said their denomination or wider religious community had provided them with adequate training or resources for promoting reconciliation.

- Leaders from Other Religions were most likely to say they had been provided with adequate training or resources for promoting reconciliation (89%), followed by Methodists (63%)

- Other Christian ministers and Church of Ireland clergy were least likely to say they had been provided with adequate training or resources for promoting reconciliation (31%).
Most clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole (as well as in the Republic and Northern Ireland) think it is appropriate to spend 11-25% of their time per year preaching and teaching on reconciliation. But they also report that they do not spend as much time preaching and teaching on reconciliation as they would like.

**Ecumenism**

- When asked about what ecumenism includes, the most popular option on the island as a whole was Interchurch Dialogue between Catholics and Protestants, followed by Good Civic Relations between Catholics and Protestants.

- When asked about ecumenism, the Christian respondents prioritized options including ‘Catholics and Protestants’ rather than options including ‘Other Religions.’ The most popular choice for Christians including Other Religions was ‘Good Civic Relations with Other Religions.’ This was ranked fifth among the 13 options respondents could select from on the island as a whole.

- When asked about ecumenism, interchurch communion/shared Eucharist between Catholics and Protestants was the least popular choice among clergy in the Republic and Roman Catholics. It was most popular among Methodists, where it was ranked seventh of 13.

- The most prevalent form of ecumenical involvement is ‘local ecumenical activities’, with 59% on the island as a whole (56% in the Republic and 63% in Northern Ireland) taking part. Methodists (80%) are the most likely to engage in local ecumenical activities, while the least likely are Other Christians (41%).

- The next most prevalent form of ecumenical involvement is ‘local ecumenical bodies’, with 42% on the island as a whole (36% in the Republic and 50% in Northern Ireland) involved. This is followed by international/national ecumenical activities (22% on the island as a whole, 23% in the Republic, and 21% in Northern Ireland) and international/national ecumenical bodies (19% on the island as a whole, 19% in the Republic and 20% in Northern Ireland). Methodists are the most likely to participate in all these categories, while Roman Catholics are the least likely.

- 40% of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole think it is appropriate to spend less than 10% of their time per year on ecumenical activities. But 68% of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole actually spend this amount of their time per year on ecumenical activities. As with reconciliation, some clergy are not spending as much time on ecumenical activities as they think appropriate.

- On the island as a whole, 67% reported that their denomination or wider faith community’s perception of ecumenism was positive (70% in the Republic and 61% in Northern Ireland). Methodists (90%) and Other Religions (89%) reported the most positive conceptions of ecumenism.

- Only 18% of Presbyterians thought their denomination’s perception of ecumenism was positive, while 42% thought it was negative and 29% were unsure.

- Denominations as a whole were perceived as more positive about ecumenism than leaders’ own congregations – except for in the Presbyterian Church.
• Despite these quite positive perceptions of ecumenism, responses to open-ended questions about ecumenism revealed a great deal of suspicion and cynicism about the term, both from ‘opponents’ and ‘supporters’ of ecumenism. Some suggested abandoning the term altogether.

**Other Issues**

• In Northern Ireland, 68% of clergy identified themselves as evangelical (91% of Methodists and Presbyterians, 58% of Other Christians and of Church of Ireland, and 39% of Roman Catholics). In the Republic, 45% identified themselves as evangelical (86% of Presbyterians, 75% of Methodists and of Other Christians, 42% of Church of Ireland, and 35% of Roman Catholics). This was a much higher rate of self-identification as evangelical, than we expected.

• Using open-ended questions, we asked clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders to identify other issues of importance for their faith communities. This generated a wide range of responses, from confronting secularism, dealing with the effects of the economic downturn, and thinking about new ‘models’ of ‘doing church,’ amongst others.

• Throughout this report we try, as much as possible, to let the respondents speak for themselves. We include a range of quotations, drawn largely from the open-ended responses, which reveal the passion people felt about these issues and their range of emotions about the future – from cynicism and pessimism to optimism and hope.
About the Survey
Our goal was to reach as many clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders in the Republic and Northern Ireland as we possibly could.1 Research Assistant Therese Cullen compiled a database of email and postal addresses of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders, gathering this information from Denominational Directories, websites, and telephone directories. Eventually, our survey was distributed directly to 4,005 addresses, of which we received 710 usable responses (overall response rate 18%). We sent 2698 requests via email and received 555 usable responses (21% response rate) and 1,307 requests via post and received 155 usable responses (12% response rate). Those who responded to the email requests accessed the survey through a link that sent them directly to the online survey. We sent a follow-up email request to those who had not yet responded near the end of May, about six weeks after the initial request. Those who responded to the postal surveys sent them back to us in the mail, and Cullen entered these into the online survey system.

The survey was confidential in that we did not ask clergy, pastors, ministers or faith leaders to provide their name or contact information. We did, however, provide a space where they could supply this information if they wished.

The surveys included a range of questions, including open-ended questions, one-answer multiple choice questions, and questions where respondents could choose more than one option. Pilot tests indicated that the survey took about 20 minutes to complete. It was quite common, however, for respondents to skip questions, or to leave open-ended questions blank. Given that we wished to canvas as wide a range of views as possible, we counted all usable responses even from ‘incomplete’ surveys. So, for instance, if a respondent omitted the question about county of residence, we did not throw out this survey altogether. This meant, however, that such surveys could not be counted when we analyzed the data by the categories ‘Republic of Ireland’ and ‘Northern Ireland.’ Throughout this report, this explains why the sums of the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Northern Ireland (NI) in some tables do not add up. Table 1 below shows the response rates by geographical location and denomination (email and postal surveys combined).2

Table 1: Survey Response Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole Island</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RCC</th>
<th>COI</th>
<th>PCI</th>
<th>Methodist</th>
<th>Other Christian</th>
<th>Other Religions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response Rate</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the Republic of Ireland, 51% of the responses we received were from Roman Catholic clergy, followed by Church of Ireland (25%), Other Christians (13%), Methodists (4%), Presbyterians (4%), and Other Religions (4%). Table two below compares this to

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1 We are aware of sensitivities around language of many of the terms used in this report. It is never our intention to cause offence, or to imply a particular standpoint by the words we use. That is why we have attempted to be inclusive in referring to this as a survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders in the hope that this will cover the terms that most churches or faith communities use for their leaders. Similarly, we refer to the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. When we write about the ‘whole island’ or the ‘island as a whole,’ we are referring to combined results from the Republic and Northern Ireland. We also use some abbreviations throughout, especially in tables. At times, ‘clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders’ is abbreviated to ‘clergy’ in tables, simply because this is the shortest word. Other abbreviations include ROI (Republic of Ireland), NI (Northern Ireland), RCC (Roman Catholic Church), COI (Church of Ireland) and PCI (Presbyterian Church in Ireland). In the actual survey itself, we used the terms ‘Roman Catholic’ and ‘Catholic’, for different questions. We are aware that for some people the use of ‘Roman’ before ‘Catholic’ can be contentious. However, when we asked people to choose a denomination we wrote ‘Roman Catholic,’ so as to avoid any confusion with other churches that at times use the term Catholic. In this report we also use both the terms ‘Roman Catholic’ and ‘Catholic.’ In no case are we implying that our institution, or ourselves personally, have a preference for either term.

2 We follow the convention of rounding figures to the nearest whole number in the text, and to one decimal point in tables.
the Republic’s religious demography, as indicated by the 2006 Census Data. This purpose of this table is simply to provide additional context.

**Table 2: Comparison of Census Data and Responses, Republic of Ireland**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of the Republic of Ireland Population by Religion (2006 Census)</th>
<th>Clergy in Republic of Ireland who responded to Survey (percentage by denomination)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>86.8%</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Ireland</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian + Other Religion</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>12.8% Other Christian + 4.4% Other Religion = 17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Northern Ireland, 34% of the responses we received were from Church of Ireland clergy, followed by Presbyterians (28%), Roman Catholics (16%), Methodists (13%), Other Christians (7%) and Other Religions (2%). Table three below compares this to Northern Ireland’s religious demography, as indicated by the 2001 Census Data. Again, this simply provides context.

**Table 3: Comparison of Census Data and Responses, Northern Ireland**

|                      | Percentage of Northern Ireland Population by Religion (2001 Census) | Percentage of Clergy in Northern Ireland who responded to Survey |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------
| Church of Ireland    | 15.3%                                                               | 34.2%                                                             |
| Presbyterian         | 20.7%                                                               | 27.9%                                                             |
| Roman Catholic       | 40.3%                                                               | 16.4%                                                             |
| Methodist            | 3.5%                                                                | 13.0%                                                             |
| Other Christian      | 6.1%                                                                | 6.7%                                                              |
| Other Religions      | 0.3%                                                                | 1.9%                                                              |

So our response rates were highest among Methodists (33%), Other Religions (24%) and Church of Ireland (21%) and lowest among Roman Catholics and Other Christians (13%). There may be any number of reasons for this, but one is methodological. As researchers, it was much easier for us to find contact information for clergy from Protestant denominations than for the Catholic Church, especially email addresses. Our main sources of contact information for clergy from all denominations were the denominational directories. These directories included either postal or email addresses, or both. Our preferred method of contact was email, and the Methodist, Church of Ireland and Presbyterian directories had more complete lists of email addresses than the Catholic directory. The Methodist directory, for example, provided emails for all its pastors. This meant that proportionately more survey requests went to Catholic clergy via the post. By its very nature a postal survey takes longer to complete and more effort to return than an online survey (writing usually takes longer than typing, it takes more effort to put a completed survey in the post than to click a submit button, etc.). This may have adversely impacted the return rate for Catholic clergy.

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4 Source: CAIN, [http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/ni/popul.html#3](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/ni/popul.html#3), retrieved on 31 August 2009.
We also have considered the possibility that the clergy most likely to take our survey are already ecumenically inclined. The email and postal requests, after all, came from the Irish School of Ecumenics, and clergy who are hostile or indifferent to ecumenism may therefore not have given our survey a second glance. This should be borne in mind when considering the results.

On the other hand, the survey also asked clergy if they considered themselves evangelical Christians. The stereotypical image of evangelicals is that they are opposed to ecumenism. In Northern Ireland, 68% identified themselves as evangelical. Within the Methodist and Presbyterian churches in Northern Ireland, 91% of clergy identified themselves as evangelicals, followed by Other Christians and the Church of Ireland (58%), and Catholics (39%).

In the Republic, 45% of all clergy identified themselves as evangelical. The most evangelical denomination in the Republic was the Presbyterians with 86% of clergy identifying with the term, followed by Methodists and Other Christians (both with 75%), the Church of Ireland (42%) and Catholics (35%).

The number of self-identifying evangelicals among clergy in Northern Ireland and the Republic far exceeded our expectations. For instance, most estimates put the evangelical population of Northern Ireland’s Protestants at about 25%. The relatively high number of evangelical respondents among our clergy may indicate some or all of the following: clergy are more inclined than laypeople to identify as evangelical, evangelical clergy were more likely to respond to our survey than non-evangelical clergy, or clergy may interpret the term ‘evangelical’ quite loosely. What we mean by this is that estimates of evangelicalism by academic researchers are often based on strict criteria rather than self-identification, i.e. researchers categorize Christians as evangelicals if they agree to statements such as: you must have a ‘born again’ experience to be a Christian, the Bible is the inspired word of God, it is a Christian imperative to evangelize others, or Christ’s death and resurrection were actual historical events. But at the very least, the willingness of so many clergy to self-identify as evangelical should give pause for thought. It could be that clergy and pastors in Northern Ireland and the Republic are more evangelical than has been supposed. In addition, with so many self-identified evangelical clergy and pastors willing to participate in a survey dealing with ‘ecumenism,’ they may not be as unwilling to engage with ‘ecumenism’ as has at times been assumed.

Throughout the survey, most results are presented in the following categories: on the island as a whole, in the Republic, in Northern Ireland, and among Catholics, Church of Ireland, Presbyterians, Methodists, Other Christians, and Other Religions. Most tables display percentages and the number ‘n’ – the actual number of respondents who answered a particular question. This allows the reader to see both the percentage and ‘how many’ respondents are in each category. The reader will notice the following trends: in general, fewer respondents answered all the questions the closer they got to the end of the survey (this ‘question fatigue’ phenomenon is quite common in surveys), and by the end of the survey the overall numbers of respondents especially for Presbyterians, Methodists, Other Christians and Other Religions is quite small.

Given these considerations, it is best to say that our survey results are indicative, rather than representative, of the thoughts, beliefs, practices, and so on, of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders in the Republic and Northern Ireland.

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6 The figures for these three geographical categories should be read with caution, bearing in mind the differing response rates among the denominations.

7 There could be a case for combining the results of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Other Christian responses (due to the overall small sample size). In this report, however, we have left these distinctions intact, believing they would be of interest to the readership. This also follows the convention of Porter’s (2008) report, which was dealing with similar sample sizes. See Fran Porter (2008) ‘Faith in a Plural Society: The Values, Attitudes and Practices of Churches in Protecting Minority Participation,’ Belfast: Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland.
Opportunities and Challenges for Churches and Faith Communities

Our survey reveals a variety of opportunities and challenges for churches and faith communities. Although our main research areas were diversity, immigration, reconciliation and ecumenism, we recognize that these are not the only issues facing churches and that many clergy responding to our survey would be more deeply engaged with other issues. To get a sense of clergy’s priorities and perceptions of their wider work, we asked two general, open-ended questions before moving to our questions about diversity, immigration, reconciliation and ecumenism. First, we asked, ‘What do you think are the greatest opportunities for churches and faith communities in Ireland and Northern Ireland in the years ahead?’ This was followed by the question, ‘What do you think are the greatest challenges for churches and faith communities in Ireland and Northern Ireland in the years ahead?’

In this and other parts of the report in which we discuss the answers to open ended questions, we supply examples and direct quotations from the surveys. These are meant to provide the reader with a sense of the range of responses to the questions, rather than to be representative of the responses.

So, for the question about opportunities, some responses were pessimistic, bordering on despair: ‘Opportunities is not the word I would use’ (Roman Catholic, location omitted), ‘I don’t see any!’ (Roman Catholic, Co. Leitrim), ‘opportunities are few and far between’ (Church of Ireland, Belfast City), and ‘don’t know!’ were among the responses. Others identified opportunities in the ending of the Troubles, which they saw as opening the way for deeper engagement with others; or they identified opportunities in immigrants coming to Ireland and Northern Ireland, who they felt could invigorate the faith of Irish Christians. Other opportunities included greater involvement of laypeople and women (mention of women was often accompanied with the statement that women should be ordained); the Credit Crunch/recession/collapse of the Celtic Tiger, which was seen as prompting people to re-think their values and turn to faith; the collapse of traditional church structures and the chance for new forms of church to be developed; a post-modern, post-Christian and secular humanist public milieu that is open to spiritual questions; an innate spiritual hunger within people in Ireland; increased interest in Celtic spirituality; the decline in church attendance creating communities of Christians who are really committed; youth with a passion for justice; the opportunity to use modern technologies; the chance for the church to lead the way on green/ecological issues; and the chance to bring lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT) people into the church.
Here are some examples of ‘opportunities’ from those who responded to the surveys:

The absence of violence which has encouraged people to come out of their ghettos. There is now a willingness to share and listen to other denominations’ identity. There is now a real opportunity to work as Christians, not just as a denominations. – Church of Ireland, Co. Londonderry/Derry

Influx of foreigners into the country, making us aware that the world is bigger than Ireland! -- Catholic, Belfast City

Immigration brings fresh challenges, opportunities for local churches to grow in faith and generosity. Immigration also brings new insights, people asking questions and requiring answers. Christian faith lives best, not when ruling as the only option as in Christendom, but when constantly challenged and enriched by the reality of other faiths, other options. – Presbyterian, Belfast City

New vision: less priests, more focused priests. – Catholic, Co. Cork

A smaller group of committed people, who want to practise their faith. Half-commitment is soul-destroying. – Catholic, Co. Sligo

To break down barriers - as Catholics we still aren't welcome in some churches - hopefully we will soon pray and learn together. – Catholic, Co. Antrim

A greater general spiritual hunger; increasing ignorance about the tenets of Christianity which may enable people to hear it 'fresh'. Growing ecumenism. – Methodist, Co. Offaly

The greatest opportunity for the church is the awakening that is happening due to the spectre of its own demise. – Church of Ireland, Co. Londonderry/Derry

I welcome the increasingly strong secular humanism because I think it will allow us to transcend the foolish “Catholic/Protestant” dichotomy and actually form communities that embody the Gospel (instead of merely speaking to their own concerns- which is how the average Irish post-Christendom citizen sees us). – Presbyterian, Co. Kildare

Collapse of dysfunctional, isolated institutional structures, and the creation of space for something new. – Presbyterian, Dublin City

To connect with the un-churched through doing church in a different way. I was struck when I heard a talk in January of a fellowship in Manchester which operates on the basis of connecting through text and e-mail. There are about 150 in the fellowship, linked by a Church of England minister, but as far as I can discern, only maybe a dozen of them meet at any one time in a home or cafe. It’s not always the same dozen of course, so all 150 would know each other. This is one example of doing things differently!! – Methodist, Co. Fermanagh

Focusing on the faith of people. Emphasis on the message and less on the structures and the central control systems. Empowering lay people, especially women. Only lip service is paid to lay church, especially to women. Women should be ordained. – Catholic, Dublin City

To live, laugh and to love more than those who do not believe. – Presbyterian, Co. Dublin
To get back to One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church in the unity of our faith, doctrine and the knowledge of the Son of God. – Orthodox, Belfast City

That they may be one as Jesus and the Father are one - cf. John 17. There is unity among the majority already in matters pro-life and in the pursuit of peace - if only this could be achieved in the question of faith. History confirms that we were one before Henry VIII apostasized from the One True Church. The Protestant Churches have all but disintegrated and even collapsed in Cork County due to a weakness in faith and morals. There is a great opportunity for Roman Catholics to rebuild a true sense of unity and peace in the name of Jesus Christ and his Church. – Catholic, Co. Cork

As a Catholic, our greatest opportunity is to live as best we can as members of the Catholic Church in which subsists the fullness of Salvation. – Catholic, Co. Wexford

To present a positive informed image of what it means to be a Reformed Evangelical Christian in today's increasingly secular world. – Presbyterian, Co. Antrim

Constant faithful witness to the uniqueness of Christ for salvation. – Presbyterian, Co. Antrim

To discover and use a fresh ecumenism which recognises unity as being in diversity with mutual support. – Methodist, Dublin City

To establish unity in working for a peaceful world, including meeting with all those willing to join in prayer, discussion or action to promote friendship between the religions and the knowledge that there is only one God, one humanity and ultimately one religion. – Baha’i, Co. Sligo

When it came to identifying challenges, a Presbyterian from Co. Antrim noted that, ‘opportunities and challenges are two sides of one coin.’ Indeed, what some clergy identified as opportunities, other clergy identified as challenges. Some of the challenges clergy identified were starkly put: ‘dying out!’ (evangelical, Co. Limerick) and ‘survival’ (Church of Ireland, location omitted). Other challenges included secularism/secularization; materialism; a secular media that is increasingly hostile to the churches; a perceived loss of the churches’ right to speak about moral issues in the public sphere; declining church attendance; increased indifference and apathy among the people; anger and apathy caused by the clerical sex scandals; aging congregations and an inability to attract young people to the churches; fewer priests and ministers — and those that remain coming under increasing time pressure; a lack of leadership or weak leadership; financial challenges, a largely un-churched population in need of evangelization; contributing to healing and/or dealing with the past (especially in Northern Ireland); engaging with immigrants; engaging with the LGBT community; and environmental issues.

Here are some examples of ‘challenges’ from those who responded to the surveys, demonstrating a range of perspectives. For instance, in the first two examples, one minister sees welcoming people from the LGBT community as a challenge the church must meet by helping them to feel ‘embraced’, while the next minister sees it as a challenge to keep LGBT out of the ranks of the clergy:

To embrace people who are gay etc. – Unitarian, Belfast City

Gay clergy to soon appear. – Presbyterian, Co. Londonderry/Derry
Other examples include:

The Churches are suffering as a result of scandals, concerning abuse of vulnerable young people. It will take many years for trust to be restored. Those who continue to love the church are carrying a burden. Outreach is difficult in this atmosphere. – Church of Ireland, Co. Wicklow

Aggressive promotion of 'liberal' policies/doctrines, especially on sexual issues, which challenge the authority of the bible and are divisive. Political Correctness and the hidden dangers of limitation of freedom of expression brought about by human rights legislation; continuing and entrenched sectarianism. – Church of Ireland, Co. Armagh

For priests and ministers to reclaim their own spiritual lives. –Catholic, Co. Dublin

For bishops to let go of their power and control. –Catholic, Co. Dublin

Keeping up numbers of regular worshippers, suicide prevention, economic hardship, fundraising of mission and maintenance. – Church of Ireland, Co. Tyrone

The only way is up! To improve morale of religious ministers. Leadership needs serious work and reflection. – Catholic, Co. Down

To keep faith alive and relevant in an increasingly secular world where what the media say is taken as gospel truth. – Catholic, Belfast City

The residual problems caused by the collapse of the authority of the Roman Catholic Church which washes off on other denominations and traditions whether we like it or not. – Church of Ireland, Co. Dublin

Among the big challenges is the overcoming of widespread prejudice against the Churches. This is based on the bad experiences of religion and the loss of credibility as Gospel based communities. Racial prejudice may yet rear its ugly head as the economy goes through a deep trough. The loss of currency of the Bible and a knowledge of the basics of the faith. – Church of Ireland, Co. Dublin

The only challenge facing the church is that from within. From its very inception the church has proclaimed the gospel in a multi-faith, multi-cultural world dominated by a few key languages, the existence of all-pervasive empires and patterns of thought, and with differing opinions on personal and public morality. The greatest challenge for the church is not the variable of the world in which it exists, the greatest challenge is to live as a Spirit filled people, with values, beliefs and morality shaped by an eschatological vision. It is godless religion that is the challenge for the church, not the secular world. – Church of Ireland, Co. Londonderry/Derry

I think the ongoing challenge for the churches in Ireland is to step out from centuries-long habits of desiring power; political, cultural and economic. The 21st Century church can only speak to Ireland (as a whole island) as a subversive presence in society, prophetically incarnating the Biblical passion for justice and expressing the grace of God in action as well as word, especially to the people groups who least expect us to embrace them. – Presbyterian, Co. Kildare
The Irish need to forgive the church leaders. There will be a great demand for including church and Christian ethics in schools curriculum. Other small churches will challenge the government one-sidedness of the Catholic Church. – African Independent Church, Co. Dublin

Being culturally relevant and attracting and keeping young people so that they leave binge-drinking, drug taking and put their energies into establishing the Kingdom of God in this country, into changing it so that corruption will be a thing of the past and we will be known across the world for our genuine Christianity, peace and justice. – Methodist, Galway City

We need to return to being communities that follow the way OF Jesus rather than being communities that believe things ABOUT Jesus. Embedded within the latter are tribal identity and security; our ‘neighbour’ tends to be those within the church community. Recent projects like Hard Gospel are prodding communities in the right places. – Church of Ireland, Co. Tipperary

A willingness to understand the meaning behind the teachings of other religion which are not your own. To recognise that your own religion is not the only path or the ultimate. – Buddhist, Co. Cavan

The greatest challenge for the Church here in Ireland, is make sure we don’t make the mistake made by other countries when they ignored newly arrived foreign faith communities and kept apart from them. – Church of Ireland, Co. Laois

In the Republic of Ireland there is a great deal of buried hatred disguised as tolerance. The churches of all denominations need to learn to work together and stop stereotyping each other. There is a marked level of division between the different Protestant groupings in the Republic of Ireland that is not as marked in Northern Ireland. – Presbyterian, Co. Offaly

The decline in attendances and how we reach working class people and the young; also how relevant is our worship. – Methodist, Belfast City

Presenting the Gospel as relevant. We need to listen to others at a much deeper level and we must move from the presentation of the Church as concerned with acceptance or non-acceptance of doctrine and challenge people to travel together on a journey. – Church of Ireland, Co. Dublin

Too many boring, badly preached, and lifeless celebrations, with overworked ministers & passive people. – Catholic, Belfast City

The opportunities and challenges presented here provide some perspective on the depth and breadth of the concerns of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders in the Republic and Northern Ireland – as well as the emotions they feel when thinking about them. Beyond the more narrow concerns of our project, they help to identify directions for possible future research. These issues also are part of the context in which clergy are dealing with the issues of immigration, diversity, reconciliation and ecumenism, to which we now turn.
Immigration and Diversity

This part of the survey was designed to gather information about diversity within religious communities, as well as the ways in which religious communities are responding to it. First, we asked clergy what percentage of their congregation or faith community had immigrated within the last ten years. By far the largest category chosen was ‘less than ten percent,’ with 70% in the Republic and 93% in Northern Ireland (79% combined) selecting this option.

Considering the island as a whole (Republic of Ireland + Northern Ireland), Table 4 breaks this question down by the four largest denominations, Other Christians, and Other Religions. Amongst these groups, the Other Christians have the most immigrants within their ranks, with 8% reporting more than 90% of their congregation having immigrated within the last ten years and 10% reporting 76-90% of their congregation having immigrated within the last ten years (n=63). This likely reflects the preference of some immigrants for independent, evangelical, Pentecostal/charismatic congregations.

Table 4: Congregation/Faith Community: % Immigrated in the Last Ten Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Island as a whole (n=613)</th>
<th>Less than 10%</th>
<th>11-20%</th>
<th>21-40%</th>
<th>41-50%</th>
<th>51-60%</th>
<th>61-75%</th>
<th>76-90%</th>
<th>More than 90%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Ireland (n=357)</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland (n=234)</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic (n=242)</td>
<td>84.3%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Ireland (n=166)</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian (n=80)</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist (n=49)</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian (n=63)</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions (n=13)</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*When we refer to 'n', this means the actual number of respondents who answered the question (the achieved sample).
We then asked clergy if they had done anything to accommodate ethnic minorities in their congregation over periods of time (within the last 12 months, the last 1-2 years, the last 3-5 years, the last 6-10 years, more than 10 years ago, never, never but would consider doing so). On the island as a whole, 29% had done something within the last 12 months, 15% had never done so, and 30% had never done so but would consider it. In the Republic, 32% had done so within the last 12 months, 13% had never done so, and 25% had never done so but would consider it. In Northern Ireland, 27% had done so within the last 12 months, 14% had never done so, and 37% had never done so but would consider it.

Considering the island as a whole (Republic of Ireland + Northern Ireland), Table 5 breaks this question down by the four largest denominations, Other Christians, and Other Religions. The most likely to have done something to accommodate ethnic minorities within the last 12 months are the Other Religions, followed by Other Christians and Methodists. Other Religions and Other Christians are, of course, more likely to have higher percentages of ethnic minorities within their ranks (if it can be assumed that the categories within higher percentages of immigrants in their faith communities have higher percentages of ethnic minorities as well).

**Table 5: Action to Accommodate Ethnic Minorities, By Denomination or Wider Faith Community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>In the last 12 months</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Never, but would consider doing so</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic (n=209)</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Ireland (n=146)</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian (n=75)</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist (n=41)</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian (n=57)</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions (n=9)</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also asked clergy to provide examples of what they had done, that was out of the ordinary, to accommodate ethnic minorities. Examples included assisting with asylum claims/tribunal hearings; financial support for accommodation, education, transportation or other needs; assistance in finding jobs; translation of bibles, sermons, or other reading materials; providing English language classes, conducting open air religious services in areas where ethnic minorities live; visiting Chinese takeaways with religious materials; organizing cultural evenings in which people share food and customs from their native lands; inviting ethnic minorities to take part in St Patrick’s Day celebrations; visiting their homes; organizing special welcoming committees or parish groups; encouraging prayer during worship services in native languages; using the music and dance from immigrants’ home countries in religious services; helping children settle into schools; use of church buildings, halls and car parks; and including special sections for newcomers on congregational websites. Some clergy remarked that such activities should not be considered out of the ordinary – for them, these were the ‘ordinary’ works of charity with which Christians should be engaged. For example:

*I don’t think they are out of the ordinary, however, we have started Romanian Services, we even brought Zamfir, a famous Romanian pan flutist, to do a special concert. We have Portuguese and Russian Bible study groups. We also have special musical items in Church Services from different ethnic groups in their own language. – Seventh Day Adventist, Dublin City*

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*The numbers in this table do not add up to 100% because we have omitted the categories of 1-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-10 years and more than 10 years due to space constraints and the fact that we were most interested in the categories of the last 12 months, never, and never but would consider doing so. This convention is practiced in some of the other tables that follow as well.*
And:

*Inviting new individuals/families to my home to share dinner. Offering my help if they need it i.e. finding work, introducing them to other community members, assisting them to improve their English. Then again, this is not out of the ordinary. This is very ordinary Christian behaviour.* – Catholic, Dublin City

On the other hand, some clergy indicated that it was difficult or would be difficult to accommodate ethnic minorities in their areas. For example:

*[We have done] very little as it doesn’t really apply in our area. The numbers coming here are miniscule. Why? They would be ‘run out of the place’ or life would be made difficult. That is a very sad fact.* – Catholic, Co. Dublin

And:

*They do not attend the churches where I am presently based. This is a deep rural area I work in with no responsibility for policy. i.e: After I specifically invited young people in the congregation to invite a friend along to a Family style worship service, I was told ‘don’t do that. Most people know which group (denomination) they belong to.’ The implication being that this would cause trouble with the present attendees.* – Church of Ireland, Co. Fermanagh

*Another said that he facilitated children of ethnic minority groups becoming pupils at parish school despite opposition.* – Church of Ireland, Co. Wexford

We then asked what positions ethnic minorities held within their faith communities. Respondents were provided with a list, and could tick as many options as they liked. These results document a range of positions held, with ‘Other’ the most popular in the Republic and on the island as a whole. In Northern Ireland, the most popular option was ‘none,’ which probably in part reflects the fewer number of ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland. Table 6 summarises the responses.

**Table 6: Frequency of Positions Held By Ethnic Minorities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Whole Island</th>
<th>Republic of Ireland</th>
<th>Northern Ireland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of Children</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay Eucharistic Minister</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy/Pastor/Primary Leader</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of Adults</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay Preacher</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not counting those who responded ‘none,’ the most popular positions by denomination were: Roman Catholic (Other, 60), Church of Ireland (Other, 18), Presbyterian (Other, 9), Methodist (lay preacher, 10), Other Christian (Teacher of Children, 26), and Other Religions (Teacher of Adults, 5). Within the ‘Other’ category, some of the main options listed were: Choir members, musicians, youth workers, committee members, readers, lectors, church wardens, prayer group leaders and members, care givers, catechetical work, evangelists, deacons, leadership positions in parish schools, secretaries, and treasurers.
We then asked if they had preached or taught on immigration, diversity, or ‘welcoming strangers’ over periods of time (within the last 12 months, the last 1-2 years, the last 3-5 years, the last 6-10 years, more than 10 years ago, never, never but would consider doing so). On the island as a whole, 54% had done so within the last 12 months, 8% had never done so, and 11% had never done so but would consider it. In the Republic, 53% had done so within the last 12 months, 9% had never done so, and 8% had never done so but would consider it. In Northern Ireland, 55% had done so within the last 12 months, 5% had never done so, and 16% had never done so but would consider it. Denominationally, Presbyterians were the most likely to have preached on these themes in the last 12 months (63%), followed by Roman Catholics (56%) and Other Christians (51%). Methodists were the least likely never to have preached on these themes, with only 2% indicating ‘never.’

Table 7: Percentage preached or taught on immigration, diversity or welcoming strangers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In the last 12 months</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Never, but would consider doing so</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Island as a whole (n=558)</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Ireland (n=319)</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland (n=219)</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic (n=217)</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Ireland (n=157)</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian (n=76)</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist (n=44)</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian (n=55)</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions (n=8)</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clergy were then given the opportunity to provide examples of how they had preached or taught about this. A Church of Ireland minister in Co. Dublin responded, ‘you would have to go out of your way to avoid it if you are preaching on the Gospel!’ Others supplied examples of specific stories, texts, special occasions or holy days including: Race Relations Sunday, Christian Aid Week, Jesus "the stranger" on the road to Emmaus, Immigrant Sunday, St Patrick’s Day (specific reference is made to St Patrick as a slave and immigrant), special series during Lent (including the Church of Ireland’s Hard Gospel Lenten Series on the Good Samaritan), Feast of the Epiphany, Christmas (the holy family as refugees), Philip and the Ethiopian, Moses in Egypt, John 4, referring to Peter in Acts 10 as reaching over dividing wall in his relationship with Cornelius, Matthew 25:35-36, Hebrews 13, the Book of Ruth (Ruth as a foreigner), the early church in Acts and its diversity in growth, the Church 21 Programme, material produced by the Race Relations Panel of the Presbyterian Church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Diversity Strategy called ‘Growing Together’, the Jewish tradition of welcoming stranger and loving your neighbour/enemy/outsider, the welcome for the Prodigal Son, examples from Thomas Merton, examples from Jean Vanier and the L’Arche Community, and the Do This In Memory Programme for First Penance & First Eucharist.

There also were examples in which clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders applied biblical or scriptural themes to difficulties faced by ethnic minorities and immigrants today, including:

Preached about justice in and outside the work place, especially with rents and accommodation. –Catholic, Co. Armagh

I spoke out against the terrible events in our neighbouring town where a Bulgarian family where victimised. Preached to the Orange Order about celebrating diversity. – Church of Ireland, Co. Antrim
Most recent occasion was in the context of economic decline, pointing out that those who had come from elsewhere, done jobs that nobody else wanted to do, and paid their taxes, were entitled to "a place at the table" now, when things are less prosperous. – Catholic, Co. Wicklow

The comments of some clergy indicate that they see these as a fairly urgent task in their local situations:

Matthew 25 (welcoming the stranger) is very important to me, especially as one of my churches has a habit of getting rid of strangers. – Church of Ireland, Co. Antrim

Welcoming the 'alien' and ensuring their flourishing is a big theme in Hebrew Scriptures. I preach fairly often on this to a congregation some of whom employ Polish or other Eastern European nationals, yet are not welcoming to them when their children come to our school. – Church of Ireland, Co. Tipperary

We then asked about the use of the native languages of ethnic minorities in religious services over time (within the last 12 months, the last 1-2 years, the last 3-5 years, the last 6-10 years, more than 10 years ago, never, never but would consider doing so). On the island as a whole, 15% had done so within the last 12 months, 42% had never done so, and 29% had never done so but would consider it. In the Republic, 19% had done so within the last 12 months, 40% had never done so, and 24% had never done so but would consider it. In Northern Ireland, 11% had done so within the last 12 months, 43% had never done so, and 36% had never done so but would consider it. Denominationally, Methodists were the most likely to have used the native languages of ethnic minorities in the last 12 months, with 35% reporting that they had done so, followed by Other Christians (27%) and Other Religions (25%). These results are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8: Percentage used native languages of ethnic minorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In the last 12 months</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Never, but would consider doing so</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Island as a Whole (n=557)</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Ireland (n=317)</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland (n=219)</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic (n=219)</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Ireland (n=153)</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian (n=78)</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist (n=43)</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian (n=55)</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions (n=8)</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, we asked clergy to reflect on the most positive and challenging aspects of minorities’ contributions to congregational life. A Methodist in Dublin City responded simply: ‘We wouldn’t exist without them.’ A Seventh Day Adventist minister in Dublin City said: ‘Congregations that were once small are now overflowing with people, energy and life. They bring an eagerness to be involved and new ideas.’ Other positive aspects mentioned were the enthusiasm, energy, involvement and vitality that immigrants were bringing to local congregations; the way in which minorities had opened the minds of Irish people to the wider world; providing a vision of the universal church; the presence of more children (especially in aging Irish congregations); and immigrants’ prayerfulness and willingness.
to believe in the supernatural, including miracles. Some ministers provided examples of how they saw minorities’ enhancing the faith of their congregations:

_The Catholics who have come here from other countries have brought a very vibrant faith. Our biggest ethnic group are the Polish. The religious commitment has roused the zeal of our own local Catholics._ —Catholic, Co. Cork

_The Polish and African communities enjoy their faith far more than the Irish do and the children of these communities have had a positive impact on the families that they are friendly with. Irish children are beginning to tell us about Jesus dying to save everybody rather than talk about Easter Eggs._ —Catholic, Co. Waterford

_Many bring rich faith which rebukes the almost ‘secular’ faith of Western Christians. Some also bring exuberance to praise and worship, often lacking in the west._ —Presbyterian, Co. Louth

At the same time, some ministers resisted thinking of thinking of ethnic minorities as a ‘group’:

_We don’t view ethnic minorities as a group with a shared set of characteristics. There is the passionate prayer warrior who happens to be from Beijing. There is the lady gifted with hospitality who is from Jakarta. There is the former executive in a global company who takes care of our finances. By the nature of being a new Presbyterian church in the Republic of Ireland we are a diverse group. It is best, pastorally and missiologically, to avoid generalised statements about groups._ —Presbyterian, Co. Kildare

This example reflects a desire expressed by some clergy not to ‘ghettoize’ immigrants, but rather to build congregations that are at the same time united and diverse.

On the other hand, clergy identified a number of challenges associated with ethnic minorities and immigrants. These included the language barrier, racism, emotional fatigue (‘many demanding needs and support. A fairly weak congregation giving out a lot’ — Presbyterian, Co. Dublin), timekeeping, different attitudes towards children’s behavior in church (some observed that their children were too noisy during services), devising liturgies and worship services that make both newcomers and long-time members feel welcome, overcoming racism and common prejudice, the transient nature of immigrants who move frequently for work, a perceived ‘clannishness’ or shyness among immigrants, dealing with the difficult economic circumstances of many immigrants, and conflicts between different ethnic groups. Some of the comments revealed negative experiences of interaction with newcomers:

_Some people feel they are here to live on what they can get from the state._ —Catholic, Co. Galway

_After using our premises it took two dozen people several hours to clean up and the church committee will not have them back._ —Church of Ireland, Co. Antrim

_They have brought new ideas which sometimes seem too ambitious and grandiose._ —Humanist, Co. Dublin

In other examples, clergy say it has been difficult convincing local communities to welcome immigrants:

_Overcoming the ‘When in Rome do as the Romans’ perspective of the more conservative members._ —Presbyterian, Co. Dublin
**Bringing people on board. Some people left the congregation as a result of the inclusive policy. – Church of Ireland, Co. Cork**

**Hidden prejudices of those who believe such strangers in our midst are responsible for taking "our" jobs or "free-loading" on welfare at a time of economic down-turn. –Catholic, Limeric City**

Others, such as this Catholic from Belfast City, lamented their own limitations: ‘I cannot minister very effectively - can only smile, & speak & pray in English.’

On the other hand, some ministers reported that their experience of newcomers had been overwhelmingly positive, with one saying that the immigrants were ‘no greater challenge than the rest of us!’ (Catholic, Co. Kilkenny). Some explained that they had not thought of the issue in terms of challenges, as this minister reported:

**I don’t think it’s really an issue. But having done this survey I’ll talk to her about participating more fully in ways with which she might feel comfortable ... and that could open up new possibilities for us. – Presbyterian, location omitted**

**Summary of Findings on Immigration & Diversity and Questions Raised**

The responses to our questions about immigration and diversity are open for interpretation. Research from other multiethnic contexts indicates that people of different ethnic groups enjoy better relationships within congregations when the leaders of the congregation preach and teach on ethnic/racial harmony as an expression of godliness, when minorities share leadership positions with majority ethnic groups, and when a variety of languages are used in worship services. So on the one hand, the vast majority of congregations/faith communities on the island (80%) have fewer than 10% of recent immigrants in their midst. 30% of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders report doing something to accommodate them, while 44% never have. 50% have preached or taught on immigration/diversity/welcoming strangers, and immigrants and ethnic minorities hold a range of positions within faith communities. But only about 15% have used immigrants or ethnic minorities’ native languages in religious services.

What do these percentages tell us about congregations and faith communities in the Republic and Northern Ireland today? What can the various comments from the clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders tell us about what multiethnic faith communities are really like in the Republic and Northern Ireland today? Are our congregations and faith communities responding adequately to immigrants and ethnic minorities?

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Reconciliation

This part of the survey was designed to gather information about how clergy, pastors and faith leaders think about reconciliation. We opened by asking them to say, in a few short words, what reconciliation means to them. Since definitions of reconciliation are often contested, we wanted to provide people with this opportunity to let us know what was in their heads when they answered the other questions about reconciliation that would follow. Again, we received a range of responses. Some emphasized that reconciliation between individuals and God is the most important thing – from that all other forms of reconciliation follow. Others mentioned being at peace with God and people, mutual understanding, accepting difference, unity amid diversity, forgiveness, admission of sin, apology, making restitution, healing, and restoring relationships as essential to reconciliation. A Buddhist respondent said that rather than using the term reconciliation, she thought, ‘conscious connection to natural great peace might be a more appropriate term for a Buddhist.’ Here are more examples of the responses. These two reflect the emphasis on reconciliation between humans and God:

Reconciliation is the outstretched arms of Christ on the Cross, calling us to embrace him, to be adopted into his family, treated as his sibling and enjoying his presence forever. To the extent that this Paschal reconciliation affects our life, we can pour this love we have received out into the wider world, embracing our enemies and loving our foes. — Presbyterian, Co. Kildare

1. God reconciled to mankind in the cross. 2. Believers reconciled to one another. 3. Duty to promote reconciliation in N.I. recognizing all have contributed to some degree to disharmony. — Church of Ireland, Belfast City

These reflect some uneasiness about how the term reconciliation is used:

It means a number of different things. The online dictionary defines it as “the process of making consistent or compatible”. It can also mean restoration to harmony and/or renewal of friendship. In a Northern Ireland context it is often used in a way that means the abandonment of the Protestant/Unionist/British heritage of the majority of the people and “reconciliation” to the Irish/Nationalist tradition. — Church of Ireland, Co. Londonderry/Derry

Not sure I agree that reconciliation is what we should be looking at, the ‘re’ of the word suggests that we have somewhere to go back to. Think I would just want to look forward to create new ways of being together. — Church of Ireland, Co. Londonderry/Derry

These respondents conceived of reconciliation as people believing the same message:

All being members the visible body of Christ sharing the same Faith, the same Sacraments and the same Governance under Peter. — Catholic, Co. Dublin

Reconciliation is basically the message of the Gospel, i.e. Christ died upon the cross to pay the price for man’s sin in order that sinful man might be brought into fellowship with God. The Bible states that it’s only those who are reconciled to God who shall be with God in eternity. — Free Presbyterian, Co. Down

While these respondents conceive of reconciliation as people accepting and/or celebrating diverse beliefs:

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. — Methodist, Belfast City
Understanding and respect for other person’s stance—and recognition there may be truths in it for you. – Church of Ireland, Co. Down

The relief of letting go the stress of not liking someone; and the dawning of the realisation that they have something interesting to teach me. – Church of Ireland, Co. Antrim

We followed this question by asking a series of questions about how often they preached or taught about reconciliation between various groups (between individuals and God, between individuals, between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, between Catholics and Protestants on the whole island, between different religions (i.e. Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, etc), between people of different religions (i.e. Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, etc), and between people of different ethnicities or nationalities over time (within the last 12 months, the last 1-2 years, the last 3-5 years, the last 6-10 years, more than 10 years ago, never, never but would consider doing so).

Our respondents reported that within the last 12 months they had mostly preached or taught on reconciliation between individuals and God (84% on the whole island) and between individuals (82% on the whole island). These were by far the most popular groups on which they had preached or taught about reconciliation. On the island as a whole, 43% reported preaching or teaching on reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. Within Northern Ireland, 66% preached or taught on reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, while this figure fell to 26% for clergy in the Republic of Ireland. On the island as a whole, 44% reported preaching or teaching on reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants on the island as a whole. Within Northern Ireland, 51% preached or taught on reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants on the island as a whole, while this figure was 39% for clergy in the Republic of Ireland.

Clergy were more likely to preach or teach on reconciliation between people of different ethnicities or nationalities than they were on reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants. On the island as a whole, 51% reported preaching or teaching on this topic (47% in the Republic and 53% in Northern Ireland. It is interesting here that a higher percentage of clergy in Northern Ireland preached on this topic, when there is more ethnic diversity in the Republic). Denominationally, Methodists were most likely to preach or teach on this topic within the last 12 months (68%), followed by Other Religions (67%), and Presbyterians (61%).

Clergy were least likely to have preached or taught within the last 12 months on reconciliation between PEOPLE of different religions (39% on the whole island) and between different religions (30%). The most likely to have preached and taught on both of these themes are the faith leaders from Other Religions (78% in both categories). Amongst the Christian categories, Catholics were most likely to have preached on reconciliation between PEOPLE of different religions within the last 12 months (43%) and between different religions (41%). Strikingly, just 10% of Presbyterians had preached or taught on reconciliation between different religions – by far the lowest percentage here. These results are summarized in Table 9.
Table 9: Percentage preached or taught on reconciliation within the last 12 months:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole island</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RCC</th>
<th>COI</th>
<th>PCI</th>
<th>Meth</th>
<th>Other Christian</th>
<th>Other Religions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Btw Individuals &amp; God</td>
<td>84.2% (n=568)</td>
<td>82.0% (n=323)</td>
<td>86.6% (n=224)</td>
<td>86.6% (n=223)</td>
<td>81.5% (n=157)</td>
<td>89.9% (n=79)</td>
<td>90.7% (n=43)</td>
<td>73.2% (n=56)</td>
<td>50.0% (n=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Btw Individuals</td>
<td>81.8% (n=559)</td>
<td>79.9% (n=315)</td>
<td>85.6% (n=222)</td>
<td>84.8% (n=217)</td>
<td>76.8% (n=155)</td>
<td>89.9% (n=79)</td>
<td>80.5% (n=41)</td>
<td>72.7% (n=55)</td>
<td>88.9% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Btw Catholics &amp; Protestants in NI</td>
<td>42.7% (n=518)</td>
<td>25.9% (n=282)</td>
<td>66.1% (n=215)</td>
<td>37.2% (n=196)</td>
<td>45.2% (n=146)</td>
<td>62.9% (n=70)</td>
<td>53.5% (n=43)</td>
<td>23.1% (n=52)</td>
<td>33.3% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Btw Catholics &amp; Protestants whole island</td>
<td>43.7% (n=519)</td>
<td>39.1% (n=307)</td>
<td>51.0% (n=192)</td>
<td>41.4% (n=210)</td>
<td>46.1% (n=141)</td>
<td>53.7% (n=67)</td>
<td>59.0% (n=39)</td>
<td>19.2% (n=52)</td>
<td>37.5% (n=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Btw diff religions</td>
<td>30.3% (n=531)</td>
<td>31.1% (n=299)</td>
<td>29.1% (n=213)</td>
<td>41.1% (n=207)</td>
<td>28.7% (n=150)</td>
<td>9.6% (n=73)</td>
<td>23.1% (n=39)</td>
<td>19.6% (n=51)</td>
<td>77.8% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Btw PEOPLE of diff religions</td>
<td>39.1% (n=529)</td>
<td>37.9% (n=298)</td>
<td>41.4% (n=210)</td>
<td>43.1% (n=202)</td>
<td>36.0% (n=150)</td>
<td>38.7% (n=75)</td>
<td>35.0% (n=40)</td>
<td>26.9% (n=52)</td>
<td>77.8% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Btw people of diff ethnicities/nationalities</td>
<td>51.4% (n=527)</td>
<td>46.9% (n=309)</td>
<td>53.1% (n=179)</td>
<td>49.5% (n=202)</td>
<td>43.9% (n=148)</td>
<td>60.8% (n=74)</td>
<td>67.5% (n=40)</td>
<td>47.2% (n=53)</td>
<td>66.7% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also asked clergy to indicate, using a scale from 1-5 (with 5 being the most important), how important they thought it was to preach and teach on reconciliation between these various groups. Table 10 shows what percentage of clergy chose ‘#5-very important’ for each of these categories. What this means is that the percentages shown in each box represent what percentage of people chose ‘#5-very important’ for each of the categories of preaching and teaching on reconciliation between the various groups.

The top two categories chosen as very important for all groups of clergy are ‘between individuals and God,’ and ‘between individuals.’ This reflects the amount of time spent teaching and preaching on these topics (see Table 9). On the island as a whole, in Northern Ireland, and among Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist clergy, the next most important category is reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. In the Republic of Ireland and among Other Christians, the next most important category is reconciliation between people of different ethnicities and nationalities, while for Other Religions it is reconciliation between different religions. Reconciliation between different religions is the least important category on the island as a whole, in the Republic, in Northern Ireland and among clergy in the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist churches. Presbyterians (13%) were the least likely to rate reconciliation between different religions as very important.

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11 I have omitted the ‘n’ values for this table due to space restraints. These can be made available upon request.
Table 10: Percentage Who Thought it is Very Important to Preach & Teach on Reconciliation Between …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Island</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RCC</th>
<th>COI</th>
<th>PCI</th>
<th>Meth</th>
<th>Other Christian</th>
<th>Other Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals &amp; God (79.9%)</td>
<td>Individuals &amp; God (77.6%)</td>
<td>Individuals &amp; God (85.0%)</td>
<td>Individuals &amp; God (76.9%)</td>
<td>Individuals &amp; God (76.7%)</td>
<td>Individuals &amp; God (86.9%)</td>
<td>Individuals &amp; God (87.8%)</td>
<td>Individuals &amp; God (85.2%)</td>
<td>Individuals &amp; God (83.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals (70.5%)</td>
<td>Individuals (72.2%)</td>
<td>Individuals (68.0%)</td>
<td>Individuals (72.2%)</td>
<td>Individuals (67.9%)</td>
<td>Individuals (65.4%)</td>
<td>Individuals (80.5%)</td>
<td>Individuals (71.7%)</td>
<td>Individuals (75.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholics/Protestants in NI (39.1%)</td>
<td>Diff ethnicities/nationalities (37.7%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants in NI (45.6%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants in NI (44.6%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants in NI (40.4%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants in NI (31.9%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants in NI (52.5%)</td>
<td>Diff ethnicities/nationalities (43.8%)</td>
<td>Diff Religions (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diff ethnicities/nationalities (36.8%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants whole island (33.8%)</td>
<td>Diff ethnicities/nationalities (35.4%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants whole island (37.4%)</td>
<td>Diff ethnicities/nationalities (36.2%)</td>
<td>Diff ethnicities/nationalities (31.4%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants whole island (52.5%)</td>
<td>Diff Religions (22.0%)</td>
<td>People of Diff Religions (44.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholics/Protestants whole island (34.0%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants in NI (33.7%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants whole island (34.0%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants whole island (35.4%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants whole island (35.3%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants whole island (23.2%)</td>
<td>Diff ethnicities/nationalities (46.2%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants whole island (20.4%)</td>
<td>Diff ethnicities/nationalities (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People of Diff Religions (27.8%)</td>
<td>People of Diff Religions (27.8%)</td>
<td>People of Diff Religions (27.4%)</td>
<td>People of Diff Religions (34.4%)</td>
<td>People of Diff Religions (25.3%)</td>
<td>People of Diff Religions (14.5%)</td>
<td>People of Diff Religions (32.5%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants in NI (20.0%)</td>
<td>Catholics/Protestants whole island (20.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diff Religions (26.9%)</td>
<td>Diff Religions (26.5%)</td>
<td>Diff Religions (26.8%)</td>
<td>Diff Religions (32.0%)</td>
<td>People of Diff Religions (24.8%)</td>
<td>Diff Religions (13.0%)</td>
<td>Diff Religions (31.6%)</td>
<td>People of Diff Religions (19.6%)</td>
<td>People of Diff Religions (20.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clergy also were asked to provide examples of any other preaching or teaching about reconciliation which they had done. Some expressed the view that preaching and teaching about reconciliation was normal: ‘Normal part of Catholic Catechism teaching and instruction’ (Catholic, Co. Laois), and ‘Normal and natural as it comes in bible passages’ (Presbyterian, Belfast City). They also had the chance to say if there were other groups between which they had preached or taught about reconciliation; or to name any special events which were devoted to teaching or preaching about reconciliation. Examples of other groups included: Between humans and the environment (a Methodist in Co. Down commented, ‘The reconciliation which needs to take place between humankind and creation………i.e. between ourselves and a physical world which we have exploited, abused and neglected’), between people of different sexual identities (a Unitarian in Belfast City commented: ‘Regret so far you make no reference to the inclusion of gay people; it is a serious gap in your survey’), between rich and poor, between rural and urban, between public and private sector, between the republican groups; between PSNI and breakaway republicans; between the grieving families of ‘Hoods' and Victims of Hoodish behavior, within families, within marriages, within local communities, family feuds, ex-service people and families of victims in Northern Ireland, within Europe, with the government for equal treatment of the non-religious within schools, in schools, with those in prison, and within yourself (‘taming’ yourself, as a Buddhist respondent expressed it).

Examples of events included: the Word of Life Group of Focalare, Alpha Courses, Penitential Services, children’s first confession, Christian Unity Week, During Advent and Lent, during the Sacrament of Reconciliation, during Novenas (a Roman Catholic in Co. Down commented: ‘Last November at a parish Novena, Rev. Ruth Patterson (Presbyterian) was invited to speak on this issue in Northern Ireland. Excellent.’), in primary schools, in bible study groups (some of which are inter church), special inter faith services, inviting clergy from other denominations to preach in their parishes or congregations, sermon series on peacemaking using materials...
from the Presbyterian Church, Remembrance Sunday, writing for journals, Baha’i study circles, personal example, cross community prayer walks, developing ‘para-liturgies’ where people carry stones to represent their sins or washing their hands after confession, and special missions and retreats.

It should be noted that some clergy used this space to express concern that we had included reconciliation between different religions in the survey. One wrote:

**I feel this question could be misconceived. If we believe that reconciliation comes from the gospel, then the outworking of the gospel will drive reconciliation. What do you mean by reconciling Muslims and Christians? If it is not in the gospel - is it really reconciliation?** – Presbyterian, Co. Donegal

And another said:

**My teaching is about being reconciled to God through Christ and then showing love to all. While I accept there are things to help community relationships which can be done, biblical reconciliation can only happen with those who hold the same true faith. We have seen that in our own congregation with those who have left the Roman Catholic faith and have come to a saving faith in Christ and who now hold leadership roles within the church.** – Presbyterian, Co. Antrim

Then, we asked clergy if they had accessed any resources on reconciliation. 50% of clergy on the entire island had accessed resources on reconciliation in general. Church of Ireland clergy (59%), followed by Methodists (58%) were the most likely to have done so. The next most popular category was resources on reconciliation in Northern Ireland, for which 38% of clergy on the entire island (56% in Northern Ireland and 26% in the Republic) had done so. Presbyterian clergy (54%) were most likely to have done so, followed by Methodists (51%). Resources on reconciliation on the entire island were accessed by 29% of clergy (31% in Northern Ireland and 26% in the Republic), with Church of Ireland (43%) and Methodists (41%) the most likely to do so.

Leaders of other religions were the most likely to have accessed resources on reconciliation between different religions (43%), people of different religions (33%) and people of different ethnicities and nationalities (33%). Church of Ireland clergy were the next most likely to have accessed resources on reconciliation between different religions (32%), and between people of different religions (31%). Methodists and Church of Ireland were next most likely to have accessed resources on reconciliation between people of different ethnicities and nationalities (29%). Methodists were the least likely to have accessed resources on reconciliation between people of different religions (15%), while Other Christians (13%) and Methodists (16%) were the least likely to have accessed resources on reconciliation between different religions.
### Table 11: Percentage accessed Resources on Reconciliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole Island</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RCC</th>
<th>COI</th>
<th>PCI</th>
<th>Meth</th>
<th>Other Christian</th>
<th>Other Religions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reconciliation in General</strong></td>
<td>50.1% (n=539)</td>
<td>48.5% (n=309)</td>
<td>51.4% (n=208)</td>
<td>47.4% (n=209)</td>
<td>58.7% (n=150)</td>
<td>50.0% (n=76)</td>
<td>57.9% (n=38)</td>
<td>32.1% (n=53)</td>
<td>40.0% (n=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In N. Ireland</td>
<td>37.9% (n=530)</td>
<td>25.9% (n=305)</td>
<td>55.6% (n=207)</td>
<td>30.0% (n=210)</td>
<td>44.8% (n=143)</td>
<td>54.1% (n=74)</td>
<td>51.3% (n=39)</td>
<td>24.5% (n=53)</td>
<td>10.0% (n=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On entire island</td>
<td>29.0% (n=520)</td>
<td>26.1% (n=314)</td>
<td>31.0% (n=203)</td>
<td>21.0% (n=205)</td>
<td>42.6% (n=148)</td>
<td>34.8% (n=69)</td>
<td>41.0% (n=39)</td>
<td>8.2% (n=49)</td>
<td>11.1% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Btw different religions</td>
<td>25.5% (n=522)</td>
<td>24.3% (n=300)</td>
<td>26.2% (n=206)</td>
<td>26.6% (n=203)</td>
<td>32.2% (n=146)</td>
<td>21.9% (n=73)</td>
<td>15.8% (n=38)</td>
<td>13.5% (n=52)</td>
<td>42.9% (n=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Btw PEOPLE diff religions</td>
<td>26.0% (n=507)</td>
<td>26.7% (n=307)</td>
<td>24.5% (n=196)</td>
<td>25.4% (n=193)</td>
<td>30.6% (n=147)</td>
<td>23.2% (n=69)</td>
<td>15.4% (n=39)</td>
<td>25.5% (n=49)</td>
<td>33.3% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Btw diff ethnicities/nationalities</td>
<td>25.2% (n=508)</td>
<td>26.2% (n=294)</td>
<td>23.4% (n=197)</td>
<td>21.7% (n=194)</td>
<td>28.7% (n=143)</td>
<td>25.4% (n=71)</td>
<td>29.0% (n=38)</td>
<td>21.6% (n=51)</td>
<td>33.3% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also asked clergy to provide examples of the resources which they had accessed. Examples of resources included: the Bible (some specifically said ‘only’ the Bible), internet resources (using Google or specific websites), materials produced for Christian Unity Week, special seminars, personal reading in books or newspapers, the writings of Thomas Merton, Corrymeela materials, materials from the Community Relations Council, materials or courses from the Irish School of Ecumenics, materials from Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland/Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland, materials from the Church of Ireland’s Hard Gospel Project, materials from the Presbyterian Church’s Peacemaking Programme, the writings of Miroslav Wolf, Furrow, Catholic Church Justice and Peace Resources, resources from the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, materials from Northern Ireland Interfaith Forum, visiting clergy or ministers from other denominations, Writings of Popes John Paul II and Benedict, other papal documents, the work of the Interfaith Centre in Oxford, modules in the ‘Common Purpose’ Programme, the work of Jacques Dupuis, work done by the Redemptorist Community in Belfast, work by Robert Schrieter, the writing of Brian Lennon, materials from the US or from the Reformed Church in France, materials from Willow Creek Church in the US, Think Again, Christian Aid Materials, the Bhagavad Gita, the work of Richard Rohr, Embrace, materials distributed by Edgehill College, the work of Caroline Myers, Margaret Wheatley, Deepak Chopra, John O’Donohue, and Christian Mystics, materials produced by the Peace Education project of the Irish Council of Churches and the Peace and Justice Commission of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, the knowledge and expertise of people in their parishes or congregations, Raphoe Reconciliation Centre, Iona Community, books about Irish and British history, Tear Fund materials, materials in church magazines, the work of Fr. Jim McManus, the work of William Cavanaugh, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the work of Isaac Rottenberg, the work of Samuel L. Canine, Renovare material, speeches by Rowan Williams, materials from the United Reformed Church and Church of Scotland, Inter Church Relations Board, Jesuit centre for faith and justice material, Intercom Magazine, Evangelical Alliance, Nelson Mandela, Bishop Romero, Taize Community, materials from the Glencree Centre for Reconciliation, The Catechism of the Catholic Church, Baha’i Writings, Mediation Northern Ireland, CTS pamphlets, Bishop Kaspar, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Healing the Hurts (Methodist Church), Christian Renewal Centre at Rostrevor, Material from African Enterprise, the work of Hamburger and Kelly, the Asylum seekers council, philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas on the centrality of the ‘other,’ Martin Buber on the I-Thou relationship, and the Tablet, amongst others.

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15% of Church of Ireland clergy reported accessing the Hard Gospel as a general resource on reconciliation.
The option to provide examples of resources they had accessed about reconciliation between different religions or people of different religions yielded some different responses, including: the inter faith forum of Belfast City Council, attending ‘non-Christian’ services and events, Tim Kinahan, Hans Kung, the Hard Gospel, Alan Race; the Unknown Christ of Hinduisum, Raimundo Panikkar, The Unseen Face of Islam, Bill Musk, The reading list for the World Christianity and Interreligious Dialogue course of ISE, the Irish Council of Churches, WCC on dialogue & understanding between the faiths, statements of Vatican II regarding Non-Christian religions, Works by Bede Griffiths, Raymond Panikkar, the Koran, Thich Nhat Hanh, Karen Armstrong, Jack Kornfield, the Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum, the book The Faiths of Ireland by Steven Skuce, attending courses on Tai Chi, Acupuncture, and Yoga, books such as "The Gagging of God" by D.A. Carson and Encountering Religious Pluralism by Harold Netland; Pope Benedict's writings, the ISE library, and meeting people through organizing events such as the Run for Unity, amongst other things. Examples of resources for reconciliation between people of different ethnicities and nationalities also produced some different responses, including: the example of Martin Luther King Jr., Christianity Today magazine, Bible college training, the publication ‘Welcoming Angels,’ the Hard Gospel, New Internationalist magazine, Churches' Commission for Racial Justice, "Reading the Bible with the Damned" by Bob Ekblad, Embrace, Columba Centre in Maynooth, local ethnic forum publications, Trocaire, and the writings of Eric Voegelin, amongst other examples. It also should be noted that some clergy again used this opportunity to say that they thought reconciliation between different religions was inappropriate even to consider.

Next we asked if clergy thought that their denomination or wider religious community had provided them with adequate training or resources for promoting reconciliation. On the island as a whole, 52% said yes, 24% said no, and 23% were unsure. By denomination or faith community, leaders from Other Religions were most likely to say that they had been provided with adequate training (89%), followed by Methodists (63%). The least likely to say they had been provided with adequate training were Other Christians and Church of Ireland (31% said no). Presbyterians were the most likely to choose ‘unsure,’ with 27% doing so. These results are summarized in Table 12.

Table 12: Denomination or Religious Community has provided adequate training for promoting reconciliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination/Religious Community</th>
<th>Whole Island (n=553)</th>
<th>ROI (n=318)</th>
<th>NI (n=215)</th>
<th>RCC (n=213)</th>
<th>COI (n=159)</th>
<th>PCI (n=77)</th>
<th>Meth (n=40)</th>
<th>Other Christian (n=54)</th>
<th>Other Religions (n=9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>52.3%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unsure</strong></td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We then asked how much time (as a percentage per year) clergy thought was appropriate to preach and teach about reconciliation.13 The most commonly chosen category on the whole island was 11-25%, with 30% choosing this option (30% in the Republic and 31% in Northern Ireland). 11-25% was the most popular category for Methodists (46%), Other Christians (35%), Roman Catholics (31%) and Church of Ireland (29%). Other Religions and Presbyterians said it was appropriate to spend more time preaching and teaching about reconciliation. For Other Religions, 38% said it was appropriate to spend more than 75% of their time preaching and teaching about reconciliation. For Presbyterians, 21% chose 26-50%, with 18% each choosing more than 75% and 11-25%. However, the most popular category among Presbyterians was ‘unsure’ (23%). These results are summarized in Table 13.

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13 A Catholic from Co. Carlow offered this comment when asked to identify ‘percentages’ associated with reconciliation and later, ecumenism: ‘It’s a way of being, not a percentage of time.’ This is an insightful comment, and a point taken. However, we hoped by asking about percentages of time we could gain some handle on how clergy prioritized (or not) reconciliation and ecumenism.
We followed this with a question about how much time clergy actually spend preaching and teaching about reconciliation. On the island as a whole, in the Republic, and for most denominations, clergy spend less time preaching and teaching about reconciliation than they think is appropriate. For example, on the island as a whole the most popular category was less than 10% (32%), with 36% in the Republic choosing this category. On the island as whole, 28% said they preached and taught on reconciliation 11-25% of the time, lower than the 30% who thought this was the appropriate figure. In the Republic, 27%, said they preached and taught on reconciliation 11-25% of the time, lower than the 30% who thought this was the appropriate figure.

In Northern Ireland, the most popular category for actually preaching and teaching on reconciliation was 11-25%, with 31% choosing this option. 31% thought this was the appropriate amount of time.

Other Religions and Presbyterians (who from the previous table placed the most emphasis on preaching and teaching about reconciliation), reported preaching and teaching on this topic more frequently than others – but again not as much as they hoped. While 21% of Presbyterians thought it was appropriate to preach and teach on reconciliation 26-50% of the time, 17% actually did so. While 18% thought it was appropriate more than 75% of the time, 13% actually did so. And while 18% thought it was appropriate 11-25% of the time, 23% chose this (lower) figure for the time they actually did so.

These results were further confirmed when we isolated the clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders who said that they thought it was appropriate to spend 11-25% of their time preaching and teaching on reconciliation, and calculated how many actually spent that much time on reconciliation. Of those 162, 100 reported that this was the actual amount of time spent preaching and teaching on reconciliation. So, 62% of all clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as whole were able to match the 11-25% figure that they thought was appropriate with what they actually did, while 38% were not (32% reported spending less than 10% of their time on preaching and teaching about reconciliation).

Results are summarized in Table 14.
We conclude this section on reconciliation with some samples of comments from the surveys, which express various ideas about reconciliation, and if or how best to promote it:

Probably listening to people of other ethnicities is more important than preaching. – Church of Ireland, Co. Donegal

I also believe that there are significant differences between Catholics and Protestants, and world religions, that “living at peace” with the differences, allowing people to have freedom of conscience and to peacefully disagree, is more important than trying to work towards a common unity, which is actually intolerant of disagreeing. Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland, Co. Cork

Some things are important, but not worth preaching about! – Presbyterian, Belfast City

I think these are all very important but I don’t think my flock are ready for it yet. – Church of Ireland, Co. Wicklow

Until there is a change of heart in the individual brought on by a work of God all the preaching/teaching the world will not help. – Baptist, Co. Cork

Summary of Findings on Reconciliation and Questions Raised

There is diversity among clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders about what they think reconciliation is, about how important it should or should not be in their preaching and teaching, and about how they have been equipped to teach and preach about it. What can be learned from these different conceptions of reconciliation?

Strikingly, reconciliation seems to be primarily understood in quite individualistic terms. Clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders were most likely to say that reconciliation between individuals and God, and between individuals, were the most important types of reconciliation. After that and reflecting, most likely, historical and contemporary demographic realities, clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders in the Republic were more likely to emphasize reconciliation between people of different ethnicities and nationalities, while those in Northern Ireland were more likely to emphasize reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants. This raises questions about how appropriate it is for conceptions of reconciliation to focus so much on the individual. Is this done at the expense of other forms of reconciliation?
50% of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders had accessed resources on reconciliation in general – and these resources ranged from those provided by denominations or wider faith communities, to the internet, to materials they had found through their own study and initiative. 52% of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders said that their denomination or wider religious community had provided them with adequate training and resources for promoting reconciliation. Interestingly, Church of Ireland ministers were the most likely to have accessed general resources on reconciliation (59%), and among the most likely to say that their denomination had not provided them with adequate training (31%). So while a slim majority of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders are accessing resources on reconciliation and feel that they have been adequately prepared to preach and teach on it, it seems there is significant room for improvement in these areas. What can be done to help clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders better prepare to teach and preach about reconciliation?

Finally, most clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders indicated that the time they thought it was appropriate to spend on preaching and teaching about reconciliation, as a percentage per year, was 11-25%. This is a significant chunk, in the context of the myriad other topics and issues dealt with by churches and religious communities. But 62% of these clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders actually spent 11-25% of their time preaching and teaching on reconciliation, with 32% of those who thought it was appropriate to do so spending less than 10% of their time on it. Clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders do not have the time for reconciliation that they would like. While it was beyond the scope of this survey, it would be interesting to ask clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders why they think this is so? And to ask if 11-25% is indeed the appropriate amount of time to spend on reconciliation? Further, what can be done to narrow the gap between the time clergy thought it was appropriate to spend on reconciliation and the time they actually spend on reconciliation, bearing in mind the different contexts of their ministries?

Ecumenism

This part of the survey was designed to gather information about how clergy, pastors and faith leaders think about ecumenism. We opened by asking them to define, in a few short words, what ecumenism means to them. Since definitions of ecumenism are often contested, we wanted to provide people with this opportunity to let us know what was in their heads when they answered the other questions about ecumenism that would follow. Again, we received a range of responses, including: promotion of understanding, reaching out, mutual respect, the eventual unity of the churches, reconciliation between all Christian churches, the efforts to be made to bring about the answer to Jesus’ prayer: ‘that they may be one’, a ‘creedal re-unification of the church,’ communication to bring about understanding and acceptance of the other’s position without of the necessity of agreeing with that position, and treating other traditions as equals on journey to God. The definitions of ecumenism seemed to fall into three broad categories: some said it meant church unity in which people believed and practiced the same things; others said it meant a church unity in which people were free to have some different beliefs and practices – but treated each other as brothers and sisters; and others said ecumenism included efforts towards spiritual unity with people of all faiths (not just Christian ones). In these definitions, many respondents were keen to demonstrate their approval or disapproval of what they thought ecumenism was or included. Here are some examples of definitions which clearly indicate dislike and suspicion of ecumenism:

Ecumenism is the coming together of religious groups with the pretence that major principles of fundamental difference can either be overcome or simply overlooked. – Christian, Belfast City

Compromising principles for short term gain. – Church of Ireland, Co. Antrim

It is an effort to bring different faiths together and thus a departure from the truth of the Gospel. – Free Presbyterian, Co. Tyrone
Ecumenism is a false, dressed-up display of unity. True unity is the body of Christ made up of people of every nation, tribe and language who have been reconciled to God through His blood, shed on the cross. – Presbyterian, Co. Down

The Catholic Church will concede nothing, so ecumenism means the Vatican ruling the World. – Humanist, Co. Dublin

Ecumenism to me is a negative word. I perceive it as a word which invites me to "give up" valued beliefs I believe to be biblically true. I understand the intent, but believe the actions of its leaders globally and sometimes nationally are misguided. – Seventh Day Adventist, Co. Armagh

On the other hand, some clergy offered definitions that indicated a positive perception of ecumenism:

Getting to know about people of other Christian faiths; and their beliefs. Discovering truths about the beliefs of people from other World religions. – Catholic, Co. Armagh

The realisation of Jesus’ prayer ‘that they may all be one' and realising that we can have this unity while maintaining diversity. – Catholic, Co. Laois

Learning to live rightly in relationship to God and thus holistically to God's creation (oikos) so that our entire way of life reflects the love of God for each particular within this infinite inter-connected whole. It includes but transcends human-to-human reconciliation and includes such notions as 'economics' and 'ecology' both of which have their roots in the Greek word 'oikos' meaning 'God's household'. – Presbyterian, Co. Down

For me ecumenism, along with mission, is the lifeblood of the Church. It is also the biggest challenge because it questions the whole basis of denominations which are in themselves signs of failed reconciliation. – Church of Ireland, Co. Dublin

Seeing Jesus in those you meet of other religions. – Catholic, Co. Donegal

Ecumenism for me is about recognizing firstly the Catholic Church to which I belong must take its share of blame for the divisions that now exist between Christians. It's about being humble and admitting that we don't have all the answers, and that we are all sisters and brothers in Christ and therefore treat each other as such. – Catholic, Co. Dublin

That said, even some clergy who seemed to have positive conceptions of ecumenism said that they found the term alienating – even a stumbling block to better relationships with others:

[Ecumenism is] sitting in some cold church with the same few faithful members of either congregation in early January, following some strange prayer leaflet that nobody sees as facing issues that need facing-just let's be 'nice' to each other. Cynical? Sorry. – Catholic, Co. Sligo

Honestly b___ s___ t! Ideally, that we would all be one. – Catholic, Co. Down

Ecumenism means to me that diverse people decide to temporarily forget their differences and meet on common ground, then go back home and continue to practice their differences. Evangelical Baptist, Co. Dublin

Ecumenism means a shared vision. In reality, everyone’s too busy in their own patch to give time and effort to put the amount of work putting it into practice. – Church of Ireland, Co. Offaly
It’s a word I avoid, because of others’ misconceptions. But to me, it’s about being a world citizen, and a member of the body of Christ, Lord of ALL creation - so willing to be in relationship to all people. – Presbyterian, Belfast City

To me Ecumenism is something that Catholic and Protestant church leaders used to do. It is a word not used in the church circles I dwell in. It has become tainted to evangelicals. – Christian Fellowship, Galway City

It’s a word that sadly needs to go on the junkpile because of the way that it is received. Although, I appreciate it and would unashamedly call myself an ecumenicist, I think it is commonly read as a word for exchange without critique; a project of empty relativism that can’t feed into discipleship of Christians or the increase of justice in the land. – Presbyterian, Co. Kildare

What I experience is nothing short of tokenism; avoidance of risk, of experimentation for fear of ‘higher authorities’. Ecumenism in Ireland has become a form of clericalism. Many good, unannounced forms of ecumenism happening between individuals. – Catholic, Co. Mayo

Following on from this, we asked clergy 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. The following table records the frequencies of all the options as they were ticked.

The most popular option was Interchurch Dialogue between Catholics and Protestants, followed by Good Civic Relations between Catholics and Protestants. For Catholic clergy, the most popular option was interchurch prayer between Catholics and Protestants, while for Other Religions the most popular option was Interfaith Worship including Other Religions and Christians.

The Christian churches prioritized options including ‘Catholics and Protestants’ rather than options including Other Religions. The most popular choice including Other Religions was Good Civic Relations with Other Religions.

Interchurch communion between Catholics and Protestants was the least popular choice among clergy in the Republic and Catholics. It was most popular among Methodists, where it was ranked seventh of the 13 options. Table 15 summarizes the frequency with which each of the options was ticked (bear in mind that each individual could tick more than one option).
### Table 15: Ecumenism includes? Frequencies of Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Island</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RCC</th>
<th>COI</th>
<th>PCI</th>
<th>Meth</th>
<th>Other Christian</th>
<th>Other Religions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Interchurch Dialogue Catholic/Protestant (488)</td>
<td>Interchurch Dialogue Catholic/Protestant (275)</td>
<td>Interchurch Dialogue Catholic/Protestant (184)</td>
<td>Interchurch Dialogue Catholic/Protestant (184)</td>
<td>Interchurch Dialogue Catholic/Protestant (189)</td>
<td>Interchurch Dialogue Catholic/Protestant (197)</td>
<td>Interchurch Dialogue Catholic/Protestant (184)</td>
<td>Good Civic Relations Catholic/Protestant (64)</td>
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<td>Interchurch Prayer Catholic/Protestant (193)</td>
<td>Interchurch Prayer Catholic/Protestant (193)</td>
<td>Interchurch Prayer Catholic/Protestant (184)</td>
<td>Good Civic Relations Catholic/Protestant (184)</td>
<td>Interchurch Prayer Catholic/Protestant (36)</td>
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<td>Interchurch Prayer Catholic/Protestant (462)</td>
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<td>Interchurch Prayer Catholic/Protestant (170)</td>
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<td>Shared Missionary Catholic/Protestant (128)</td>
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<td>Interfaith Prayer Other Religions (184)</td>
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<td>Interfaith Prayer Other Religions (163)</td>
<td>Interchurch Communion Catholic/Protestant (71)</td>
<td>Interchurch Communion Catholic/Protestant (71)</td>
<td>Interchurch Communion Catholic/Protestant (71)</td>
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<td>Interfaith Prayer Other Religions (86)</td>
<td>Interfaith Prayer Other Religions (86)</td>
<td>Interfaith Prayer Other Religions (86)</td>
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<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (80)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (80)</td>
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<td>Interchurch Communion Catholic/Protestant (31)</td>
<td>Interchurch Communion Catholic/Protestant (31)</td>
<td>Interchurch Worship Catholic/Protestant (19)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
We also gave clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders the opportunity to identify other options that should be included in ecumenism. Some of these responses included Protestant/Protestant relationships, inclusion of Orthodox Christians and not just focusing on Roman Catholics/Protestants, informal activities, and building relationships. As one said:

Just because it includes all these things does not mean that I would always participate in all of these. There are times and places for putting energy into such endeavours. The quality of relationship is more important than the symbolic gesture. I can happily pray with anyone - because God is Lord of all, but I would not necessarily be content to participate in every practice, or consent to every activity or statement. Relationship, relationship, relationship! – Presbyterian, Belfast City

We also sought to gauge clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders’ level of involvement in ecumenical bodies and activities, at the international/national and local levels. The following table shows percentages of clergy who have participated in international/national ecumenical bodies and activities and local ecumenical bodies and activities in the last 12 months, on the island as a whole, in the Republic, in Northern Ireland, and by denominations/faith communities. It also shows the percentages who have never taken part in ecumenical bodies and activities, and those who have never taken part but would consider doing so.

On the island as a whole, local ecumenical activities are the most popular, with 59% taking part (56% in the Republic and 63% in Northern Ireland). Methodists (80%) are the most likely to engage in local ecumenical activities, followed by Church of Ireland clergy (71%). The least likely to engage in local ecumenical activities are Other Christians, with 41% taking part.

Next most popular are local ecumenical bodies, with 42% involved on the island as a whole (36% in the Republic and 50% in Northern Ireland). Methodists (69%) are the most likely to be involved, followed by Presbyterians (50%). The least likely to be involved are Roman Catholic clergy at 34%.

At the international/national level, 22% of clergy on the island as a whole are involved in ecumenical activities (23% in the Republic and 21% in Northern Ireland). Again, Methodists (38%) are the most likely to be engaged, followed by Church of Ireland (23%). Roman Catholics are least likely to be engaged, with 19% reporting that they have participated in these activities. As for international/national ecumenical bodies, 19% have been involved in the last 12 months on the island as a whole (19% in the Republic and 20% in Northern Ireland). Methodists (39%) and Other Christians (23%) are most likely to participate, while Roman Catholics (16%) are least likely.

Here, it is important to recognize that Methodists, as the smallest of the ‘big four’ denominations, may have more opportunities to take part in ecumenical activities than clergy from the larger denominations. There may only be one Methodist church in many areas, so that minister may be invited to take part in more ecumenical bodies and activities than clergy from larger denominations. Further, in many rural parts of Ireland there may only be Roman Catholic parishes, making involvement in ecumenical bodies and activities more difficult for Roman Catholic clergy.

For Other Religions, ecumenical involvement is lower than for Christian groups in most cases (0% involved in international/national bodies in the last 12 months, 11% international/national activities, 11% local bodies, 13% local activities). But Other Religions report a willingness to be more involved, with 71% saying that they would consider being involved in international/national bodies, 44% saying they would consider being involved in international/national activities, 56% saying they would consider being involved in local bodies, and 38% saying they would consider being involved in local activities. These figures should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents among Other Religions (‘n’ ranges from seven to nine in Table 16).

Results are summarized in Table 16.
Table 16: Involvement in Ecumenical Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole Island</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RCC</th>
<th>COI</th>
<th>PCI</th>
<th>Meth</th>
<th>Other Christian</th>
<th>Other Religions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Int/Nat Bodies Last 12 months</td>
<td>18.8% (n=526)</td>
<td>19.1% (n=294)</td>
<td>19.7% (n=208)</td>
<td>15.6% (n=199)</td>
<td>17.5% (n=149)</td>
<td>19.2% (n=73)</td>
<td>39.3% (n=18)</td>
<td>22.6% (n=51)</td>
<td>0.0% (n=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int/Nat Bodies Never</td>
<td>34.4% (n=526)</td>
<td>36.7% (n=294)</td>
<td>30.8% (n=208)</td>
<td>36.2% (n=199)</td>
<td>31.5% (n=149)</td>
<td>35.6% (n=73)</td>
<td>26.3% (n=38)</td>
<td>43.4% (n=53)</td>
<td>14.3% (n=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int/Nat Bodies Never, would consider</td>
<td>23.6% (n=526)</td>
<td>22.8% (n=294)</td>
<td>23.6% (n=208)</td>
<td>24.1% (n=189)</td>
<td>25.5% (n=149)</td>
<td>25.1% (n=73)</td>
<td>26.3% (n=38)</td>
<td>15.1% (n=51)</td>
<td>71.4% (n=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int/Nat Activities, Last 12 months</td>
<td>21.9% (n=517)</td>
<td>22.8% (n=283)</td>
<td>20.9% (n=206)</td>
<td>19.2% (n=193)</td>
<td>22.9% (n=149)</td>
<td>20.8% (n=72)</td>
<td>38.5% (n=39)</td>
<td>20.8% (n=51)</td>
<td>13.6% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int/Nat Activities, Never</td>
<td>32.7% (n=517)</td>
<td>31.9% (n=283)</td>
<td>34.0% (n=206)</td>
<td>34.7% (n=193)</td>
<td>28.5% (n=144)</td>
<td>34.7% (n=72)</td>
<td>20.3% (n=39)</td>
<td>47.2% (n=51)</td>
<td>33.3% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int/Nat Activities Never, would consider</td>
<td>20.7% (n=517)</td>
<td>19.7% (n=283)</td>
<td>21.9% (n=206)</td>
<td>20.7% (n=193)</td>
<td>21.5% (n=144)</td>
<td>16.7% (n=72)</td>
<td>23.1% (n=39)</td>
<td>13.2% (n=51)</td>
<td>44.4% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Bodies, Last 12 Months</td>
<td>42.0% (n=524)</td>
<td>36.5% (n=288)</td>
<td>50.5% (n=210)</td>
<td>34.2% (n=196)</td>
<td>45.6% (n=147)</td>
<td>50.0% (n=74)</td>
<td>69.2% (n=39)</td>
<td>35.3% (n=51)</td>
<td>11.1% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Bodies, Never</td>
<td>22.9% (n=524)</td>
<td>25.4% (n=288)</td>
<td>19.5% (n=210)</td>
<td>24.0% (n=196)</td>
<td>15.0% (n=147)</td>
<td>29.7% (n=74)</td>
<td>5.1% (n=39)</td>
<td>45.1% (n=51)</td>
<td>22.2% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Bodies Never, would consider</td>
<td>13.6% (n=524)</td>
<td>16.3% (n=288)</td>
<td>10.5% (n=210)</td>
<td>16.3% (n=196)</td>
<td>12.9% (n=147)</td>
<td>9.5% (n=74)</td>
<td>10.3% (n=39)</td>
<td>5.9% (n=51)</td>
<td>55.6% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Activities, Last 12 months</td>
<td>58.9% (n=530)</td>
<td>56.4% (n=296)</td>
<td>63.3% (n=210)</td>
<td>52.2% (n=201)</td>
<td>74.4% (n=147)</td>
<td>60.8% (n=74)</td>
<td>80.0% (n=40)</td>
<td>40.7% (n=54)</td>
<td>12.5% (n=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Activities, Never</td>
<td>10.9% (n=530)</td>
<td>9.8% (n=296)</td>
<td>12.9% (n=210)</td>
<td>6.0% (n=201)</td>
<td>8.2% (n=147)</td>
<td>17.6% (n=74)</td>
<td>0.0% (n=40)</td>
<td>31.5% (n=54)</td>
<td>25.0% (n=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Activities Never, would consider</td>
<td>5.3% (n=530)</td>
<td>6.1% (n=296)</td>
<td>4.8% (n=210)</td>
<td>6.5% (n=201)</td>
<td>0.7% (n=147)</td>
<td>4.1% (n=74)</td>
<td>5.0% (n=40)</td>
<td>9.3% (n=54)</td>
<td>37.5% (n=8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also asked clergy to provide examples of the ecumenical bodies and activities with which they were involved. Examples of international/national ecumenical bodies included: World Council of Churches, British Council of Churches, Irish Council of Churches, Irish Inter Church Meeting, Irish Catholic Bishop’s Advisory Committee on Ecumenism, Association of Hospital Chaplains, the Irish School of Ecumenics, The Glenstal Conference, the Greenhills Conference, Maynooth Advisory Body, Christian Aid, L’Arche and Faith & Light Movements, SWICKEN, Sword of the Spirit, Church of Ireland Commission on Christian Unity and Dialogue, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland; World Alliance of Reformed Churches; Conference of European Churches, Church of Ireland - Methodist Covenant Council, MAP; JCMWA, Embrace, Corrymeela, European Society for Inter-theological and Intercultural
studies, Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland/Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland, Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum, World Deaconess Association, Columbanus Community of Reconciliation in Belfast, CTBI Network for International Students, Jewish Christian Dialogue, The Open Christianity Network; The Julian Meetings (ecumenical contemplative prayer groups); Changing Attitude Ireland, the Ulster Project (children’s exchange programme to USA), Focolare, Ecumenical Youth Council of Europe, Evangelical Alliance, Irish Churches Together, Presbyterian Inter Church Relations Committee, and Ballymascanlon Gatherings. A Church of Ireland minister in Dublin commented that he had never been asked, while another Church of Ireland minister in Co. Dublin wrote: ‘I was at some meetings of ICC and would like to be asked more often - many ordinary clergy feel excluded!’ Examples of local ecumenical bodies included: The Lantern Inter-Faith, Inter-Cultural Centre in Dublin, Focolare, Diocesan Ecumenical Bodies, Local 'Churches Together', local 'Councils of Churches', local development bodies, Friends of The Way, Inter Church Forums, ecumenical study groups, Charis Ecumenical Community, YMCA, Chaplaincy Teams, Celtic Spirituality Group, and the Raphoe Reconciliation Group.

Examples of activities included: Christian Unity Services (especially in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity), World Day of Prayer, youth group outings, Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations, Not for Sale Sunday, Women’s World Day of Prayer, Walk of Light, conferences, seminars, Pentecost meetings sponsored by Transformations Ireland, pilgrimages, United Prayer Breakfasts, Alpha courses, Joint Services of Remembrance, bible studies, an interfaith 'fun-run' which involved children of all faiths, trips abroad together, Christmas carol singing, weddings, funerals, blessings, pulpit swapping, ‘dedication’ or ‘blessing’ services for supermarkets, motorways, or other public spaces, shared way of the cross on Good Friday, prayer meetings, healing services, shared social activities, Taize prayer services, covenant relationships with other local churches, concerts, hospital committees, employment and training schemes, and peace groups. Among those who do not participate in activities, a Religious Missionary Sister in Dublin commented: ‘I have little time available and local ecumenical activities seem to be superficial.’

Then we asked clergy to describe their involvement in ecumenical activities as ‘frequent,’ ‘never,’ or ‘occasional.’ On the island as a whole, 32% considered their involvement frequent, 56% considered it occasional, and 11% reported never engaging in ecumenical activities. Clergy in Northern Ireland were more likely to describe their involvement as frequent (37%) than those in the Republic (29%). Denominationally, Methodists were most likely to describe their activity as frequent (58%), followed by Church of Ireland (47%). Other Christians were most likely to report never participating in ecumenical activities (41%). Results are summarized in Table 17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 17: Self Evaluation of Level of Ecumenical Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next we asked how much time, as a percentage per year, clergy thought was appropriate to devote to ecumenical activities. The most popular category here was less than 10%, with 40% of clergy on the whole island choosing this option (38% in the Republic and 45% in Northern Ireland). The only denomination to stray from this trend was the Church of Ireland, in which the most popular category was 11-25%, selected by 34% of its clergy. While the most popular categories among Methodists were less than 10% (31%) and 11-25% (26%), they were more likely than other denominations to select 26-50% (15%), 51-75% (13%) and more than 75% (8%). Results are summarized in Table 18.
Results are summarized in Table 19.

Table 19: Time Actually Devoted to Ecumenical Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole Island (n=533)</th>
<th>ROI (n=305)</th>
<th>NI (n=206)</th>
<th>RCC (n=209)</th>
<th>COI (n=151)</th>
<th>PCI (n=73)</th>
<th>Meth (n=37)</th>
<th>Other Christian (n=48)</th>
<th>Other Religions (n=9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10%</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-25%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-50%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-75%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 75%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next, we asked clergy to describe their denomination/wider faith community and their congregation/local faith community’s conception of ecumenism as positive, negative, or indifferent. They could also choose to answer that they were unsure. On the island as a whole, 67% reported their denomination’s conception as positive (70% in the Republic and 61% in Northern Ireland). The only exception to this trend was the Presbyterians, with only 18% perceiving their denomination’s conception of ecumenism as positive. For Presbyterians, 42% thought the denomination’s conception was negative, with 29% thinking it was indifferent. Methodists and Other Religions (90%) reported the most positive conceptions of ecumenism.

When it came to their own congregations, 57% of clergy on the island as a whole reported that its conception of ecumenism was positive (65% in the Republic and 47% in Northern Ireland). While the positives outweigh the ‘negatives’ and ‘indifferents’, these percentages are lower across the board (except for Presbyterians). This indicates a general trend where denominations as a whole are perceived as more positive about ecumenism than congregations. For Presbyterians, on the other hand, 41% of clergy reported that their own congregations were positive about ecumenism – in stark contrast to the 18% who said their denomination had a positive conception of ecumenism. Those most likely to report congregations/local faith communities with positive conceptions of ecumenism were the Other Religions (78%) and Roman Catholics (69%). Presbyterian ministers were most likely to regard their congregation as negative (22%) and Church of Ireland clergy were most likely to regard their congregation as indifferent (34%). Results are summarized in Table 20.

### Table 20: Denominational & Congregational Perceptions of Ecumenism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole Island</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RCC</th>
<th>COI</th>
<th>PCI</th>
<th>Meth</th>
<th>Other Christian</th>
<th>Other Religions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denomination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive</td>
<td>66.9% (n=549)</td>
<td>70.3% (n=310)</td>
<td>61.2% (n=214)</td>
<td>76.2% (n=214)</td>
<td>73.4% (n=154)</td>
<td>18.2% (n=77)</td>
<td>89.7% (n=39)</td>
<td>60.8% (n=51)</td>
<td>88.9% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative</td>
<td>8.9% (n=549)</td>
<td>6.1% (n=310)</td>
<td>13.6% (n=214)</td>
<td>2.8% (n=214)</td>
<td>2.6% (n=154)</td>
<td>41.6% (n=77)</td>
<td>2.6% (n=39)</td>
<td>11.8% (n=51)</td>
<td>0.0% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>16.0% (n=549)</td>
<td>16.1% (n=310)</td>
<td>16.4% (n=214)</td>
<td>14.5% (n=214)</td>
<td>13.6% (n=154)</td>
<td>28.6% (n=77)</td>
<td>5.1% (n=39)</td>
<td>21.6% (n=51)</td>
<td>11.1% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>8.2% (n=549)</td>
<td>7.4% (n=310)</td>
<td>8.9% (n=214)</td>
<td>6.5% (n=214)</td>
<td>10.4% (n=154)</td>
<td>11.7% (n=77)</td>
<td>2.6% (n=39)</td>
<td>5.9% (n=51)</td>
<td>0.0% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denomination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive</td>
<td>57.3% (n=541)</td>
<td>65.0% (n=306)</td>
<td>47.4% (n=211)</td>
<td>68.6% (n=210)</td>
<td>52.0% (n=154)</td>
<td>40.5% (n=74)</td>
<td>55.3% (n=38)</td>
<td>52.0% (n=50)</td>
<td>77.8% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative</td>
<td>8.0% (n=541)</td>
<td>3.3% (n=306)</td>
<td>15.2% (n=211)</td>
<td>0.5% (n=210)</td>
<td>9.1% (n=154)</td>
<td>21.6% (n=74)</td>
<td>13.2% (n=38)</td>
<td>14.0% (n=50)</td>
<td>0.0% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>29.0% (n=541)</td>
<td>25.5% (n=306)</td>
<td>32.2% (n=211)</td>
<td>26.7% (n=210)</td>
<td>33.8% (n=154)</td>
<td>31.1% (n=74)</td>
<td>21.1% (n=38)</td>
<td>26.0% (n=50)</td>
<td>11.0% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>5.7% (n=541)</td>
<td>6.2% (n=306)</td>
<td>5.2% (n=211)</td>
<td>4.3% (n=210)</td>
<td>5.2% (n=154)</td>
<td>6.8% (n=74)</td>
<td>10.5% (n=38)</td>
<td>8.0% (n=50)</td>
<td>11.1% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, we asked clergy what they thought should be the priorities of ecumenism in Northern Ireland and the island as a whole. These were open ended questions, designed to solicit a range of perspectives. Among the suggestions for Northern Ireland were: dialogue on theology, shared social action, reconciliation between Roman Catholics and Protestants, peace, less talk and more action, end racism/secitarianism and class difference, bringing schools together, healing, dealing with the past, forgiveness, respect, listening, anti-sectarianism, confronting materialism, joint action on combating secularism, demonstrating shared concern for international aid / development, encouraging cross community relations, protect family and married life, moving the agenda on from being ‘Troubles related’ (a Roman Catholic in Co. Limerick wrote: ‘Forget the past. Obsession with reconciliation is living in the past.’), dealing with ‘extreme’ Protestantism or ‘fundamentalism,’ shared communion (a Church of Ireland minister from Co. Sligo wrote: ‘Shared
Eucharist between Christians of all denominations – without this ecumenical worship is a mere farce.’), and reaching out to smaller Christian denominations, including Pentecostals. Some indicated that ecumenism should not be a priority at all, with comments urging the preaching of ‘justification by faith alone’ or responses that seemed to see an ‘interpretation of ecumenism’ in the survey itself:

As stated, your interpretation of ecumenism is not one I share, so even my answers will be clouded to you. All who are converted to Christ by the power of the Gospel, long for fellowship... that's Biblical ecumenism. ... This survey is not interested in the Truth of God’s Word, but is sectarian in its approach, trying to dilute the Word of God, and mix light with darkness. This cannot be so. READ YOUR BIBLE!!! – Presbyterian, Co. Armagh

Other examples focused on making ecumenism more local and relevant, and re-thinking the very use of the term ecumenism:

Communication with the person in the pew. "Ecu-maniacs" are viewed by many, if they are aware of them at all, as akin to yet another denomination. – Church of Ireland, Co. Westmeath

"Nothing is real until it is local." Let it be less academic and more visible, transparent and practical. Ask of others (such as politicians) nothing which not prepared to do themselves. An open, declared and shared responsibility for what by commission and omission the churches have contributed to sectarianism and our years of violence and brokenness. An open, declared and shared commitment / responsibility for reconciliation and healing. – Methodist, Co. Down

Think about and create a word other than ecumenical to describe collaborative working amongst 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

I think shared prayer and common spiritual experience, such as used to be available through the Christian Renewal Centre in Rostrevor and through various ecumenical prayer groups, is important but I would also, as a lifelong ecumenist stress the value of ecumenical dialogue at a theological level. In the current state of inter-church relations (taking into consideration the official hard-line attitude of the Roman Catholic Church) I would describe myself as a short-term pessimist - but a long-term optimist. I think this is part of a very long-term faith journey. In Northern Ireland the important thing is to establish and maintain good personal relationships and to remove misconceptions. – Church of Ireland, Co. Armagh

Among the suggestions for the island as a whole were: confronting secularism, eco issues, anti-sectarianism, immigration, the economy, reconciliation, dialogue, education, getting to know each other socially, to move towards more formal agreements on common baptism and marriage, liturgies and observances, the removal of church from all state bodies, to promote greater understanding between people from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, making the world a better place for the poor, less clericalism and empowering laypeople, rediscovering a common Celtic heritage and sharing this with the new churches, keeping evangelicals ‘on board,’ sharing the gospel, and speaking to an un-churched generation. Although some responded along the lines of: ‘I don’t think organized ecumenics are effective and no energy should be put into them’ (Evangelical Baptist, Co. Dublin), there were other suggestions such as:

To develop ecumenism so it does not become just a issue of tokenism associated with Northern Ireland and the Troubles. –Catholic, Co. Dublin

Ireland needs a new model of church, new models of ordained ministry, a 'Medellin' or a 'Puebla.' – Religious Missionary Sister, Co. Dublin
The ‘fall out’ from recent revelations of activities and behaviour of those in ‘Christian’ institutions towards the most vulnerable - especially in the ‘secular’ society in which we find ourselves - will affect all denominations but certainly the once ‘dominant’ one will feel the breeze. So ecumenical activity may have to focus on ‘reconciling’ with an angry secular society. – Church of Ireland, Co. Dublin

Bringing the message of Christ to those who have no personal knowledge of God and Christ. Without a personal relationship with Christ there can be no true and lasting ecumenism and reconciliation on this island. – Methodist, no location provided

We so badly need figures of faith with stature speaking up and speaking out. Sacks does it in England. Tim Ratcliffe does it. Rowan Williams can do it but is too caught up in the inner conflicts in the Anglican communion. Here we have too many who have lost credibility and the so called leaders have become muted or are figures of fun. We badly need faith people to have a say and to say something worthwhile. – Catholic, Co. Dublin

Doing together as much as possible; including the occasional provocative ‘bottom-up’ activities such as con-celebration of Eucharist. Continually challenging church leaders for theological justification for structures that limit and define others, such as participation of women in full ministerial roles (both conservative Evangelical and Roman Catholic!) Formal ecumenical bodies providing an independent and robust critique of unjust church structures and traditions where ever they are. – Church of Ireland, Co. Tipperary

Summary of Findings on Ecumenism and Questions Raised

As with reconciliation there was a range of opinions about what ecumenism is and what it should include. Responses to open ended questions, especially, revealed deep emotion about ecumenism on the part of those who stridently oppose it and on the part of those who see it as a vehicle to transcending historic and contemporary differences.

Generally, clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders conceived of ecumenism in terms of relations between Catholics and Protestants, with dialogue and good civic relations taking priority over other kinds of interaction. Other forms of activity such as joint social action, prayer, worship and mission were not regarded as quite as important. This raises questions about why this is so, and whether ‘dialogue’ and good ‘civic’ relations are actually ‘lowest common denominator’ activities, the ones that are easiest to engage in politely. If this is the case, it raises these questions: is this good enough? Can young people, the newer generations of Christians (and people of other faiths) on this island, get excited about the polite dialogue and civic relationships that seem to echo the relationships between secular groups within civil society?

Further, clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders placed less importance on relationships and activities with Other Religions than on relationships between Christian denominations. In light of increasing religious diversity in the Republic and Northern Ireland, we can ask what level of engagement (if any) with Other Religions is appropriate and can and should be pursued.

The survey also revealed that most ecumenical activity is local, and some expressed the desire that ecumenism should be more local still. Clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders provided examples of a range of local ecumenical activities and bodies with which they were involved. But there was a sense that some still perceived ecumenism as something done far away by high ranking clergy, which had little relevance or impact on everyday lives.

That said, most clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders thought it was appropriate to spend less than 10% of their time each year on ecumenism, which means that most prioritize ‘reconciliation’ over ‘ecumenism.’ Even so, clergy were not always able to spend as
much time on ecumenical activities as they thought appropriate. While it was beyond the scope of this survey, it would be interesting to ask clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders why they think this is so? And to ask if less than 10% is indeed the appropriate amount of time to spend on ecumenism? Further, what can be done to narrow the gap between the time clergy thought it was appropriate to spend on ecumenism and the time they actually spend on ecumenism, bearing in mind the different contexts of their ministries?

Finally, clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders generally reported that their denominations and congregations had positive conceptions of ecumenism (except for Presbyterians, most of who reported that their denomination’s perception was negative). Most also thought that their denominations had more positive conceptions of ecumenism than their congregations. This raises the question of why this is so? Do most denominations and faith communities actually have positive conceptions of ecumenism and if they do, are they effectively communicating with local churches and faith communities about ecumenism? That said, these ‘positive’ evaluations should be read in light of the comments in the sections of the survey with open-ended questions. Here, a number of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders expressed the view that the term ‘ecumenism’ was itself negative and tainted. Reasons for this ranged from their own disagreement with what they perceived as the ecumenical project, to dismay that much of the good work that goes on under the banner of ecumenism is damaged by a word that has been too much used and abused to be of any good use. This raises questions such as: Are they right to evaluate the term ‘ecumenism’ in this way? Does the term ‘ecumenism’ need to be redeemed or abandoned?

**Next Steps**

We hope that this report will stimulate plenty of debate and discussion about these issues. In the next phase of the research project, we plan to conduct eight case studies of congregations, parishes, and faith communities, identified through this survey, throughout the Republic and Northern Ireland. This will provide us with deeper insight about the dynamics of how people in churches and faith communities are actually addressing these issues. Our other goals include: 1. To facilitate the appropriation of a context-sensitive ecumenics to stimulate further theological research in related theological subdisciplines (e.g., ecumenical ecclesiology, socio-religious reconciliation; contextual theology and social ethics); and 2. To equip churches and other faith communities with theological resources for a new ecumenical vision and praxis for the 21st century.

You can keep up-to-date on our research project via our website, [www.ecumenics.ie](http://www.ecumenics.ie).