



“Whatever you say say nothing”

A report on the views and experiences
of **Border Protestants** for the **Church
of Ireland Diocese of Clogher**

Written by **David Gardiner**
Commissioned by the **Hard Gospel Project**

{Contents}

| | | | |
|---|-----------|---|-----------|
| • Preface | 2 | 4. Civic Life | |
| • Introduction | 3 | 4.1 The Education System | 50 |
| • Methodology | 5 | 4.2 The Orange Order | 51 |
| | | 4.3 Politicians | 52 |
| | | 4.4 Generational Matters | 53 |
| 1. The Church of Ireland - Clogher Diocese | | 5. Conclusions and Recommendations | |
| 1.1 The Church and the People | 9 | 5.1 Church as 'comfort zone' versus Church as 'uncomfortable zone' | 56 |
| 1.2 The Clergy | 14 | 5.2 Walking on egg shells | 57 |
| 1.3 Issues and Challenges | 20 | 5.3 Lifting the carpet | 57 |
| | | 5.4 Facing up to the legacy | 58 |
| 2. The Troubles | | 5.5 On being a Protestant | 59 |
| 2.1 Violence | 26 | 5.6 Taking a rightful place at the table | 60 |
| 2.2 'Prodesans and Catlicks' | 30 | 5.7 Borderlands | 61 |
| | | 5.8 'The elephant in the room' | 61 |
| 3. The Border Protestant | | 5.9 'Education, education, education' | 62 |
| 3.1 The People | 36 | 5.10 Orange and Black | 63 |
| 3.2 The Border | 41 | 5.11 'The Generation Game' | 63 |
| 3.3 The Border Church | 44 | | |
| 3.4 The 'Neighbours' | 46 | • Bibliography | 65 |
| | | • Acknowledgements | 66 |
| | | • Appendices | 67 |

{Preface}

In complete contradiction of the title of this report *"Whatever you say, say nothing"* - the people I met in the course of its preparation were enormously obliging and more than willing to talk. The candour and sincerity of interviewees made the research element of this report enormously enjoyable.

Whilst *"Whatever you say, say nothing"* has undoubtedly been a maxim the Border Protestant has used intuitively throughout difficult times, a new era is dawning and it may now be time to review old ways and adopt new approaches. In order to prosper in the modern world the vast majority of Border Protestants understand that they need to communicate, cooperate and become more active with their various neighbours. This report explores some of the views and experiences of Border Protestants and examines how ready they are, with appropriate leadership and support, to face the challenges of the new era.

**“Whatever
you say
say nothing
”**

{Introduction}

This study, commissioned by the Hard Gospel Project¹ on behalf of the Church of Ireland Diocese of Clogher², focuses on the experiences and views of a sample of Protestants from across Clogher Diocese³, most of whom are members of or are familiar with the Church of Ireland.

As such, this report is a social enquiry, an exploration and examination of how personal, social, cultural, religious and political beliefs and personal experiences influence people's attitudes, behaviours and outlook on life.

The original rationale for this project, originally drafted by the Hard Gospel Project, proposed that the rural/border protestant people of Clogher Diocese had been subject to a wide range of complex challenges and issues over decades which have had a profound and somewhat debilitating effect on individuals, families, groups and the broader community. *"Pessimism, fragmentation and a difficulty in articulating hopes and fears"* were cited as common traits within the *"Ulster Protestant psyche."* Consequently, an important part of the purpose of this study is to *"shed further light on these issues"* and enable a better understanding of them for both those directly and immediately involved and those who may be considered neighbours or other interested parties. The target

audience for the report and its recommendations is therefore primarily the Church and its members.

Additionally, the project rationale proposed that the best way forward is to *"facilitate and support the rural/border protestant community to express, articulate and explore the experiences and emotions which it all too often has either denied or suppressed."* The natural Protestant tendency to defensiveness and stoic reserve was identified as problematic for a community needing to take its place at the societal table and positively and confidently engage with all of the diverse 'others' around that table. Thus, this study chose to adopt an action-research approach in order to stimulate and encourage a process of self-reflection, leading, hopefully, to both greater expression and articulation of experiences, feelings and aspirations and some consequential action.

The overall aim was agreed as:

To contribute to a more peaceful and sustainable rural community by encouraging the development of a progressive, confident and inclusive Protestant border community in cross-border areas covered by the Church of Ireland diocese of Clogher.

¹ For further information see www.hardgospel.net

² For further information see <http://www.clogher.anglican.org/>

³ See Appendix 1

A number of objectives were also identified:

- *To facilitate members of the rural/border Protestant/Church of Ireland community to share and explore their personal experiences and reflections of life in Clogher diocese and their aspirations for the future, with particular reference to some of the following: the 'Troubles', the Church, the Border, being a minority community, the loyal orders, civic life, 'the neighbours', the Enniskillen bomb.*
- *To record and present the experiences, views, aspirations and recommendations of participants to wider audiences in ways which promote dialogue, engagement, learning and community development.*
- *To enable members of the rural/border Protestant/Church of Ireland community to engage constructively and effectively with other communities to address issues key to peace building and community development.*

The style and tone of this report is deliberately informal and semi-conversational, due partly to the research methodology employed, and in order to appropriately reflect the agreed aim and objectives. Quotations and viewpoints extracted from interviews are interwoven with comment from the author, to create a medley of ideas and analysis intended to stimulate thought and discussion rather than provide easy answers. Whilst it is expected that this report will be read by individuals and groups who have an interest in or connection to the Church of Ireland Diocese of Clogher, it is hoped that the content and style of the report will ensure it is accessible, interesting and informative for a wider range of audiences.

Therefore, this report seeks to bring to life and analyse the experiences and views of those who agreed to be interviewed or participate in focus groups, under the explicit purpose of examining and exploring Border Protestant perspectives. The intention of this report is to stimulate thought and debate and hopefully initiate both further study and on-the-ground activity.

All meetings took place within the context of an agreed commitment - particularly given the relatively small numbers of people involved - to treat the views expressed and direct quotations with confidentiality. Therefore, no views or comments are attributed to any named or identified individual.

Whilst I have attempted to accurately and fairly represent the views of those I met, this report and the analysis and recommendations contained within it should, nevertheless, be regarded as those of the author.

{Methodology}

The little understood phenomena under investigation in this exploratory study, is the life, experiences and views of Border Protestants in the Church of Ireland Diocese of Clogher. The primary purpose of this report is to examine and investigate the important underlying patterns, themes, and factors which affect the population group in question, namely, Border Protestants, and attempt to shed new light on these matters.

As such, it was expected from the outset that this investigation would lead to the formulation of further research questions and hypotheses. Where these arise, they are woven into both the narrative of the report and the final section - Conclusions and Recommendations.

The methodology utilised in this study has been entirely qualitative in nature in order to appropriately reflect the agreed purpose and objectives. It was never the intention or scope of this study to employ any quantitative methods of data collection or analysis, rather the central focus, from the outset, has been to encourage and facilitate members of the rural/border Church of Ireland and Protestant community to share, express and explore their personal experiences and reflections of life in Clogher Diocese in a more personal, immediate and informal

manner and environment. The value and validity of this report is, therefore, based on it being an accurate and genuine reflection and analysis of the expressed views, hopes and concerns of the participants.

The data for this study was collected using two key methods - semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Most of the data was collected during June 2008.

The principle method employed was that of semi-structured interviews with individuals who were identified and invited for interview on the basis that they satisfied two criteria:

- a. They belonged to one of the 'interest groups' that had been identified at the beginning of the project. These include: Clergy, persons living on or very near the Border, persons directly impacted by the troubles, Church of Ireland laity (representing a range of ages, social classes and both genders), Politicians and Civic leaders and persons from all 'geographical corners' of the Diocese.
- b. They were judged, through reference or recommendation, to have valuable experiences and viewpoints to share.

It was never intended that those selected for interview would be a quantifiable sample of the entire population, but rather a carefully selected sample representing key groups within and across the Diocese which were considered of relevance to the research focus.

Forty three individuals were interviewed representing a broad span of experiences and viewpoint. The intention, from the outset, was to gain as broad a range of perspectives as possible and the author drew on the advice and support of the Diocesan Office and all those who were interviewed to continuously expand the field of those invited to participate. As the list of potential interviewees grew it became clear that time and resources were the main limiting boundaries.

The use of semi-structured interviews was adopted as the two-way conversational nature of the interchange was considered the most conducive method to encourage individuals to relax, share and discuss potentially sensitive and emotional issues. This approach, it was felt, maximized the opportunity for participants to talk about the issues of most relevance and importance to their own unique experiences. It also enabled flexibility in conversation and the possibility to explore and examine issues in greater depth. After the purpose, key themes and boundaries have been agreed, the discourse that follows tends to proceed from a place of relative trust and shared commitment to agreed goals. The approach combines faith in what the subject says with space for scepticism and enquiry about what she/he is saying, which enables dialogue to develop where the two parties jointly examine the key issues whilst continuing to build trust and a platform for further enquiry.

Inherent within the idea of a 'semi-structured' interview is the understanding that a core format will be constructed to help focus the conversation; the format used in this study is included as an appendix (see Appendix 2). In this instance, some of the questions were deliberately designed to provoke bias, as given the purpose of the study, it was important to gain honest and genuine responses to key themes and lines of enquiry. Further questions can be created during the interview, allowing both the interviewer and the person being interviewed the flexibility to probe for details or extend ideas. Consequently, this method is especially relevant for studies, which intend a subsequent intervention or action that is meaningful for the sample interviewed. It is therefore congruent with an action research approach, which seeks to pursue action (or change) and research (or understanding) at the same time. The interviews were conducted in a controlled context designed to ensure that articulation of experiences, fears and aspirations were beneficial to participants.

Secondly, focus groups were used to explore a number of key themes. Focus groups provide the obvious advantage that individuals can feed off each other for both ideas and encouragement. Two focus groups were held, one involving 25 women from across the whole diocese and one involving 6 men from a particular geographical area and cluster of parishes on the Southern side of the Border in County Monaghan.

Focus groups are effective for getting rich data in participants' own words and developing deeper insights due to participants being able to build on one another's responses and come up with ideas they might not have thought of in a one-to-one interview. Participants can also act as checks and balances on one another - identifying factual errors or extreme views. That said, the responses of participants are not independent and there is always the potential for a few dominant focus group members to skew the session.

It was intended, from the outset, that this report be complemented by the production of a Digital Video (DVD) recording, to enable some of the raw data to be captured and compiled in another format, to further stimulate and provoke a thorough consideration of the themes and issues raised. The production of the DVD has been co-facilitated, directed and produced by John Peto of the Nerve Centre, Londonderry, with technical assistance provided by Bobby Gordon and Billy Gallagher. All those who agreed to participate in the DVD, had previously been interviewed as part of this study.

“Whatever
you say
say nothing”



{1}

The Church of Ireland
Clogher Diocese

“May the
peace of
Christ
disturb you
greatly.”

{ 1.1 The Church and The People }

“Comfort zones”

The vast majority of those I met and spoke with had something to say about the Church in general and what they expected from it at a parish level. Time and again the importance of the Church was emphasized.

Many referred to its stabilising and guiding influence and others spoke about the sense of identity and belonging they gained from being members of a local congregation. More than a few enthusiastically expressed their *‘thankfulness’* for their upbringing in the church and in their respective families. Moral teaching, resulting in *‘strength of character’*, was often cited as a valued outcome of such upbringing. According to one person:

“It used to be that everyone went to Church - it was the foundation of family and community life.”

However, as the above quotation intimates, change is in the air. Alongside their gratitude, many people felt the need to express their not inconsiderable concerns at societal changes they perceive as alarming and which appear, in tandem with other developments, to be both reducing attendance at Church and reducing respect for the people and institutions of the Church.

A number of people commented on what one person termed: *“An increasingly less respectful and deferential society”*. In relation to the Church and particularly the way Clergy are viewed one commentator said: *“It used to be that if a Cleric said something parents would reinforce the message over Sunday lunch; now if a Cleric says something parents are just as likely to criticise, attack or undermine him.”* Views of this type in general, and the above comment in particular, were offered, in the main, by people on the older end of the generational spectrum. That said, it would be foolish to dismiss such concerns as merely generational angst and miss the genuine point being made.

In relation to the role of the Church, one member of the Clergy suggested it was: *“To be with people where they are at and to help them in their search for their truth.”* Most views broadly concurred with this and went on to emphasize their own particular interests or concerns. A number of people were quite definitive, the Church, they said, should: *“be there for the people - to perform burials, to bring comfort, to marry those who require it and also to hold a Sunday service which meets the needs of parishioners.”*

One of the consistent themes that emerged was that many people expect the Church to be a place where they feel comfortable and secure. Suggestions and discussions

about the possibility of the Church adopting new priorities, developing in new directions or acquiring new ways of doing things were generally dismissed and countered with arguments akin to 'if it ain't broke, there's no need to fix it'. That said, there were a few - a minority of those I spoke with - who felt that the Church needed urgent and radical reform of one kind or another and there was an evident and palpable tension between the two positions.

In relation to why people go to Church, the views of a number of Clerics ranged from Churchgoers as: *"Nominal Members who appear to feel the need - for reasons of respectability - to be seen at church"* to: *"the mainline Church of Ireland person compartmentalises faith and life - Church is seen as a good thing which gives a certain sense of purpose, hope and moral direction"* to: *"Church is furniture'in Fermanagh. Woe-betide the person who comes in and tries to move the furniture around."*

All of these are strong statements in their own right. The first appears to suggest that 'to be seen to be at Church' is, at least for some people on some occasions, as important as going to Church for any other reason. The second statement proposes that the Church is understood and appreciated by many as performing a number of key functions throughout life and is, accordingly, allocated a particular and not insignificant place. The third statement, arguably, could be interpreted as supporting and adding to the previous two by bringing in dimensions such as aesthetics, identity, heritage and social status. Further detailed interpretations aside, it is clear that belonging to and attending Church is a family tradition, with deep roots, which remains important to the majority of Clogher Protestants and is considered an integral part of normal life.

“ Church is furniture in Fermanagh. Woe-betide the person who comes in and tries to move the furniture around. ”

During the interviews it became abundantly clear that the majority of people had, what could comfortably be called, 'traditional' expectations of the Church and that, by and large, the Church delivered for them. Conversations were had about the length of sermons (beyond 15 minutes is generally considered 'counterproductive!') the type/style of singing; the nature of prayers and liturgy; the involvement of parishioners in services, and much more.

A number of people suggested that Clergy should take greater account of the needs and interests of the new 'multi-media generation' whose principle forms of communication are text messaging and email, by delivering 'short and snappy' sermons, e.g. 5-10 minutes, using multi-media methods. What is apparent is that everyone has an opinion and that everyone's 'tastes' are different. That said, people who share geography/location, history and/or allegiance to a particular parish often tend to find substantial agreement on what they collectively like and dislike - the collective 'zeitgeist'. Often thinly veiled warnings were appended onto such conversations to 'ward off' any notions that deviation from the tried and tested traditional forms might be possible or acceptable.

Any incumbent or future Cleric with meddling ideas would certainly be regarded as naïve or misguided and their efforts, I was informed, would be doomed to failure. Thus, the traditions of the Church and the *modus operandi* of the parish in a particular area appear to become almost synonymous with the people of that parish/area. They seem to intertwine, symbolise and represent each other and most people appear to be comfortable with what they have shaped and what they know. Again, it may be appropriate to note that interviewees were, mostly, on the middle to upper end of the generational spectrum.

In overall terms there was consensus that the Church/faith community appears to be designed, and is carefully maintained, to be a respectful and deferential environment where the comfort, security and stability of the faith of the people is fostered and protected. Thus, change and/or any kind of new activity, whether challenging or largely innocuous, is treated with anything from healthy scepticism through to outright opposition. The strong impression I received was that very many people view Church as a 'comfort zone', a place where 'the boat should not be rocked', where tradition, stability and predictability prevail. One person spoke of the Church as the place where they retreated to when 'the going got tough' and offered the imagery of the foetal position - the warmth, comfort and security of the womb.

Much concern was expressed about falling church attendance and shrinking congregations, particularly in Border areas. In such areas, the Church is viewed as a critical institution in the battle to retain the presence and character of the Protestant Community. *"It helps keep the Protestant people together and gives continuity."*

The people I met in Border areas appeared especially sensitive to potential contagion which might have any kind of disruptive or detrimental impact upon what they perceive as their fragile and perilous minority status. For instance, concerns about the potential impact of mixed marriages on the community and frustrations about what's perceived as the 'poaching' by modern charismatic type Churches, often featured in conversation. One person coined the phrase *"little congregations of integrity"* as they described the importance of preserving *"sacred spaces which people have invested heavily in over many years and buildings, which encapsulate history, tradition and faith."* After all, they suggested, *"it's not as if the Church doesn't have the money."*

In relation to falling Church attendance another person commented on why many young people particularly didn't now go to church: *"lots of them are relatively affluent, all their needs are met and so the church is largely irrelevant to them."* The extent to which we are now - and particularly the youth - a much more 'consumer orientated' society and, as a consequence more prone to simply discard what we've decided we don't like anymore in favour of a new brand or style is perhaps worthy of further consideration. There were certainly a number of voices, which were fairly vociferous in their criticism that the Church was simply not 'keeping up'. The view expressed was that the Church isn't sufficiently *"Marketing its services, isn't relating well enough to its people and isn't trying hard enough to identify and seek to meet the needs of the people."* One individual offered a 'no holes barred' view that criticised the Church for not fulfilling its appointed role as a result of the *"sloppiness and laziness of at least some of its key people."*

In conversation with Church of Ireland Clergy and lay persons, the rationale for and the 'shape of' a Church which might require its members to be more demonstrably and explicitly 'self-sacrificial' in their Christian lifestyle than is, arguably, the current norm, was explored. The vast majority appeared to consider the possibilities a 'non-starter'. Many quickly reverted to talking about 'incidents' or occasions when particular Clergy were perceived to have upset members of a congregation by preaching a 'too challenging message' or by appearing to criticise members of the Loyal Orders for their 'once or twice a year attendance'. And whilst a number of people acknowledged the important leadership given by some Clerics during particularly challenging periods of the Troubles, it was clear that instructing people to 'not do something', to desist, may be one thing but proposing that they change habits and customs to actively 'do something new or different' is a whole different 'kettle of fish'.

**“
Do people consciously,
through choice
or expectation or
etiquette, leave their
not inconsiderable
critical faculties at
the front door of the
Church, or does it
just look like that?”**

A number of conversations attempted to further explore and better understand why there appeared to be a limited appetite in and/or between the Church and its people for a faith environment characterised by 'robust enquiry, honest engagement with doubt/uncertainty and the difficult issues of life.' The question was asked: '*Do people consciously, through choice or expectation or etiquette, leave their not inconsiderable critical faculties at the front door of the Church, or does it just look like that?*' No clear consensus was reached, although a number of people suggested "*insecurity on everyone's part*" as an important factor. If there was an emerging view, it was that there appeared to be a general lack of confidence in 'dealing with the unknown and unknowable' and that the normal human default position, in such circumstances, is to try to maintain composure and 'stick to what you know'.

There are a number of obvious tensions and dilemmas here. As some, perhaps most people, work to preserve and protect the serenity of the environment, others, a small but not insignificant minority, believe that the mission of the Church is to bring an 'uncomfortable message' and be a force for change which challenges the comfortable norms and seeks, above all, to bring peace and justice to the oppressed. Hence "*May the peace of Christ disturb you greatly.*" Some of the questions that emerge include: 'Who decides and gives leadership on what the priorities of faith and Church should be?' 'Are priorities set at a parish, diocesan or National level?' 'Once set, how effectively are people supported to interpret and express the priorities in their locale and is there a 'quality assurance' role to be fulfilled?'

Summary:

- Belonging to and attending Church is a family tradition, which remains important to many Clogher Protestants. However, though it may be considered an integral part of normal life, times and norms are changing.
- There is widespread concern about falling attendance and shrinking congregations, particularly in Border areas.
- The majority of people in Clogher have 'traditional' expectations in relation to the Church and are liturgically conservative in style and the Church appears, by and large, to meet their needs.
- For many the Church is a place where they calm and 'gather themselves' and retreat from the maelstrom of life - it is a place where they seek comfort and reassurance.
- Whilst some people wish Church to facilitate a more robust faith environment and a more committed and proactive social involvement, the majority appear satisfied with the way things are and are reluctant to consider change.
- A minority of those interviewed felt that the Church was failing to meet the needs of its membership and wider community and needed urgent and radical reform. A tension appears to exist between those who seek reform and change and those who wish to retain the status quo.

{ 1.2 The Clergy }

“Sure, they’re Professional Christians”

Many people expressed appreciation for existing or past clergy. There is absolutely no doubt that many clergy have demonstrated, often over many years, self-sacrificial commitment and courageous leadership.

One person emphasised that: *“the importance of (Cleric X’s) leadership and overall role in this parish and community cannot be overstated.”* Another person reported: *“there were key men - broadminded, big picture men - who kept a lid on things, helped the people stay calm and gave great leadership.”* They continued: *“He showed tremendous loyalty to the people.”* Yet another person described an existing Cleric as: *“a breath of new life.”*

Contributors were generally not shy or slow in identifying Clergy, Bishops and/or Archbishops who they valued for their consistent ‘speaking out on behalf of the people’ and ‘support for the people’ when they needed it. A number of people were able to describe how, at key times, leadership was given, which was strong, courageous and uncompromising about what was right and wrong and what was expected of those who would call themselves

‘Christian’. One person said: *“It was the Clergy and the bereaved women who said ‘no retaliation’ and people like Gordon Wilson⁴ who communicated a Christianity which saved us from descending into a dark chaos.”*

A common view was that the church has benefited from ‘Good Bishops’ and that the church has been consistent in its support to the people throughout the Troubles. Others said: *“there was consistent pastoral support and persistent preaching of Christian forgiveness.”* Many people, both Clergy and lay, expressed the view that the Bishop and his predecessors deserve commendation for their leadership and supportive presence with the people. Several people commented on the ‘no-win’ and challenging nature of their role.

However, there was not universal praise for Clergy. Those who did not appear to support the Orange Order, who gave a sermon that was too challenging of the views or beliefs of parishioners or who went too far in their ecumenical activities were criticised, by a small number of people, as: *“going beyond their remit.”* One person went further and said: *“they are doing damage to the Church as parishioners’ beliefs and principles are being violated - people/families will walk away.”*

⁴ Gordon Wilson (1927 - 1995) was the father of Marie Wilson, one of 12 victims of the Enniskillen Remembrance Day Bombing by the Provisional IRA in 1987. He came to national and international prominence with an emotional television interview he gave to the BBC the same evening in which he described his last conversation with his daughter, a nurse, as they both lay buried in rubble, in which he expressed forgiveness to his daughter’s killers and urged Loyalists not to take revenge for her death.

Additionally, there were widely differing perspectives on where power, authority and responsibility lies in the Church - is it at Parish level; with the Bishop; between the Clergy and the Select Vestry? Talking with Clergy didn't help, as there was no consensus. Clearly there are different views between those, broadly speaking, supporting a more 'Ground up' ('priesthood of the believers' model) and those supporting on a more 'Top down' (hierarchical) model.

These uneasy and somewhat unclear organisational, authority and accountability arrangements can be evidenced across the Church landscape each July, as some Churches fly the Union flag and others don't. Despite the General Synod of the Church of Ireland voting, in 1999, to only approve the flying of 'specified flags' on such occasions -

*"The General Synod of the Church of Ireland recognises that from time to time confusion and controversy have attended the flying of flags on church buildings or within the grounds of church buildings. This Synod therefore resolves that the only flags specifically authorised to be flown on church buildings or within the church grounds of the Church of Ireland are the cross of St Patrick or, alternatively, the flag of the Anglican Communion bearing the emblem of the Compassrose... Any other flag flown at any other time is not specifically authorised by this Church..." - **Church of Ireland General Synod 1999.***

- it is clear that this issue remains a live and contentious one in some parishes and it would appear to be the Select Vestry who hold the balance of power. The Cleric is not easily able to assert either their own position or

the 'official position' of the Church of Ireland over the views and wishes of the Vestry. This sense of Clergy 'walking on egg-shells' in their own parish is palpable in some situations. When Clergy are 'advised' by parishioners that they have been seen going somewhere, such as into a local Public house, or doing something which is considered 'unhelpful' or 'inappropriate', such as attending the opening of the local GAA grounds/premises, it creates for the Cleric, at the very least, a huge dilemma.

More realistically, it creates an invidious situation. Whether to 'boldly go' and explain/justify or to acquiesce to the anxieties of the few? Balancing the realities of attempting to effectively relate to and work with an established community, with its own culture and traditions - or, more cynically, in the words of one person, '*knowing what side your bread is buttered on*' - and a Christ-orientated ministry of leadership in the community is clearly a complex matter with built-in stresses and dilemmas. That said, it is, surely, the bedrock and 'bread and butter' of professional Christian ministry. Establishing, nurturing and maintaining open and effective relationships and communication with the people of the parish, is the principal means of getting the job done. In relation to this, one layperson stated, "*Sure, they're Professional Christians.*"

A couple of Clergy spoke regretfully of their feelings of isolation and the general lack of collegiality with their fellow Clergy. A desire for better communication, co-operation, organisation/administration, at a diocesan level, and supportive 'fraternity' between colleagues was expressed strongly by a number of Clergy. A few,

however, dismissed this as 'unrealistic' due to either geographical, organisational or 'incompatibility' issues. Clearly there are issues of style, temperament and professional integrity here - to name but a few - but for the diocese, presumably, there are also important issues of ethos, training and support and quality control to be considered.

In relation to the administration of Diocesan affairs, one person commented: *"The Rural Dean's role is an awful office, a diabolic imposition, an administrative burden that many lay people could do better, which would then release the Cleric to do what they are trained for and meant to do."*

When talking about their expectations of Clergy a number of lay people were unanimous and clear that what they wanted was a Cleric who was more visible, social and involved in community life. *"The Clergy just don't seem to socialise and get around the houses as much as they used to - it used to be they visited at least twice a year and now you might not see them from one year to the next."* One of the most common reasons offered for this was *"They seem to be too busy going to meetings and working on their computers."* Another person, reminiscing about the days when clerics appeared to be *"motivated only by their vocation"* accused the modern Cleric of being too inclined to want to be paid for anything they might have to do: *"They've lost their way, it's more of a job now, they expect to be paid for weddings and funerals, etc. They won't do anything now unless they're paid."* It is therefore not surprising that the interface between a not particularly well defined or understood professional role and diverse 'client expectations' is somewhat

“Have you ever seen a Job Description for Clergy?”

contentious. The issue of the gradual erosion of the people's confidence in the Clergy and the Church through changing circumstances and mismatched expectations should not be treated lightly by the Church.

I was asked, 'tongue in cheek', on several occasions: *"Have you ever seen a Job Description for Clergy?"* The point being made was that there is insufficient clarity and consensus on the priorities of the job, and that consequently, there is limited ability to define, oversee and ensure quality. The apparent lack of clarity about what, if any, accountability arrangements exist, allow for enormous variations in approach, style and theological interpretation - much to some people's chagrin. A number of Clergy reported, in the words of one, *"there's little or no accountability in the diocese."* The corollary, of course, is that there is freedom to be expressive and responsive, and for some, not having to get permission for everything can be enormously liberating and affirming.

A number of people, both lay and clergy, did confirm that the 'style' of both the Bishop and the Diocese was - in their view - *"permissive"* and *"supportive"* and that that was as good an approach as any for most situations, one exception being, when quality assurance and consistency was required.

Whilst most people, Clergy and lay people, were unsure about the business language used to describe these matters, there was nevertheless general agreement that improvements could be made. A common 'Job Description' for all with the flexibility to tailor it to local needs would be welcomed by many. Clearer and more explicit 'year-on-year business priorities,' coupled with clearer and more consistent support and supervision arrangements would also be a step in the right direction, for most.

An area of enquiry which received a great deal of 'air time' was whether or not Clergy were sufficiently trained and adequately equipped to carry out their roles to 'a good enough standard'. Strong views were expressed and there was a general consensus that some Clergy at least were not well enough equipped to handle the demands of working 'up close and personal' with people experiencing the normal emotions, conflicts and complexities of human life, not to mention the complexities and traumas of the Northern Irish 'troubles.' It was reported, by a number of lay people, that some Clergy appeared to actively avoid difficult or conflictual situations and that it was entirely up to chance as to 'whether or not you got a good one.'

**“
Surely if they
co-operated in a kind
of team ministry... it
would enable them to
deploy the best people...
and also gain support
from each other.”**

One person reported: *"The personality of the Clergy is very important; 'a' was a very dull man, 'b' was great with young people and 'c' is very open and gets everybody involved."* On another occasion a member of the Clergy was referred to as: *"Downright rude, he wouldn't have a woman about the church."*

Training for 'the ministry' in Dublin was criticised by one Cleric as *"mostly liturgical, academic and fairly devoid of honest engagement with real people and situations - not at all conducive to creating well-rounded and competent people."* Others reported that 'in-service' training to 'up-skill' Clergy in the oft missing 'interpersonal, conflict resolution and personal and social skills' has been largely non-existent. Clearly, there are many complex and interrelated issues here, which deserve further exploration. It may be that there are questions here about initial selection and intake to the Church of Ireland Training College and questions about the nature, relevance and effectiveness of the training offered there. There may also be questions about 'in-service' training/ capacity building opportunities and about the extent to which curacy is or should be viewed as an apprenticeship to be 'passed' before being professionally approved.

One person made an interesting suggestion that there should be more cross-denominational team ministry, particularly in scattered rural areas. Their rationale: *"Sure, they're Professional Christians, and some of them do appear to lack certain skills. Surely if they co-operated in a kind of team ministry to cover particular areas it would enable them to deploy the best people to work with youth and visit the sick and bereaved, etc, and also gain support from each other."*

“

Fermanagh people prefer clergy who are evangelical, traditional and essentially conservative - definitely not liberal or ecumenical.”

Whether or not such cross-denominational work ‘on the ground’ could be contemplated is, of course, a matter for the potential partners themselves to consider. One person pointed to the delicate nature of such matters, by observing: *“There was a church/prayer service held in Enniskillen, involving the four bigger denominations, post 9/11 - the tip-toeing on egg-shells that took place around issues of liturgy and protocol in the run up to it had to be seen to be believed.”*

In relation to cross-denominational or ecumenical activities there was starkly divided opinion. There were some who held the view that too many clergy were currently *“too interested in ecumenical activities”* and that they should be more interested in *“their own flock.”* Those who lived closer to the Border on the Northern side were more likely than others to expect that clergy should refrain from any ecumenical type activities in favour of ‘ardent support’ of the local community/congregation. Another person suggested: *“Fermanagh people prefer clergy who are evangelical, traditional and essentially conservative - definitely not liberal or ecumenical.”*

Just as one person asserted: *“There’s no such thing as the Protestant community”*, so it was abundantly clear that there was and is no such thing as an archetypal Church of Ireland Clogher diocesan cleric. It was the

view of a number of clergy and some lay people that where clerics came from in the first instance, where they were educated, socialised and formed, does make a noticeable difference and have a fairly profound influence on their outlook and their particular characteristics and temperament.

Whether they come from North or South of the Border, or indeed beyond the Island altogether makes a difference. Whether their ministry is based North or South of the Border also makes a difference, as the ambience, orientation, ethos and characteristics of the people is different in the two jurisdictions. In an attempt to be helpful, one person boldly attempted a summary overview of some of the key characteristics and differences of the Church in the two jurisdictions: *“In the Republic of Ireland the Church tends to be liberal and ecumenical, it’s a minority community, it’s Masonic and pretentious! - In Northern Ireland the Church tends to be conservative and evangelical, it’s the majority community (mostly), it’s Orange and self-righteous!”*

Another person offered a slightly ‘softer’ critique: *“The Church is more uniform, traditional and evangelical in the North - more relaxed and diverse in the South.”* Generalisations apart, it is clear that the temperament, style, skills and theological inclinations of clergy are important as they seek to ‘fit in with the people’ and establish their roles. Again there are questions and possible areas of exploration to be further explored, such as ‘Do Parish Nominators and potential incumbents collude, knowingly or not, to maintain a consistency of style and theological approach in parishes which is stifling in the long-term?’ ‘If you ‘continue to do what

you've always done; will you continue to receive what you've always had?' In other words, is the way of doing things essentially designed to ensure 'comfortable fit' and sameness and if so, is that the desired outcome?

The idea of clergy as 'animateurs' was explored with some contributors. Animation means, literally, to breathe life into something; a transformation is involved. To be an 'animateur', would require an ability to stimulate and enliven activity, to spark and help create new initiatives and endeavour designed to develop people and communities. The key is to be able to facilitate an environment within which people can express themselves and take greater responsibility for their own development, rather than trying to do everything for individuals or groups. One of the reasons why, in conversation, such a concept and associated role was explored, was that it was precisely these qualities and activities, which some people pointed to, as examples of what 'good clergy' provided.

Summary:

- Substantial appreciation was expressed for the faithful service and courageous leadership of clergy and bishops over many, and often difficult, years.
- Criticism of clergy was, however, not uncommon and there was a definite sense of some clerics 'walking on egg-shells' as 'issues' bubbled between them and some of their parishioners.
- A desire for better co-ordination, interchange and support between clergy in the diocese was expressed.
- Matters such as clarity of role/expectations, accountability and authority were also raised as requiring improvement.
- Concerns were raised about some Clergy not being sufficiently skilled or having the necessary personality or temperament to fulfil the expected job requirements, particularly those involving inter-personal contact with people under duress. In regard to this, questions were raised about the adequacy of selection, initial training and 'in-service' capacity building opportunities.
- The potential for new cross-denominational partnership arrangements was considered, whilst recognising that there is sharply divided opinion across the Diocese on the appropriateness of any 'ecumenical' activities.

{ 1.3 Issues and Challenges }

“Well, you don’t live in Rome and fight with the Pope”

Whilst Worldwide Anglicanism appears at times to be somewhat blinded in the twin headlights of sexuality and gender, the primary concerns of Protestants in Clogher Diocese are, in comparison, more local and ‘down-to-earth’.

For instance, ‘How, if at all, to relate to one’s Christian ‘neighbours?’ At least some of the live tension in the Church of Ireland in Clogher Diocese appears to be between those who feel the Church should be much more proactive, open and socially involved and those who feel the Church’s role is, first and foremost, to look after its own and protect its own particular Protestant traditions and heritage.

The style and temperament of the Church came in for a great deal of analysis in many interviews. The majority view appears to be of a Church characterised by a moderate, meek/mild and polite stance, which, on occasions, can easily be mistaken for indifference. For a significant minority of those interviewed the Church appears, at times, too aloof and awkward about getting involved in the politics (‘small p’) and ‘rough and tumble’ of everyday life. One person said: *“The church gets on with its business and the people get on with their lives.”*

The ‘middle ground’ which appears to be the numerical majority in the Church of Ireland Diocese of Clogher, was identified by one commentator, as *“afraid to speak up or speak out and totally unable to mobilise on any issues, therefore feeble and ineffective.”* Melting into the background, keeping the ‘collective head down’ and possibly just going on holiday during most of the summer to avoid the unsightly sectarian posturing, were all identified as typical characteristics of the ‘not wanting to cause offence or make a fuss’ Protestant middle ground. According to one person, speaking about the Church in general: *“It’s resistant to change - almost calcified - one of the last bastions of traditional old-style unionism”.* Another person said: *“It’s traditional, official, respectable ‘Big house Protestantism’, the general view is ‘if it ain’t broke, there’s no need to fix it’.”*

Alongside a certain resignation that the Church is, on the one hand, a fairly innocuous organism, there was a certain pride in some quarters and consternation in others that the Church is also a fascinating, complex and dynamic body of people - the quintessential ‘broad’ Church. Too broad in one person’s view: *“There are too many different ‘flavours’ in the Church of Ireland - some Clerics are ‘born again’, some are conventional and straight, others are ecumenical.”*

**“
An argumentative,
vociferous and messy
bunch stuck between the
Authoritarian Monolith
of the Roman Catholic
Church on one side
and the ‘57 varieties’ of
Calvinism on the other.”**

Another view hinted at the Church of Ireland as a live and interesting bunch who occupy an important strategic location in the ecclesiastical order: *“An argumentative, vociferous and messy bunch stuck between the Authoritarian Monolith of the Roman Catholic Church on one side and the ‘57 varieties’ of Calvinism on the other.”*

The complex, liturgical, realistic, liberal, catholic organism which is the Anglican Communion, which is open to a myriad of influences and appears both willing and able to ‘wash its dirty linen in public’ in a way other denominations manage to avoid, should, surely, be more able than most to engage its people locally in open and honest debate, exploration and activity around the pertinent issues of the day. It appears, however, that the Church of Ireland in Clogher Diocese, by and large, does not provide such facility or encouragement for its people to be a robust community of enquiry and activity. On the contrary, it would appear that the vast majority of activity is spent nurturing and maintaining the status quo and the mechanisms of the machine. One of the inevitable outcomes of such an approach is that the people are conditioned to believe that ‘the machine’, and therefore

those who direct its movements, are really not that interested in their particular quandaries or questions. In fact, people become conditioned to avoid talking, sharing and seeking the support of others. Unsurprisingly however, when talking with people about the Troubles and the various ‘legacies’ that live on and which individuals carry with them day and daily, a common view was expressed that what many people want, as much as anything else, is to have others acknowledge and recognise their hurt and pain. The opportunity to talk about their feelings and experiences was also identified as desirable by many. To borrow a rather clichéd phrase, the impact, hurt and questions ‘haven’t gone away, you know’. Perhaps the Church should reconsider its part in helping the individuals and communities it serves to access the therapeutic and developmental services best suited to their needs.

It was interesting to note that issues which often dominate media interest, such as relative poverty, inequality, the breakdown of the family, alcohol and drugs dependency, suicide and hopelessness were all largely missing from conversations. Perhaps these are largely urban and/or East of the Province matters and concerns, or maybe the rhythm and flow of interviews just didn’t take us in those directions, or perhaps people just don’t make strong connections between these wider and challenging issues and their Church membership, attendance or experience. Perhaps there are questions here for the Church to consider. For instance: ‘What level of priority should be given by the Church to enabling and facilitating its people to be as involved as possible in the thorny and pertinent issues of the day? Does the Church run shy from controversy, conflict and the messy stuff of

life? Is it not the Church's role to encourage its people to face the doubts, dilemmas and difficulties of everyday existence with honesty and integrity?

Certainly there were a small number of both clergy and lay people with a clear view that the Church should be more socially and politically engaged and more proactive in seeking to help address some of the issues of the day. The same people generally appeared to feel that 'the Church needed to lift its head above the parapet' and that the existing range of services and opportunities should be marketed more professionally.

The 'S' word inevitably featured in many conversations. 'Did the Church acknowledge and/or do anything to address the sectarianism of its own people in the past?' 'What current work, if any, was on-going to address issues of sectarianism, racism or the 'legacy of the troubles'? In response, it was proposed that: *"whilst the Church was not blatantly sectarian it did nevertheless 'allow' a certain level of ignorance, misinformation and distance or 'apartheid' to prevail, simply by not addressing it in any direct or proactive manner."*

“...whilst the Church was not blatantly sectarian it did nevertheless ‘allow’ a certain level of ignorance, misinformation and distance or ‘apartheid’ to prevail, simply by not addressing it in any direct or proactive manner.”

Commenting on this proposition one person stated: *"Well you don't live in Rome and fight with the Pope."* The suggestion appears to be that the imperative is to 'not rock the boat', not pick a fight and not stir things up needlessly. Certainly I met people who believed that talking about such matters only raised more questions than answers and generally did more harm than good.

This is, of course, a hugely contested issue. Whilst some people clearly think that the Church is not going nearly far enough to stimulate, facilitate and animate 'Peace and Reconciliation' type activities, others criticise these and the declarations of key Church people as *"going too far"*. They are referred to as: *"Wishy-washy"* and engaged in *"fashionable"* mixing with Roman Catholics. Some went further and stated: *"they should not try to railroad over people's feelings - the Roman Catholic people and their Church/Clergy have not apologised."* What one person considers appropriate and admirable Community Relations work, may just as easily be viewed by someone else as inappropriate, unnecessary or misguided. In this part of the world - Northern Ireland - we are well versed in justifying every situation to suit our needs and choosing to believe what supports our predispositions and preferences.

However, not everyone can be right and not everyone can be pleased or appeased. Therefore, this is, surely, a fundamental dilemma for the Church. Should the Church: **a.** walk the middle and moderate way, not 'rocking too many boats' or **b.** be more Peace & Reconciliation concerned and proactive and risk losing those who are reluctant to move on or resistant to such change or **c.** play the softly-softly, ultra-conservative, safe game and risk losing those who will inevitably feel that the church

has lost its way, hasn't the courage of its convictions and has capitulated to the dogmatists? Who decides?

Another part of the problem, perhaps, may be that people (arguably most of us) are often not very well equipped to handle 'the truth' and know what to do with it. Often we feel that it's just too difficult, complex and hurtful, thus, it is avoided. The controversial and recently deceased American comic George Carlin⁵, commenting on our human tendency to tip-toe around rather than face up to difficult situations, is reported to have said: *"there's a reluctance to confront reality and a desire to soften unpleasant realities."*

What is the Church's position on all of this? Should it be giving clearer leadership in terms of facilitating therapeutic interventions and training its clergy to be better able to handle the pent up emotions and hurt of the people? Should it be leading by example and engaging honestly and openly with those it 'has issues with' and should the Church be explicitly and deliberately 'lifting the carpet' which hides a multitude of historic hurts, misunderstandings, misrepresentations and disagreements? And all this, in a society continually undergoing rapid change on many fronts.

**“
...there's a reluctance to
confront reality and a desire
to soften unpleasant realities.”**

A number of people made reference to an *"increasingly consumerist society"* where everything is about style and immediacy and where 'if it doesn't fit or work, it's cast off.' Reference was made to *"new 'sexier' churches"* springing up and to new 'civil' arrangements replacing, in some cases, traditional marriage. The '24/7', 'at your fingertips', style conscious world undoubtedly poses questions for the traditional Church.

Given the wide variety of perspectives and interpretations that are possible on any one issue; given the particular characteristics of the Church of Ireland and the complex and contentious political and social issues that have dominated the collective psyche over recent decades; given the unique experiences - sometimes horrific and traumatic - and the personal needs and interests of each Church of Ireland parishioner - how is the Church meant to respond? What is the Vision of the Church, of the Diocese, of the Parish, of the Cleric, of the People?

One cleric emphasised: *"it's necessary that a Parish has a Vision - without it, 'the people perish'"*

What might it mean for the Church to be more 'Prophetic' in Clogher Diocese? Does the Church already believe that it is appropriately exercising its 'Prophetic' role?

⁵ George Denis Patrick Carlin (1937 - 2008) was an American stand-up comedian, actor and author who won four Grammy Awards for his comedy albums. Carlin was noted for his black humour as well as insights on politics, the English language, psychology, religion and various taboo subjects.

Summary:

- The consensus perception of the Church of Ireland in Clogher Diocese is that it is characterised by a moderate, meek & mild and polite stance, which may, at times, be mistaken for indifference.
- The Church is also a 'broad communion', a complex and diverse organism - in many ways an ideal environment to facilitate a modern robust faith community.
- The norm however appears to be that the safe conventions are protected and nurtured.
- Many people want to talk about their feelings and experiences and have some acknowledgement and recognition of their hurt and pain. But does the church want to listen and encourage its people to express their emotions and gain support from each other?
- Some people strongly advocate that the Church should be much more involved than it is in 'nitty-gritty' community based Peace & Reconciliation type activities, in facilitating its own people to examine their own sectarianism and in promoting better community relations. Others think some Church people are going too far in these directions already.
- The vision and priorities of the Diocese of Clogher and of the individual parishes that interviewees belonged to, do not appear to be as clear and understood as they, perhaps, could be.
- "May the peace of Christ disturb you greatly" - the challenge at the heart of Church.

“Whatever
you say
say nothing”



{2}

The 'Troubles'

**“There was
fear and
isolation -
no-one came
to our aid.
”**

{2.1 Violence}

“It wasn’t ‘the Troubles’, it was Violence!”

The words of one person summed up the felt experience of many; *“the Troubles shaped our outlook - we had good neighbours, we helped each other; but when people you know get killed and when families have to move house over night, when your school gets evacuated - co-operation gets overtaken by suspicion and fear.”*

Interviewees commonly gave detailed descriptions of violent terrorist acts and spoke openly and candidly about those involved and the impact upon everyone, including but not necessarily, themselves. Some, quite clearly, carry almost unspeakable and unbearable pain from the violent and premature loss of loved ones - mostly fathers and brothers - and as they continue to try to live with the reality that their loved one can never be returned to them, many are also haunted by questions they know will never be answered *“Did they also watch me, as they were preparing to murder my brother?”* Harrowing accounts were often produced in much the same way as someone might produce a photograph of a loved one into a conversation - out of the top pocket, without warning

and with disarming clarity. Suddenly the listener is forced to take on board the brutal facts and respond. What is clear, is that many more people have been emotionally traumatised, whether directly or obliquely, by the violence of the Troubles and carry painful memories with them everyday and everywhere they go, than is commonly understood and appreciated. For such people, each day is a minefield of emotional ‘triggers’ which, need to be negotiated to ensure the hurt doesn’t rise to the surface and overwhelm. For some, this remains a daily struggle.

The question of whether or not there had been a concerted campaign of ‘ethnic cleansing’ in the Border regions was for most interviewees an accepted fact. Like Ken Maginnis⁶, most regarded Republican violence in these areas as ‘designed to make large tracts of land along the Border uninhabitable by Protestants’ (quoted in McKay, p. 216) Many people were able to articulate various detailed accounts of how this occurred in practice, identifying the individuals and families directly affected and in some cases going further and identifying those they believed - often citing this as ‘common knowledge’ - had carried out the acts of violent terrorism. Issues of justice, collusion and political expediency were raised

⁶ Kenneth Wiggins Maginnis, former MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, Lord Maginnis of Drumglass (born 1938) currently sits in the House of Lords. He worked as a teacher for a number of years before joining the Ulster Defence Regiment in 1971. After leaving the Army with the rank of Major in 1981, he became Ulster Unionist spokesman on internal security and defence, and was that same year elected to Dungannon District Council, on which he sat for twelve years until he lost his seat in 1993.

and debated with a certain sense of predictable resignation. What was in no doubt was the vicious finality and painful legacy visited upon the few and observed from a distance by the many. One person was unequivocal: *"It wasn't 'the Troubles', it was Violence!"* Another commented: *"When you reflect on what happened to the Border Protestant people during the Troubles it's amazing that the population remained as settled as it did."*

Detailed accounts of violent events and incidents were sometimes offered, it would appear, to support a general contention that 'they (PIRA/Republicans) were bad' and we were mostly just innocent victims trying to get on with life. The view that justice has not yet been served and doesn't look likely to ever be so, was relatively common and contributed to a general sense that the lot of the long suffering Protestant was and is to 'grin and bear it' and just keep on keeping on. One person put it starkly: *"there was fear and isolation - no-one came to our aid."*

In response to a question about 'who was then and is now looking out for the people most affected by the Troubles/Violence' a not uncommon view was: *"the silence was deafening."* A number of people

**“
When you reflect on what
happened to the Border
Protestant people during the
Troubles it's amazing that
the population remained
as settled as it did.”**

articulated disappointment that neither the Protestant or Roman Catholic Churches or clergy appeared to be able or willing, particularly during times of greatest stress, to *'stick their heads above the parapet'* and speak out unequivocally about the evils of the violence and the imperative of making peace. The view of one contributor was that *"Clergy were slightly gagged - they were not allowed to rock the boat."* Another person said: *"The Church remained largely silent."*

Whilst there was clearly some criticism directed toward the Church for what was felt to be inactivity and passivism during times of great need, there were other stories too. More than one person spoke of the deliberate and sustained interventions of named clerics that gave courage and calming leadership to people. Stories of strategic and focussed prayer gatherings, of 'no punches pulled' sermons and of tenacious emotional and spiritual support were recounted. Such activities were credited, by a number of people, with the arresting of a particularly vicious and sustained campaign of murder that occurred in one particular Border area during the 1980's. Others concurred and added that men driven to the brink had been held back from taking matters into their own hands by the actions and presence of certain clergy at crucial times.

Another person, commenting on the important presence of the Church and clergy during times of particular duress, added: *"young men were better brought up in Fermanagh than anywhere else."* This, they contended, also directly contributed to the restraint of the people during the worst of the Troubles.

Whilst there is general agreement that the norm for Protestant people is to 'keep their heads down, get on with it and not make a fuss' - because, after all, these are essentially private and personal matters - it was nevertheless clear that many people welcomed the opportunity to talk to someone different about 'their story' and their inner struggles and grief. There appeared to be something at least partially cathartic, even in such a fleeting encounter. That Protestants appear either more reluctant/hesitant or just slower than their Catholic neighbours to organise themselves to intentionally and explicitly tell their stories and share their burdens is beyond debate. Clearly there are a myriad of reasons why this is so and these should be better understood and articulated by the leadership of the Protestant communities to help release and enable people to take more positive action to address their own needs.

Some part of the reluctance or hesitancy is to do with insecurity about language and lack of confidence in both process and eventual outcomes. These are indeed highly sensitive and volatile matters and the Protestant is generally anxious to not make matters worse - a condition easily misunderstood as aloofness or lack of concern. On the contrary it is as likely to be hypersensitivity and an associated inability to confidently deal with the heightened emotions involved which may hold the Protestant back from coming forward. A number of people said: *"talking about things sometimes just makes things worse."* The fact that talking about such difficult matters appears at times to raise more questions than it provides answers can be a disincentive to participation. For instance, it was reported, on a number of occasions, that people had declined to meet with me because 'they

**"...talking about things
sometimes just makes
things worse."
"**

didn't want to go back over it all again; they preferred to just get on and look forward'. Someone proposed that we shouldn't be using the language of *"moving on"* - which may conjure up ideas of somehow leaving the past and all its hurts and issues somewhere and walking away in a different/opposite direction - but rather we should be exploring what it might mean to *"move forward"* - offering a greater sense of progress and momentum without having to 'pretend' that what happened didn't or that it has to be forgotten about.

Stories need to be told so that the teller can give expression to their otherwise bottled up experiences and feelings; so that the listener can hear and perhaps gain new insight or perspective and so that people can then dialogue around the stories, in the search for meaning, interrogating ideas, seeking to learn and perhaps above all finding new and improved ways of relating to one another and sharing the earth. An example, perhaps, of one of the stories that could be told and heard and explored between the Protestant community and their Roman Catholic, Nationalist and/or Republican neighbours might be why Border protestants in particular were involved in the B Specials and the UDR. It was reported to me, by several commentators, that it was, for most, simply a means of earning some money. That being in the UDR, for instance, had no particular political or other connotation and that it was regarded, by many,

as the legitimate, legal and appropriate way to protect life, family and community. It was the only vehicle that gave men an opportunity to do something constructive without having to join the paramilitaries - which for most Fermanagh men was too extreme and counter-intuitive. One person said, *"The Fermanagh person despises all paramilitarism - the Fermanagh person believes no-one has the right to take life."* Another person expressed a view that the reason some men left the UDR - apart one assumes from the obvious threat to life - was that *"they were not particularly comfortable with the activities and behaviours of some of their colleagues"* - indicating a belief that for some it was a simple means to an end, and for others, it was, or it became, their means to exercise more sectarian and tribal instincts.

Some of those I spoke with, who had experienced direct trauma during the Troubles, and saw themselves as victims of Republican violence, did not feel that their reality was officially or fully appreciated and accepted. Whilst they did appear to value the opportunity to talk more about what happened to them, their experiences and feelings, their loss and hurt; engaging in debate about the rights and wrongs of the conflict generally is an entirely different matter, an emotional minefield which they are obviously keen to avoid getting caught up in.

They also appear to be generally wary of officialdom and government influence, always suspecting that there are hidden agendas, the sum total of which adds up to the further diminution of their status. During the years of the violence Protestants, by and large trusted the British Government to 'hold up their side of the bargain' but the same British government has since been shown, at least as far as a few commentators are concerned,

to have been expedient with the truth, and arguably, people's lives, when the occasion required it, and at their discretion. One person was unequivocal that the British Government was not the friend it purported to be: *"certain elements of the British establishment would just like the Northern Protestant to move on and forget that 3000 plus people died."*

Summary:

- The 'Troubles' or Violence had an impact on the Border Protestant Communities of Clogher Diocese far beyond the numbers of fatalities or physical injuries alone.
- The actual experiences and the lasting legacies - emotional and practical - that people carry with them everyday are profoundly affecting and 'close to the surface'.
- 'Ethnic cleansing' was experienced as a reality by the vast majority of the people interviewed, who lived close to the Border, and who recounted that individuals were strategically 'picked off' and many families left the land/area for good.
- Stories from and of the Troubles need to be told, need to be heard and need to be explored. In doing so, the wariness of the hurting Protestant should be acknowledged and addressed to facilitate the story telling and ensure the stories are heard.
- Whilst certain clerics were praised for their tenacious support of the people and their leadership during the worst of the Troubles, some criticism was also levelled at the Church generally for lacking presence and a meaningful and practical contribution.

{2.2 ‘Prodesans and Catlicks’⁷ - John Kelly⁸}

‘A Catholic person gets a new set of windows in their house. A passing neighbour admiring the windows is immediately informed that they were acquired with the help of a grant which is available to anyone, before long the passing neighbour and indeed the rest of the street has new windows.

A Protestant person gets a new set of windows in their house. A passing neighbour admiring the windows receives the polite response: ‘Thanks, we felt we’d earned them.’

This *story*, or a slightly more elaborate version of it, was told to me by three separate individuals to emphasise the fact that Protestants and Catholics are different.

There are very many perceived differences and as much or as little can be made of them as one chooses. These differences were explored in many conversations in an attempt to better understand some of the different behaviours of Protestants and Catholics both during and since the Troubles throughout the Diocese of Clogher.

The ‘window’ allegory points, rather obviously, to at least two limiting characteristics of the average Protestant. Firstly, their alleged reluctance to share information which might see their neighbour prosper and secondly, their hesitation to either apply for or accept grant aid on account of - **a.** not knowing about it, **b.** maybe not being

eligible, **c.** being too proud to accept it, **d.** not wanting their personal details or private matters to be known by the people administering the grants, **e.** not wanting to feel indebted to anybody/anything, **f.** believing that you shouldn’t have/didn’t deserve anything you hadn’t earned yourself, **g.** all of the above.

Another person, whilst discussing these matters, indicated that they had learnt through years of experience of dealing with government departments and local councils that you’d be advised to get to know and deal with the Catholics if you wanted information sent out. “A Roman Catholic will send it out straight away, asking a Protestant is nearly a waste of time - you have to almost squeeze it out of them like lemon juice.” The reason proposed was: “They don’t like to see someone else getting on.” Whilst such critique is fairly damning and ‘pulls no punches’, it flowed easily and freely from

⁷ “Suddenly he reared up (i.e. Nigel Johnston aged 4) and asked with great drama: - Are you a Prodesan or a Catlick? Was I what? What was a Prodesan? What was a Catlick? Was I one of them things? Maybe it was a trick question? Maybe I was both? Maybe I was neither? I didn’t know what to say and for a moment I thought of crying.” - John Kelly 1997 p. 8

⁸ John Kelly is from Enniskillen. After studying law at Queen’s University, he joined the BBC and went on to win two EMA awards and the prestigious Sony Award for his various music/arts/documentary radio and television programmes. In 1998 he moved to Dublin to present the *Eclectic Ballroom* on what was then called Radio Ireland. He then moved to RTÉ to present *Mystery Train* where he won the PPI Award for Music Broadcaster of the Year.

most people as thoughtful self-critique - not shocking, not new, not designed to initiate a new cultural revolution but worth reflecting on nonetheless.

A further example of the differences between Protestants and Catholics was offered by yet another contributor - *"If one Catholic is scratched, thousands of them bleed. If one Protestant is hurt or bereaved, in a few days, it's no more than a private and personal tragedy."* This exemplifies the commonly held view that Catholics are more community-minded and connected to one another whilst Protestants are much more individualistic, largely disconnected from one another and at best awkward at sharing in the suffering or emotional trauma of their neighbours.

Protestants generally, one person suggested, tend to operate and relate on a societal rather than local community level and are state compliant, whilst Catholics, on the other hand, tend to operate and relate on a more local community rather than societal level and are state resistant.

In the context of conversations which explored and exposed such contrasts and comparisons and which tended to reflect more unfavourably on Protestants

**“
If one Catholic is scratched,
thousands of them bleed.
If one Protestant is hurt or
bereaved, in a few days, it's
no more than a private and
personal tragedy.”**

than Catholics, the Protestant participants often seemed ambivalent. As they described their own characteristics *vis-à-vis* those of their Roman Catholic neighbour or community they appeared to have a sneaking regards, if not outright admiration for their neighbours' preparedness to get up and out and get their hands on whatever grants or opportunities there might be. Simultaneously however, they appeared to regard such endeavour as just a bit distasteful, vulgar and unbecoming. Similarly, with regard to community cohesion, organisation and collective activity - they could clearly see the benefits, but recognise the potential loss of private space and personal choice as an issue for them.

Certainly those I spoke with were not shy or slow in identifying a long list of particularly Protestant personality traits. These could be given a positive or negative spin, depending on who was proposing them, the emphasis of the points being made and the circumstances. Therefore, in no priority order and with no particular emphasis, the following characteristics were repeatedly offered, by contributors:

- somewhat aloof and private
- proud
- pious
- concerned with order and cleanliness (*"Now that's more Protestant"*)
- not very open, sharing or gregarious
- anti-social
- more concerned with the way things look/ impressions and inclined to think of themselves as superior to others
- moral (e.g. *'anti-drink, anti-gambling, anti-sex before marriage'*)

- law abiding/observant of the rules and laws of the land and of 'scripture'
- honest/not prepared to 'bend the truth' or 'elaborate on the facts' for personal gain or grant aid
- prudent
- snobbish
- defensive
- fatalistic
- inflexible/intransigent
- tenacious and stubborn (*'resilient'*)
- moderate/not usually prone to spontaneous or extreme acts of self-expression of emotion
- resistant to change and stepping outside the comfort zone/familiar
- self-sufficient
- self-deprecating/lacking self-confidence

One person further proposed that a common view among the dominant Roman Catholic community, about the minority Protestant community, was that they were indeed *"more honest, more hard working and better at time keeping."* To support this contention, numerous examples of the enterprise and achievements of notable Protestant families and individuals were offered as evidence.

Protestants also 'know their place'. Driving through Fermanagh from one interview to the next, Malachi O'Doherty⁹ was heard to say on the radio, *"Each man has his place in this world and ambition is folly"* a recognised Presbyterian maxim, he claimed. This

apparent lack of ambition and aspiration, and the resignation that accompanies it - 'the way things are is the way things will be and probably should be' - is familiar to many of those I spoke with. Therefore the lot of the Protestant, it would appear, is to 'make the best of it' and put up with whatever is thrown at him/her - a natural precursor attitude, one could argue, to full-scale 'martyrdom complex'. Thus, *"keeping the house and family in proper order - just in case"*, was identified by one person as important because, after all, *"we are not of this world, we are just passing through to a better place."* There is, perhaps, interesting resonances here with stories from the Old Testament - well known to Protestants - of the Israelites, the 'chosen people', who wandered in the desert. A persecuted remnant, holy and righteous, a moral, upright, stoic and disciplined people who knew God to be on their side. Border Protestants particularly, appear prone to view themselves as legal and resident but aliens, nonetheless, in a strange and temporary land.

Many questions emerge, including - 'Are Protestants 'self-aware' or 'in denial' about their particular cultural characteristics? Are Protestants 'hard wired' to think and behave in particular ways or is there a high degree of personal choice - is nature or nurture the dominant factor? Are Protestants sufficiently aware of how others perceive them and how this impacts on their relationships with others? Does Protestant education, religion and/or socialisation in any way restrict or disadvantage the individual?

⁹Malachi O'Doherty is a journalist, author and broadcaster and a regular contributor to a number of BBC programmes in Northern Ireland, providing political and social commentary for BBC Radio Ulster's Talkback and for BBC NI's Hearts and Minds programme. His political journalism has been published in many Irish and British newspapers and periodicals.

The '57 varieties' of the Protestant religion/faith all, in various ways, emphasise an individual relationship with God and personal redemption, providing the necessary compliance has been achieved and the designated 'hoops' have been jumped through. This "personalising and internalising of faith" taught and emphasised from the cradle to the grave, surely contributes to the maintenance of at least some of the traits identified above.

A number of people reported that relationships between Protestants and Roman Catholics were, "never really that bad - even during the worst of the Troubles/violence," due, it was suggested, to the "down to earth practical mindedness of the people". Furthermore, most people reported that relationships are continuing to mellow and generally improve, although, this was usually tinged with a word of caution, that to try to move too quickly would be folly due to the deep well of distrust and hurt which remains under the surface and is not being actively addressed by anyone. However, several other

**“
...the vast majority of
Protestants and Catholics
still go to different schools,
different pubs, play different
sports, go to different
churches, are loyal to different
shops, read different papers
and generally live quite
separate lives.”**

people referred to what they called the 'precariousness' of the situation. The reality remains, said one, that "the vast majority of Protestants and Catholics still go to different schools, different pubs, play different sports, go to different churches, are loyal to different shops, read different papers and generally live quite separate lives." There is no room for complacency. More positive civic and church leadership was prescribed along with the creation of shared spaces and shared learning opportunities, designed to be honest and robust. It was recognised in such discussions that clear-headed, uncompromising and tenacious leadership was required to facilitate and nurture such learning opportunities and environments, not least because of the forces of opposition that would be evident, namely, apathy and antagonism. One person suggested that a simple advertisement be produced: Notice: 'Leaders required!'

That said, those who are being led and supported to have meaningful contact, communication and activity with their Roman Catholic neighbours appear appreciative of the opportunity to do so and of the leaders enabling this. It was noted, though, that this is a significantly easier thing to do in some parts of the diocese than in others.

A key issue here is that there is an enormous amount of potential complementarity between the particular characteristics of each community or 'tribe'. If individuals and the collective could each be persuaded to be honest about their own characteristics and then co-operate to learn from and complement each other for the greater good, the richness and benefits of such diversity and breadth of capabilities could be immense.

Summary:

- Protestants and Catholics appear to be different in many ways - the group/tribe we are born into, brought up by and educated by will strongly influence our general characteristics and disposition, which in turn will make a significant difference, it would seem, to our outlook, behaviours and life trajectory.
- Most Protestants are well aware that they tend to be characterised in a more negative light than their Roman Catholic 'neighbours'. Furthermore, it appears that they more or less accept these characterisations and even have a 'sneaking regard' for the more enterprising and community orientated qualities of their neighbours.
- Some of the characteristics identified as particularly Protestant have the effect of being restricting on the individual and the community as a whole.
- Whilst some people report that relationships between Protestants and Catholics are fairly good and improving, others warn that the situation is precarious and that 'forcing the pace' would be counter productive.
- More positive civic and church leadership was proposed as necessary, along with the creation of shared spaces and shared learning opportunities, designed to be honest and robust.

“Whatever
you say
say nothing”



{3}

The Border Protestant

“...a tremendous
desire to be more
than they think
they are and to be
thought of in a
better light than
they perceive others
think of them.”

{3.1 The People}

“They’re reserved and careful with both their emotions and their money”

In many conversations I found the Border Protestant portrayed as a ‘down-to-earth’, realistic and practical person who very often had to work hard against the odds just to survive, let alone prosper.

Many people reported that: *“all of life revolved around school, family and church.”* In a similar vein someone else said their job, or ‘lot’, was to: *“Rear the family, farm the land and go to church.”*

The Border Protestant was often described as a calm, thoughtful and ‘canny’ person. Someone said, *“They’re reserved and careful with both their emotions and their money,”* therefore, more likely to put their money in the bank for a rainy day than throw a party or hold an event which might be considered frivolous. One person said of the Border Protestant that they have: *“A tremendous desire to be more than they think they are and to be*

“
...all of life revolved
around school, family
and church.”

thought of in a better light than they perceive others think of them.” There is a clear tension here between this ambitious position and the accepting, resigned, or even fatalistic, characterisation outlined in the previous chapter. There appears to be a deep ambivalence at the heart of the rural/border Protestant, which on the one hand enables them to survive onslaught, but on the other hand keeps them trapped in their self-limiting circumstances - resilient, but lacking dynamism.

It was proposed by one commentator that there were two main versions of the Border Protestant: **a.** the ‘*assimilated version*’, who has absorbed the vast majority of the dominant cultural mores and is confident with their place in it as a minority denomination and **b.** the ‘*disaffected version*’, who has been/become hardened through bitter experience and has become entrenched and largely isolated.

The maxim, *“Whatever you say, say nothing”* has clearly come to both dominate and symbolise the lives and experiences of very many Border Protestants, particularly during the Troubles. Being a minority in a politically and geographically contested space and place taught many, if they didn’t already know, that they should be ‘sharp with your eyes and slow with your tongue’. Having members

of the family - whether close or extended - who were involved with the security forces (e.g. RUC or UDR¹⁰) brought a whole new dimension of threat, fear and restriction to those living on or near the Border.

Whilst the *'keep your head down, say nothing and just get on with your own business'* approach may have been a necessary survival tactic at a certain time and may have kept people safe, it is, arguably, a negative and ultimately self-defeating maxim which may not serve the people well on all occasions. One danger of the culture and practice of dressing everything up to be better than it really is and encouraging everyone to hold their nerve and just 'keep on keeping on' is that it can generally only be done for so long before someone figures out that things are not as bad as they've been portrayed or that there is a better way to proceed. Then, the people begin to feel cheated by the dishonesty. Another danger may be that some people become conditioned by, comfortable with and reliant upon the relative safety and predictability of their own company and come to feel that they can do without the uncomfortable and messy business of relating and interacting with the erstwhile enemy.

Having said that, there are some strong and vociferous voices arguing, from within, that it is important for the Protestant Community to raise its collective head above the parapet, stick its collective shoulders back and chest out and stride forward to take its rightful place on the

social, cultural and economic stage. According to these individuals the Protestant Community needs to start to appreciate for itself and be proud of its own heritage and traditions and ensure the retention and valuing of these. In doing so it is strongly advocated that contact, interchange and even collaboration with 'the neighbours' be 'de rigueur'. The only pre-condition (perhaps not the best word to use in this context) is that the Protestant Community should ensure it is meeting with others from a position of clarity and confidence. To achieve this, many would agree, might be no small feat given the apparent fragmented, apathetic and/or demoralised nature of the Protestant community, as it stands, particularly in some Border areas.

Some individuals were, however, reporting a greater and increasing willingness to 'move on' to more inclusive and open ways. In terms of raising capacity and building confidence in the Protestant community, one person indicated that they thought it: *"very important to talk with those who feel they don't have a future or don't like the future they see."* Another person confirmed: *"the past is very much a part of people's present and frame of mind but there is a willingness to engage and relate and there is the beginnings of openness to contact with and across other denominations."*

So who speaks for the Border Protestant? According to several people, and in the words of one commentator,

¹⁰ The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) was the name of the police force in Northern Ireland from 1922 to 2001. At its peak the force had around 8500 officers with a further 4500 reservists, who were members of the RUC Reserve. During the 'Troubles', over 300 members of the RUC were murdered and almost 9,000 injured in attacks, which made the RUC the most dangerous police force in the world of which to be a member. It became the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in 2001.

The Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) was an infantry regiment of the British Army formed in 1970 to replace the B Specials in assisting with security duties within Northern Ireland. The regiment consisted overwhelmingly of part-time volunteers until 1976 when a full time cadre was added. It recruited mostly from the local community.

“

There's no such thing as the Protestant community - it's far too diverse and fragmented, it's not cohesive, it's got no connective tissue.”

“We need to speak for ourselves.” But there are a plethora of problems to overcome and confidence and capacity to be boosted. One person lamented, *“Protestants tend to sit back and whinge rather than get on with changing and improving things.”* Another said, *“Protestants don't apply (for grant aid) but they will criticize those who do and complain that they don't get a fair proportion of what's going.”* Yet another confirmed, *“Quick to complain, but apathetic and lacking motivation and action.”* A final pessimistic thought on the problem was offered by another contributor who claimed that the proliferation of small protestant groups all doing their own thing leads to an impression of fragmented competitiveness and insularity as opposed to the apparently more cohesive, connected and communally orientated Roman Catholic community. *“There's no such thing as the Protestant community - it's far too diverse and fragmented, it's not cohesive, it's got no connective tissue.”* They continued, *“People don't want to hear this but they need to face up to it - they're too focussed on individual interests and not sufficiently interested in the overall sustainability and prosperity of the Community. If people don't co-operate and act strategically there won't be a Protestant community in some areas in 5-10 years.”*

Attempts to promote and facilitate Community Development activity, in such a context, were described, by several people, as difficult. *“It's a nightmare, in certain areas they'd fight with their shadows.”* An even bleaker assessment was offered by another, *“The trust that's been broken will only be changed when this generation dies off - Peace monies and the activities of the past 10-15 years have only papered over the cracks.”*

One Community Development group described their role as, *“picking up issues that individuals didn't have the confidence to raise themselves, and wouldn't have raised otherwise.”* The view was proffered that the fragile peace between the minority Protestant population in Fermanagh (35%) and the majority Catholic population (65%), has been based on delicate compromises that have avoided addressing the difficult and unresolved issues of power, hurt and history. These, ‘under the carpet’ issues - or to put it another way ‘the elephant in the room’ - need to be faced head-on and sooner rather than later, it was proposed, if real and sustainable progress on substantive matters and importantly relationships and trust is to be achieved. A couple of examples of such ‘issues’, from the minority Protestant perspective, include - perceptions of Gardai disinterest, if not collusion, in regard to persons believed to have been involved in terrorist violence or the ‘disrespectful’ behaviour of some GAA fans around Protestant Churches at times of big games which, it is alleged, goes unchallenged by the media and civic authorities. One person reported, *“it's easier, at the time, to put up with it and keep your head down than to draw attention to yourself and attract the wrong kind of interests.”*

In the context of promoting dialogue and learning one suggestion was put that the up-coming 400th Anniversary of the Plantation or Dispossession (depending on your 'take' on these events) of Ulster - circa 1609 - would be an ideal opportunity to creatively raise and proactively seek to address some of the historical legacy issues.

"We need to understand and be able to talk about both what happened then and how it has impacted upon and affected us since."

A substantial task then for Community Development groups and others, the question is, perhaps, how alert and responsive to this need is the Church and how prepared is the Church to throw its not inconsiderable weight and resources behind the honest endeavours of those committed to these tasks?

Added to the above, a number of 'issues' identified as particularly characteristic of the Border Protestant, were highlighted as relevant and worthy of note:

- *'Never marry a Catholic'* - was widely acknowledged as the main 'rule of thumb.' Whilst most other actions, however regrettable or inappropriate, could be either understood in context or excused in time, this one - most people were under no illusion

**“
We need to understand and
be able to talk about both
what happened then and
how it has impacted upon
and affected us since.”**

- was neither acceptable nor excusable. The fear underpinning this concern is the potential loss of children, grand children and whole families to 'the other side'.

- *'Don't talk about politics or religion'* - the experience of the overwhelming majority was that there was little or no in-family conversation, discussion or enquiry into the fearful and violent activities that were going on outside and, for most, no opportunities to do so outside the family either. There was therefore little or no opportunity for young people in particular to develop their intellectual or emotional responses to the violent conflict that was the Troubles from within the relative safety of the family unit. Most simply learnt that 'it was all bad/evil/wrong' and that 'they - particularly the IRA - were all bad/evil/wrong', via the distressed headshaking and disapproving grunts of parents during TV or Radio news time.
- *'Suffer in silence'* - if things happen, if there's hardship or trauma, don't make too big a fuss or draw attention to yourself. Be stoic and dignified. 'Don't let them see they've hurt you.'
- *'What's under the carpet stays under the carpet.'* - or, in other words, 'what's done is done' and there's no point in 'rakin' over the coals.' To put it yet another way, it's a waste of time. Why? Well, there is a multitude of reasons or justifications as to 'why we shouldn't go there.' Here are just a few - **a.** We know we can't change what happened and we don't have any belief that talking about those things will bring us any relief, **b.** to try to talk about or deal

with 'what's under there' might be artificial, will certainly feel uncomfortable and is essentially counter-cultural, **c.** It's too difficult, I don't want to cry/be emotional, I don't want to feel indebted to or reliant upon anyone else and I don't want to admit that I can't cope, **d.** 'Anyway, time is the healer', leave it well enough alone and get on with life and everything will work out in the end, **e.** 'We shouldn't blame anyone else but ourselves', or if this has happened to us it's happened for a reason and it's probably something we have done. In some part we probably deserve it. Basically it's a kind of collective guilt, borne out of a sense of tribal culpability for treating 'them' badly, in the past. Even if an incident was 'random' or 'senseless', it's got something to do with the balance of life - 'karma'. One person made this point quite explicitly: *"We shouldn't blame anyone else, we should take responsibility ourselves for what we didn't do, could have done, should have done - we have all been complicit in allowing wrong things to happen."*

Certainly it would appear that the people are weighed down with a myriad of issues which all conspire to limit their propensity to be proactive, positive and progressive. One person's view was, *"People don't really know how to act, we tend to be awkward and lack the ability to deal with heightened emotions."* Commenting on how the Protestant Community have tried, over the years, to deal with some of these complex 'legacy issues', one person offered the view, *"prescribed medication; prayer; drink; hard work and keeping your head down and getting on with what had to be done - in whatever combination was necessary at the time."*

Summary:

- A large percentage of the Border Protestant community has operated, for quite some time, under the maxim of *'Whatever you say, say nothing.'* Many associated 'survival traits' have come to characterise the Border Protestant and whilst these may have had a purpose at a particular time, they are now widely regarded as either obsolete or detrimental to the advancement of the Border Protestant community.
- Voices are emerging to challenge and encourage the Border Protestant Community to become more involved in wider society and take greater responsibility for the retention and promotion of its own heritage, traditions and particular stories.
- Whilst there is a greater willingness to do this, there are a wide range of ingrained characteristics and personality traits, which appear to mitigate against the easy and enthusiastic involvement of the Border Protestant in such schemes. These need to be acknowledged and actively addressed to improve the likelihood of initial engagement and overall success.
- The Church should consider its role in the overall capacity building of the Border Protestant community alongside and/or in partnership with the endeavours of existing community groups.

{3.2 The Border}

“At last - the Border Interpretative Centre, Now Open” John Byrne 2005¹¹

It is absolutely clear from many accounts of life along the Border, all parts of it, that people often went to very great lengths during the Troubles to ensure that life went on *‘as normally as possible’* in what were clearly very abnormal circumstances.

For instance, Sunday School was held in a car for years in one Border area, some people donned wellington boots and crossed fields, streams and rickety bridges, whilst others drove 30 miles to get to a Church which was actually only a very few miles away. During the years when roads were routinely ‘cratered’ by the NIO/security forces, the people remained faithful and found ways around the obstacles. A defiant sense of humour enabled life to go on as normally as possible. One person reported: *“There was a time when the IRA, during the weekends, would fill the craters in and the Army would turn up every Monday morning to blow them up again.”* Along with humour, resilience and tenacity were the required survival qualities.

Whilst most people described in some detail their ever-present feelings of fear and outlined the convoluted personal security arrangements they felt required to observe, a number of others reported, *“We never felt threatened.”* This was put down to good relationships between neighbours and a, *“Live and let live country attitude.”*

Much was made, by many people, of the ‘transcendent’ nature of the activity of farming. Working the land, it was suggested, brought people together in a natural as opposed to artificial way. Men shared machinery, offered labour and looked out for their neighbour’s fields and livestock as required. It was a ‘needs must’, practical and down-to-earth existence which held people together with common bonds. One person put it bluntly and eloquently, *“It’s very hard to shoot a man you know.”* Many people looked back with fondness to ‘the good old times’ and rued the fact that times have changed.

People who have moved from one side of the Border to the other, whether by choice or not, have all noticed

¹¹ At the opening of the *Border Interpretative Centre* the border is presented as the only thing that actually unites the country. Border paraphernalia and memorabilia is available in the small block shed. Byrne satirises our contemporary expectations that all sites of significance must be accompanied by some kind of instrument through which it might be ‘interpreted’. Postcards eulogising the scenic ‘Castles of the Border’ - British Army observation towers – are also available, framed with dancing wild flowers and verdant hillsides. For further, ‘tongue firmly in cheek’ information, go to: <http://www.recirca.com/reviews/2006/johnbyrne/jb.shtml>

that life - attitudes, behaviours and outlook - is different depending on what side of the Border you're on. Overall, people reported that the North is a harsher, less forgiving and more dogmatic environment. People in the North appear more cautious and careful about what they say and yet, when they do open up, they are often more definitive and entrenched in their views than those living on the Southern side. A number of people expressed their struggle to get used to the different environment and expectations, one said, *"The North was a big culture shock - stressful - it took 12 months for me to get on my feet and feel confident enough."*

Interestingly a number of people made parallel observations about either their parentage or their marital relationships. One person described how a mother - originally from south of the Border but married to a Northern man and living north of the Border - was 'softer' in temperament and expectation than the Northern father. In a number of situations the Northern partner was described as more 'clear cut' and demanding on issues of what could and couldn't be done and much less forgiving of deviation from the prescribed path. The Southern partner was characterised as being more open and able to establish and nurture good relationships with the neighbours, whoever they were. Clearly there are clichés and expectations to take account of here, nevertheless, it is also clear that the Border - regardless of how it got to be there in the first place and whether we view it as legitimate or not - signifies, for many who live close to it, a dividing line between different cultures and 'ways of being' as much as between different jurisdictions.

**“Live and let live
country attitude.”**

Also, a number of people referred to the facts of significant population shifts at various times in the history of the Border including during the recent Troubles. Consequently, the Border region was identified by one person as, *"a transient place."* Thus, the ordinary demands of trying to make a living through farming in the modern era, coupled with the unpredictable and shifting sands of the Border region has proven to be a significant challenge for those who have chosen to stay - or who have felt they had no other option. Add to that the particular and peculiar nature of the geography of the Border, which weaves erratically and can be defined by a hedge, a road, a lake, a river, a mountain, a bridge or any combination of the above, and the challenges continue to expand.

However, it was reported that people are, by and large, moving freely across the Border in both directions with little or no reservations or anxiety. According to one person at least, *"Monaghan has better shopping than Enniskillen."* That said, there does still remain some evidence of a minority of Border Protestants retaining allegiances to Protestant businesses, whilst the majority simply make their decisions based on convenience. The different monetary denominations of the Euro and Sterling, were identified by several people, as the biggest inconvenience.

Summary:

- During the Troubles people went to great lengths to mitigate the inconveniences of the Border and to ensure, as much as possible, that 'life went on as normal'.
- Whilst many people experienced life on or near the Border as fearful and tenuous, others reported that they never felt threatened or anxious. Much of this appears to hang on individual circumstances and perhaps also, the 'luck of the draw'.
- Life is perceived, by many, as quite different on either side of the Border. The ethos, outlook, expectations and demeanour of the people is reported as different in the two jurisdictions and the North is viewed as the harsher, more dogmatic and less forgiving of the two environments.

**“There was a time
when the IRA,
during the weekends,
would fill the craters
in and the Army
would turn up every
Monday morning to
blow them up again.”**

{3.3 The Border Church}

“a flag and a duvet”

The role and significance of the Parish Church to Border Protestants should not be underestimated. In and around such a contested and fluid space, the Parish Church represents tradition, heritage, culture, family, belonging, security and identity. It is both ‘a flag and a duvet’.

The Border Church represents the community’s sense of moral and religious status, their right to be ‘in a foreign and hostile land’. It is the ‘scrapbook’ of family milestones and memories. It’s the hope for a stable and comfortable future. A number of people, both lay and Clergy, described the almost frantic activities of some parents to ensure their children were identified with the Parish and Church at the earliest opportunity: *“We have to get the child done (Baptised).”* The apparent ‘need’ to ‘brand’ the child at the earliest opportunity ‘just in case’ is, arguably, both superstitious and pragmatic. Any fragile and insecure people, who feel vulnerable and isolated - *“splintered clusters of minorities”* claimed one person - will seek to protect their young against any external threat.

Concern about falling church attendance and shrinking congregations is palpable in many Border areas. Many feel that the financial and practical burdens of maintaining the plethora of small rural churches and

associated buildings is shouldered disproportionately by the small and shrinking indigenous congregations. The ever present potential of ‘mixed relationships’ leading to ‘mixed marriages’ remains a concern as young men and women, and the children they may have, are often lost to the Parish in such transactions. The perceived ‘poaching’ by modern charismatic type churches is yet another concern with a similar net result. The overall impression is of a people who feel vulnerable, let down and largely abandoned and who are forlornly fighting a rear guard action to try to limit their losses. In such a context, the people take some solace from the decisions of synods and ecclesiastical committees to reprieve, improve and invest in church buildings, rather than let them go to wreck and ruin.

One person’s view was that, *“There’s no such thing as ‘un-churched’ people in Fermanagh.”* Whether this judgement extends beyond the county or not was not disclosed. The point being made, however, is clear. Belonging to and going to Church, for the vast majority of the Protestant people of the Border region would appear to be an integral aspect of their being. It’s not really a choice, and it’s not really about belief or unbelief. Rather, it’s where everyone meets, it’s where everyone finds rest, comfort and assurance, it’s where information is shared and gained and where people ‘find their bearings’.

One person's contention was, that *"The Church of Ireland is stronger and more deeply rooted in Fermanagh than any other rural part of Ireland."* Another view was: *"The Fermanagh man was brought up in a traditional and respectful Church and was taught to love his neighbour."*

Some of the particular challenges facing the Border Church, were proposed by one person to include: *"Depopulation... the pressure on clergy to be 'all things to all people'... the facilitating of greater and increasing diversity."* The actual demographics and the needs and interests of those who are around are continuing to change and emerge and the Border Church is challenged to respond.

Clearly, some people and some clerics are 'in their element' in such a rural Border location. The environment and the challenges suit their personality, demeanour and out look. That said, a more bleak assessment was given by one person, who, commenting on the 'constant vacancies' in Clogher Diocese, suggested that many clergy will simply *"never go there, due to the complexities, cabals and power struggles between clergy, Select Vestry and so called significant others."* The suggestion appears to be that the reputation of at least some of the parishes in the diocese, and of the rural environment, acts as a disincentive to potential incumbents.

Conclusions:

- The Border Church is a very significant feature in the lives of Church of Ireland Border Protestants. It is both a flag and a duvet. It symbolises identity, belonging and hope, it also provides comfort and a calming equilibrium.
- Additionally, the Border Church is where people meet, where information is shared and where business is done. It is an integral part of not just the lives of the people but also the fabric of the countryside.
- The Border Church poses many challenges to Clergy and the wider church family. Some Clergy appear 'cut out' for such challenges and some may not be.

“The Church of Ireland is stronger and more deeply rooted in Fermanagh than any other rural part of Ireland.”

{3.4 The ‘Neighbours’}

“By all means be friendly,
but don’t be over familiar”

Whilst the vast majority of people reported that there had always been good, cordial and often cooperative relationships enjoyed with their Roman Catholic neighbours. They also described the various self-imposed restrictions and protocols that operated, and have gradually changed over time, as people attended funerals and marriages and occasional civic functions. *“It used to be we would only go to the gate of the Chapel, this has only changed recently, now we’re ok with going inside.”*

In most ordinary circumstances it was generally considered acceptable to ‘pass yourself’ with your Catholic neighbour and to be cooperative in a practical sense around farming matters, *“By all means be friendly, but don’t be over familiar.”* What wasn’t acceptable, was to be too friendly and just about the worst thing anyone could do was to marry a Catholic. *“Do you think I have done all I’ve done for us to have to live in a United Ireland?”* Whilst it is clear that the ‘jump’ between marriage and the dissolution of a sovereign nation is a rather wide and improbable one, it is nevertheless clear that the fear behind such exaggerated concerns is of the

complete and irrevocable loss of family, status, identity and religious and cultural expression.

Apart from affirming that relationships with ‘the neighbours’ were mostly surprisingly cordial and general descriptions of where ‘the boundaries lay’ between the two communities, much of the rest of discussions on this issue concerned questions such as: ‘Why did they not speak up when they knew we were being terrorised?’ or ‘Why did they not and why have they not given up those responsible for... *(various named incidents)?*’

A number of individuals commented that they did not understand why the Roman Catholic Church gave Christian Burials to acknowledged IRA terrorists or why the leaders and clerics from all the Churches hadn’t been able to come together to form a strong united Christian front to end the violence at a much earlier stage.

There was, according to a number of commentators, a ‘deafening silence’ from all the Churches. *“We had a feeling of not being understood by the Catholic community and the Roman Catholic Church - they didn’t seem to see or care about our trauma.”* People also, inevitably, commented on doctrinal differences between the Protestant and Roman Catholic ‘sides of the house’, one person declaring, bluntly, *“It’s hard to believe that educated men could teach what they did.”*

A number of lay people reported that they had a strong sense that their Roman Catholic neighbours did not approve of or support the campaign of terror and violence that the IRA waged against the Border Protestant people but that they suspected that their neighbours were unable to communicate as much or reach out a hand of friendship for fear of possible repercussions. This remains, for many, one of the unspoken issues on which they would appreciate hearing the views of their Roman Catholic neighbours. *'Why was the Roman Catholic Church not able to speak out more clearly, at the time, and provide the leadership and support to their parishioners to do so?' 'Why have 'the other side' been so unable and/or unwilling to give up the guilty?'*

One person reported that a neighbour had quietly approached them after a murder saying, *"I'm ashamed to be Roman Catholic today."* The impression of the receiver was that most of their neighbours were similarly distressed at the murder, violence and association by tribe but that they were *"petrified"* to speak out. Another person reported that they received lots of sympathy and felt that many of their Roman Catholic neighbours, *"were embarrassed that someone from their religion had done this."* However, another person, reporting on their sense of abandonment, simply said, *"I just felt everyone was avoiding me."*

Another powerful and lingering issue for a number of people is the vote of their neighbours in 1981, which saw Bobby Sands - a convicted IRA activist and hunger striker - returned as MP and elected representative for Fermanagh and South Tyrone. It was a substantial vote

- 52%, against Harry West's 48%. Many Protestants and Unionists saw it, both then and now, as a clear and unambiguous vote of support for the retention of the 'armed struggle' and the purging of Protestants from the land. They couldn't understand it then and they still can't. The collective *"nailing of the colours to the mast"* was stark and shocking, but made things very clear - whatever about our previous neighbourliness, whatever about our friendly and co-operative arrangements, all of that is now over. In the eyes of some, any pretence of trust and cooperation between the communities was, and remains, just that; pretence. One person stated, *"If loyalist terrorists - of any kind and regardless of their stance/issues/justification - had stood for election, I could never imagine any circumstance in which I would have voted for them."*

At that time, one person reported: *"I felt really frightened, like I stood out like a sore thumb."* Yet another said: *"The tension was palpable"*. The 1981 vote, is one example of an issue, which continues to linger and hang between the communities and hampers the development of trusting and co-operative relationships.

One person wished to note that positive change and increased potential for better relationships with 'the neighbours' into the future had been made possible by an event which, they said, had changed Protestants from *"heretics into separated brethren."* The 2nd Vatican Council¹² was identified as a particularly liberating and significant event involving a 'genuine paradigm shift' in thinking and relationships.

¹²The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, or Vatican II, was the twentieth century Ecumenical Council of the Roman Catholic Church. It opened under Pope John XXIII in 1962 and closed under Pope Paul VI in 1965.

Summary:

- Protestants were taught from an early age to be cordial and cooperative, where at all possible, with their Roman Catholic neighbours, but not to be over familiar. Marrying a Catholic was understood by the vast majority to be a 'bridge too far.'
- Protestants, by and large, didn't understand then and still don't understand why the Roman Catholic people and Church didn't 'speak up', particularly during the worst of the Troubles, to either offer sympathy and support or seek to arrest the violence.
- The vote for Bobby Sands in 1981 is an example of an issue - and a myriad of associated questions - which hangs between the two communities and continues to hamper efforts to build trust and cooperation.

“

If loyalist terrorists - of any kind and regardless of their stance/issues/justification - had stood for election, I could never imagine any circumstance in which I would have voted for them.”

“Whatever
you say
say nothing”



{4}

Civic Life

“I grew up in
Enniskillen,
I grew up in inis
ceathlain too.”

Sunrise - Divine Comedy from
the Album 'Fin de Siecle'¹³

A number of remaining themes and issues, agreed in the project proposal, have been categorised under the generic heading of Civic Life. The summary is provided at the end.

{4.1 The Education System}

“Segregated education was the order of the day”

Several people commented on there being insufficient opportunity for young people to meet across the schools in Fermanagh and especially in Enniskillen.

Several people gave descriptions of the daily school bus journeys into and out of Enniskillen, which were ‘mixed’, but were very ‘hit and miss’ as to whether cross-community friendships or enmities resulted. Bus stops and bus depots were identified as places of some stress and, often, bullying and sectarianism. The bottom line, some said, was that schools could have done more to facilitate mixing and the development of real relationships and understanding.

One person went further and proposed that the Churches had an enormous responsibility to *“prepare young people for diversity”*, but that they had singularly failed to do so, preferring instead to cosset and stymie them until they reached the age where they went to work or university and were then forced to either ‘sink or swim’ on their own.

There was also criticism that the Churches, for too long, have had too much control over the educational agenda and overall ethos of schools. *“Young people want to be educated together, they do not want to be segregated and indoctrinated.”* According to the commentator, young people are *“hampered for later life”* by segregated education.

“Segregated education was the order of the day. No mixing with girls and definitely no mixing with people of other religions, at least during school hours. After school, of course, we all integrated ourselves perfectly for the sake of company, football or romance.”

John Kelly - p. 100

Several people, when asked about their hope for the future, said that the single most important and effective thing that society could do for the future was to create a more integrated and cooperative education system.

¹³ See Appendix 3.

{4.2 The Orange Order}

“Apart from Parades and Funerals there were very few opportunities for Protestants to connect with each other”

The Orange Order came in for carefully measured praise from a small number of people who claimed it had had an important calming influence on the Brethren, particularly due to the presence of clergy and the focus on Bible and Christian principles, throughout times of great stress.

“The Orange and the Black brought together all strands of Protestantism - political, religious, social & cultural - it was the only environment where Protestant people got together across all denominations.” It was also commented, that *“Apart from Parades and Funerals there were very few opportunities for Protestants to connect with each other.”* Furthermore, the trend of clerics distancing - *“divorcing”* - themselves from the Orders was criticised as a retrograde step: *“Drumcree was a huge problem and gave the Orange and Black a very bad press, the Church and Clergy should have got more, instead of less, involved to direct the people back to the Christian roots of the Orders.”*

A number of lay people, mostly involved in the Orange Order, commented that they viewed the Orange Order in

Fermanagh as, in the words of one person - *“less political and less aggressive than out East.”* Furthermore, Church attendance by Orange Order members was purported to be significantly higher in Fermanagh than ‘out East.’ That said, some people commenting on this issue from South of the Border were keen to assert that: *“There’s a big difference between Orange parade services - in the North some don’t go to church whereas here we all go.”* One other person referred to the Order being, in their view, active and positive in trying to diffuse tensions and reduce community anxieties around the flying of flags during July and around which flags were appropriate and approved.

There was also some criticism, however, of the Orange Order as too affluent, middle class and out-of-touch with the feelings, needs and interests of working class people; aloof and elitist. It was criticised for being *“lazy”* and not wanting to rock the boat or disturb the Roman Catholic neighbours - just too polite and mannerly and, therefore, lacking the strength to adequately protect and promote ‘Protestant culture’.

There was further criticism from another source, that elements within the Order were simply, *“Rude Bullies”*,

dogmatists who, if they didn't get their own way, were prepared to use coercion or whatever 'bully-boy' tactics they deemed fit.

The relationship, past and present, between the Orange and Black institutions and the Church - particularly some clerics - is an uneasy one. Whilst some speak of the Orders as almost integral to the parish/congregation, others speak of the need to separate the two and

understand them as quite distinct. Whilst some speak of cooperation, guidance and support, others speak of forceful individuals and cabals who expect to get their own way, regardless of the position of the Church or the cleric concerned. Clearly there is a need, in some specific local areas and also at a senior leadership level, to engage in dialogue around perceptions and relationships with each other.

{4.3 Politicians}

“Doing a job for someone could mean 1 or 20 votes”

The role of politicians was identified, both by politicians themselves and others, as primarily reactive rather than proactive, in the words of one person - *“Doing a job for someone could mean 1 or 20 votes.”*

Politicians appear, for the most part, to be 'on call' to respond to problems, constituency issues and requests for information or a response from the media, the party or a government department. The widely held view of the politician is that most of them are well meaning but *“largely caught up in their own wee world and massively tribal.”* Consequently, 'the tribe' respond, as expected every 2, 3 or 4 years and return the same people to continue doing what they have been doing. Some people

were at best suspicious of the motives and abilities of their politicians. Interestingly no one offered the view that politicians might be the appropriate people to look to facilitating, building or boosting the capacity of the Protestant community.

In an interesting twist it was confirmed by a number of people that there is a 'tried and tested practice' of constituents going with their issues and needs to Politicians and Councillors from the other side of the political/cultural/religious community to themselves. It appears that Politicians generally 'deliver more effectively' when someone from the other side presents with a burning issue and it appears that the politicians themselves can see how such arrangements can work for them also. Reverse psychology at work and a win-win for everybody.

{4.4 Generational Matters }

“The issues of Protestants and Catholics are becoming more and more redundant, young people just want to get on with life.”

Many people made distinctions between the attitude and behaviours of different generations. Younger people were very often characterised as being largely or wholly indifferent to the issues and concerns of the middle-aged or older generations who had lived through the ‘Troubles’.

Younger people were described as not being concerned with religion and difference in the same way and largely interested in just getting out, meeting others and having a good time. One person stated: *“The older generation hold onto grudges and memories and they stick to themselves; the younger generation mixes easier and just wants to get on with life.”* Another person said: *“We (Northern Protestants) hold onto things too long.”*

Another person, bemoaning the younger generation, stated: *“They’re not interested in Church... there’s a general decline in morals and respect.”* The deference, respectfulness and faithfulness of the older generation, it was reported (mostly by people on the older end of the generational spectrum) appears to remain intact, by and

large, whereas the younger generation *“don’t see the need for God and are not interested unless it patently works for them.”*

Younger people, it was said: *“don’t want to go over old ground that’s not of their making and be polarised into camps they have little or no interest in belonging to.”* Furthermore, *“The issues of Protestants and Catholics are becoming more and more redundant, young people just want to get on with life.”*

“The rest of us created our own cocoons for reasons of self-preservation. Great big couldn’t-care-less bubbles where we could all live regardless of what went on on the campus or on street. Again life had to be lived skilfully and with tact, but friendships were made and pleasure pursued with such cross-community spirit that we should have got a grant for it.” John Kelly - p. 128

One person made an interesting observation about the difference they perceived between faith and religion, which they equated with younger and older people respectively. Faith, they said was *“more moderate, liberal and inclusive”* and Religion, in contrast is *“more dogmatic, divisive and exclusive.”*

Summary:

- Young people, it was reported, do not want to be segregated and indoctrinated; they would rather be educated together. The vast majority of people believe this would better prepare young people for life beyond school.
- When asked about what would make the most positive and lasting difference for the future, the most commonly identified issue was that of a more integrated and cooperative education system.
- There is significant scope for improvement in the relationship between the Orange and Black Institutions and the Church. Relationships in some parts are currently strained. There's a need for dialogue and leadership.
- Politicians, by and large, are perceived as tribal and adversarial. More positive, non-partisan and cooperative political leadership was an aspiration of some.
- The different generations don't appear to understand each other very well. The present and future orientation of the young, is perceived as disrespectful and shallow by the old; the deference, respect and reminiscing of the old is perceived as out-dated, boring and redundant by the young. Each, arguably, has a lot to learn from the other.

**“
Young people want to
be educated together,
they do not want to
be segregated and
indoctrinated.”**

**“Whatever
you say
say nothing”**



{5}

Conclusions and Recommendations

Notice:

“Leaders
Required,”

This section seeks to identify the overarching themes of the report as reflected in the expressed views and experiences of the majority of those who participated in the project. Each sub section includes recommendations for consideration by the Church of Ireland diocese of Clogher, which may have relevance for other sections of the community.

The Church of Ireland - Clogher Diocese

{ 5.1 Church as ‘comfort zone’ versus } Church as ‘uncomfortable zone’ }

Whilst some people, both Clergy and parishioners, appear to want the Church to facilitate a more robust environment of honest enquiry around difficult issues and greater social engagement, the majority appear satisfied with the way things are and are reluctant to consider change.

Whilst a minority of those interviewed felt that the Church was failing to meet the needs of its membership and wider community and needed urgent and radical reform, the majority appear to be satisfied with a Church that provides comfort, reassurance and predictable routines.

There is a clear tension between these two positions, which should be acknowledged and addressed as creatively as possible by the Church at both a Diocesan and parish level. A shared exploration of the meaning and relevance of the phrase ‘*May the peace of Christ disturb you greatly*’ may provide a useful starting point in addressing this tension.

**“May the peace
of Christ disturb
you greatly.
”**

{5.2 Walking on egg shells}

There appears to be uneasy relationships between some clerics and their parishioners over contentious issues and matters of tradition and belief. Additionally, there appears to be unclear organisational, authority and accountability arrangements within and across the diocese leaving some Clergy feeling somewhat isolated and vulnerable.

The desire expressed by some Clergy for better communication, co-operation, organisation and supportive fraternity between colleagues should be examined and addressed by the Church. Within this there should be

a fresh consideration of the role, job description and specific priorities for clergy, both within the diocese and their respective parishes. This should also include an examination of the on-going support mechanisms and professional development opportunities provided for clergy, which enable them to enhance their skills and capabilities. Such a review may require the involvement and cooperation of the wider Church to ensure its efficacy.

It would appear that fresh guidance and direction may be helpful for both clergy and parishioners in relation to the place and importance, within the Diocese, of the fostering of better relationships with 'the neighbours' - in particular the Roman Catholic community and Church.

{5.3 Lifting the carpet}

The challenge of effectively addressing problematic issues and restoring and nurturing damaged relationships is not unique to the Church of Ireland in Clogher diocese.

Open and honest communication with friends and adversaries alike about difficult and contentious issues is widely acknowledged as an essential ingredient in such processes. The task facing the Church, and indeed wider

society is, arguably, less about solving or fixing whatever the immediate issues might be and more about building a new preparedness and capability to embrace such contentious issues in an on-going way. Perhaps the real challenge is to learn to walk towards rather than away from conflict and genuinely see it as an opportunity rather than a threat; to learn to enjoy collaborative processes with others around problem issues rather than dread and avoid such occasions.

Clogher Diocese should seek to determine the key areas where 'the carpet' needs to be lifted and decide whether or not it is indeed a role of the Church to encourage and enable people (Church leaders, clergy, parishioners and others) to gain the skills and confidence, and secure the support, to face and address the issues and challenges that prevail. The alternative is arguably a future built on continued avoidance and dishonesty.

This may be considered at a number of levels:

- How to enable and empower the people/parishioners to share and talk about their personal needs, feelings and beliefs within the Church/fait environment
- How to enable and empower open and honest examination of the prevailing issues within and across the Church of Ireland in Clogher Diocese, involving, clergy, Select Vestries, key organisations and other Church leaders
- How to enable and empower meaningful, constructive and on-going dialogue with persons and groups that operate outside the perimeter of the Church of Ireland Diocese of Clogher, and with whom there exists matters of either current or historic concern and/or contention

Establishing or refreshing a Vision and series of priorities in this regard would provide both leadership and challenge to all those who belong to the Church.

'The Troubles'

{5.4 Facing up to the legacy}

The legacy of practical and emotional suffering that some people continue to carry as a result of the Troubles is both profound and debilitating. Society in general, and the Church in particular, should constantly review how best to engage with and support those who have suffered most and carry such lasting legacies.

The Church should examine its role in helping those people who are most affected to find the language and confidence to meet and also in providing the facilities and support to do so. Protestant people may have additional barriers and challenges to overcome in order to get to a place where they feel able to talk, share and meet with others around these sensitive and emotional issues. The Church may have a particularly important leadership role in giving explicit permission and encouragement to such people.

The Church should also consider its role, or potential role, within collaborative partnerships with Community Development groups, Peace and Reconciliation groups, funders and others, working to improve conditions and increase capacity at a community level.

In regard to the promotion of dialogue and learning the suggestion that the up-coming 400th Anniversary of the Plantation be used as a stimulus is worthy of serious consideration.

{5.5 On being a Protestant}

Many of the characteristics of the Border Protestant, as discussed and outlined earlier in this report, may have the effect of being restricting and/or debilitating on the individual and the community as a whole.

In the context of conversations, which explored and examined such characteristics, the Protestant person generally appeared to fare unfavourably against their Catholic counterparts and then tended to respond, unsurprisingly, with typical self-deprecation and resignation.

These matters should be further explored with a view to developing a better understanding of the precise characteristics of the Border Protestant and how these actually impact on their life chances and modes of being in the world. It may be that new learning opportunities and experiences should be designed and be made available to encourage Protestants to acknowledge and address any cultural characteristics judged to be detrimental or limiting.

More positive civic and church leadership was proposed in this regard, along with the creation of shared spaces and shared learning opportunities, designed to be honest and robust. *Notice: 'Leaders required!'*

The Border Protestant

{5.6 Taking a rightful place at the table}

The Border Protestant, it was reported, has:
"A tremendous desire to be more than they think they are and to be thought of in a better light than they perceive others think of them."

Whilst the Border Protestant community has operated, for quite some time, under the maxim of *'Whatever you say, say nothing'* this rule of conduct and the myriad of associated survival traits are now widely regarded as either obsolete or detrimental to the advancement of the Border Protestant community.

It would appear that the challenge is to encourage the Border Protestant community to become more visible and collaborative in wider society. A better understanding of its own heritage, traditions and stories may assist the Border Protestant community to step out with greater confidence. Whilst there would appear to be both greater awareness of the importance of such developments and increased willingness to get involved, there remain issues

which actively mitigate against the Protestant doing so, and which therefore need to be acknowledged and addressed in order to improve the likelihood of initial engagement and overall success.

The Church should further consider its role in the overall capacity building of the Border Protestant community alongside and/or in partnership with the endeavours of existing community groups.

***"A tremendous desire
to be more than they
think they are and
to be thought of
in a better light than
they perceive others
think of them."
"***

{5.7 Borderlands}

The Border Church symbolises identity, belonging and hope for the Border Protestant. It appears to act, for some, as both a flag and a duvet.

The Border Church is where people meet, where information is shared and where business is done. It is an integral part of the lives of the Border Protestant and also of the fabric of rural life.

The strong culture of the Border Church poses a range of challenges to clergy and the wider Church/diocesan

family. These challenges should be acknowledged by the diocese, and the Church should establish a clear and strategic view of its relationship to and responsibilities towards the Border Church. Communication, participation and collaboration around these matters would go a very long way to allaying the fears and anxieties of an already vulnerable minority population.

Often people seek the respect of genuine consultation, and are then content to know where they stand and what is expected of them.

{5.8 ‘The elephant in the room’}

The vote for Bobby Sands in 1981 is just one example of an issue, with a myriad of associated unanswered questions, which hangs between the two communities and continues to hamper efforts to build sustainable trust and cooperation.

Protestants, by and large, didn’t understand then and still don’t understand now, why the Roman Catholic people and Church didn’t ‘speak up’ more than they did, particularly during the worst of the ‘Troubles’,

to either offer sympathy and support or seek to arrest the violence. *‘No-one shouted Stop!’*¹⁴

Issues of misunderstanding, hurt and distrust need to be acknowledged and addressed, sooner rather than later, if real and sustainable progress on substantive matters and, crucially, relationships, is to be achieved. The alternative of a future, which continues to balance perilously on delicate compromises and polite avoidance, is, arguably, dishonest, lacking in courage and bound to break down sooner rather than later.

¹⁴ 2008 is the 40th anniversary of the publication of John Healy’s book *No-one Shouted Stop - Death of an Irish Town*

The Church should examine its own practices and customs to ascertain where improvements can be made and how it can best lead by example in the addressing of matters of concern, misunderstanding and distrust, within its own population and structures. The Church should also

consider its role in creating and facilitating a conducive environment for such potentially challenging, yet rewarding, encounters to occur more broadly between members of, and groups representing, the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities.

Civic Life

{5.9 ‘Education, education, education’}

Young people, it was reported, do not want to be segregated and indoctrinated; they would rather be educated together. Education it was suggested is about preparing young people for a complex and diverse world, where, in order to be successful, they will need to be able to relate effectively with people and cultures very different from their own.

When interviewees were asked what single action would be most likely to make a meaningful and lasting difference into the future, the most popular

recommendation was ‘a more integrated education system’ as it was felt this would better prepare young people for life after school.

The Church in Clogher diocese should re-examine its role in and aspirations for the education of young people in the Diocese and consider what it can do to encourage and actively facilitate a more co-operative and integrated approach - or, as discussed in the Bain Report¹⁵, their role in working towards the integrating of children in local communities.

¹⁵ ‘Schools for the Future: funding, Strategy, sharing.’ A Report of the independent strategic review of Education. December 2006

{5.10 Orange and Black}

There appears to be significant scope for improvement in the relationship between the Orange and Black Institutions and/or particular groupings of Orange or Black members, and the Church. Relationships in some parts appear to be strained.

There is clearly a need, both in some specific local areas and possibly also at a senior leadership level, to engage in dialogue around, at the very least, perceptions of and relationships with each other.

The Church should re-examine its current relationship with the Loyal Orders, at both macro and micro levels, and look at what needs to be done to improve communication, understanding and relationships. A clear statement of the nature of the Terms of Reference between the various parties and what is expected of individuals as they communicate with and relate to one another, should be considered.

{5.11 ‘The Generation Game’}

The different generations do not appear to understand or relate to each other very well, again an issue widely recognised in many communities and cultures.

The present and future orientation of the young is perceived as disrespectful and shallow by the old; the deference, respect and remembering of the old is perceived as out-dated, boring and redundant by the young. Each, arguably, has a lot to learn from the other.

The Church should consider how it can best encourage and enable individuals and groups across the age spectrum to relate to one another and, ideally, find ways to cooperate and collaborate on shared interests and concerns.

{End thought}

As with any research (*regardless of how well executed*) any viewpoint (*regardless of the credentials of the exponent*) or any proposition (*regardless of who offers it*) an immediate human impulse is to look for the faults in content or style. In this modern consumer age, we are all experts in our own domain. Above all else, individual taste and choice prevails.

However, one of the inherent problems with such a superficial reaction is, of course, that we can often miss the deeper value or potential of a product that we have too hastily decided, for whatever reason, we don't like. We have already moved on to the next item or aisle.

I expect that there will be some aspects of this report that will make some readers uncomfortable. If it were not so, I would be disappointed. My hope is, that as many readers as possible, and the Church of Ireland in Clogher Diocese in particular, will instead embrace the challenge of the uncomfortable issues and honestly examine the recommendations for their import.

“Whatever
you say
say nothing”

{Bibliography}

Crawley, Marie. *'You feel you'd have no say' - Border Protestants and Community Development*, Rural Community Network, 2003

Gebler, Carlo. *The Glass Curtain - Inside an Ulster Community*, Hamish Hamilton Ltd, 1991

Harvey, Brian; Kelly, Assumpta; McGearty, Sean; Murray, Sonya. *The Emerald Curtain - The social impact of the Irish Border*, Triskele Community Training & Development, 2005

Kelly, John. *Cool about the ankles*, Blackstaff Press Ltd, 1997

McKay, Susan. *Northern Protestants an unsettled people*, Blackstaff Press Ltd, 2000

McKay, Susan. *Bear in mind these dead*, Faber and Faber, 2008

Quinn, Peter (Consultancy Services). *'The way it is' - A comprehensive review of Community Development and Community Relationships in Fermanagh*, 1998

Ralaheen Ltd, Dublin with EXPAC, Monaghan and Stratagem, Belfast. *All over the place - People displaced to and from the Southern Border Counties as a Result of the Conflict 1969 -1994*, A research report commissioned by Area Development Management and Combat Poverty Agency, 2005

Walsh, Kathy. *Border Protestant Perspectives - A Study of the Attitudes and Experiences of Protestants Living in the Southern Border Counties*, Locus Management, 2005

{Acknowledgements}

The usefulness of this report is based substantially on the willingness and kind co-operation of the many people who participated in interviews and provided other supportive information and material. My sincere thanks to all those who generously shared their time, experiences and reflections.

Thanks to Glenn Moore and Ruth McKane at the Diocesan Office.

To John Peto, Billy Gallagher and Bobby Gordon for their expertise.

To Earl Storey for his encouragement and support.

To Glenn Jordan for his critical eye, listening ear and wisdom.

And, finally, thanks to Lorna Gardiner whose patience, technical expertise, support and encouragement helped bring this report to fruition.

{Appendix 1}

The Church of Ireland Diocese of Clogher

A Brief History

The Irish Church originated with the mission of St Patrick to Ireland in the years following AD 432. Early Celtic Christianity was based in the numerous monasteries founded by Patrick and his followers. Many of these, such as Glendalough and Clonard, became famous seats of learning. From them, the Christian faith was to spread to Scotland, and eventually to the European continent, where it was re-established by Irish monks after the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.

The See of Clogher was founded by St Patrick, who is thought to have established a monastery at Clogher. Clogher may have been chosen because it was a pre-Christian druidic settlement, and was in possession of the *Clogh Oir*, one of the Three Stones of Erin. It was also the seat of the ancient Kings of Oriel.

Ancient relics of the Patrician period survive, including stones known as St Patrick's Chair, Altar and Well, the *Dromnach Airgid* or silver shrine and a vellum copy of the Latin Gospels, which are believed to have been a gift from St Patrick himself.

St Macartan, a descendant of Fiachus Araidh, King of Ulster, travelled with Patrick as his companion. Patrick appointed him first bishop and abbot of the monastery

he founded at Clogher. He died in 506 and was buried at Clogher. In the centuries up until the Viking invasions, Clogher produced its share of Ireland's renowned saints and scholars.

By the beginning of the twelfth century, the Irish monastic system had fallen into decline and was in urgent need of reform. The Synod of Rathbreasil in AD 1111 created, amongst other things, the diocesan system with which we are familiar today. At this synod, the boundaries of Clogher Diocese were fixed from the River Blackwater on one side to Galloon on the other, and from Slieve Beagh to Slieve Largy near Sixmilecross. With a few minor alterations in recent times, Clogher Diocese today comprises Counties Monaghan and Fermanagh, the south-east of County Tyrone and a small part of County Donegal, around Lough Derg, and a very small section of County Leitrim at Kiltyclogher.

The history of the Diocese since the Reformation period is the story of the plantation and settlement of English and Scottish settlers in the area at the beginning of the seventeenth century. They built churches, some of which still survive, although many were destroyed in the Rebellion of 1641. Many of the present churches were built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with grants from the Board of First Fruits. In 1921, St Anne's Church in Enniskillen was created a co-cathedral of the Diocese, with the dedication St Macartin. Today, there are some 72 churches in use, in 32 groupings.

Extracted from: *'Clergy of Clogher' Biographical Succession Lists*, compiled by Canon J.B. Leslie and revised, edited and updated by Canon D.W.T. Crooks and Dean T.R. Moore, 2006, Pg xxxviii

{Appendix 2}

Semi - Structured Interview Template

Church of Ireland Diocese of Clogher and Hard Gospel
Research Project Semi-Structured Interview Format

Key Themes:

1. The Church

- its influence, importance, role and leadership

2. The Border

- its relevance, the practicalities, two jurisdictions, then and now

3. The Troubles

- the impact/legacy, violence, particular events e.g. Enniskillen Bomb or more personal incidents/stories, then and now

4. The Protestant (Border) Community

- its value, strength, leadership

5. The Loyal Orders

- their relevance/influence, their role and leadership, relationship with church

6. Civic Life & Political life

- local versus regional/national government, relationship with/influence of the RUC/PSNI, Army/UDR, B Specials, events such as the election of Bobby Sands...

7. 'The Neighbours'

- perceptions, identity and relationships

Suggested Questions/Prompts:

1. The Church

- How important do you think the Church has been in the wider community in Clogher Diocese over the years and during the Troubles?
- What has been its role and what leadership has it provided?
- How important have the clergy been as catalysts/facilitators?
- What messages/'voice' have the rest of society heard from the Church over the years - and what is (or should be) the message coming from the Church these days?
- What in your view should the focus and efforts of the Church/clergy be in the current political climate?

2. The Border

- How important has the Border been in your life/experience over the years?
- What practical difficulties and opportunities did the Border present?
- Did the Border and 'Border Experiences' become normalised/accepted in your experience?
- Have things changed much in recent times?
- How was your sense of identity influenced by the Border - by Church - by the Troubles relatively speaking?

- To what extent was a person's experience of the Border and the Troubles influenced by factors such as whether or not they had a family member in the 'security forces'?

3. The Troubles

- What is your sense of the overall impact of the Troubles upon:
 - a. You?
 - b. Your family?
 - c. The Protestant Community?
 - d. The Wider Community?
- To what extent was a person's experience of the Troubles influenced by whether or not they had a family member who was involved in the 'security forces'?
- What is your view of the concept of 'ethnic cleansing' - as it relates or related to the troubles and the border?
- What was the particular impact on you and others of the Enniskillen Bomb?
- What are the peculiar and particular 'legacy issues' emanating from the Troubles for you, your family or the Community?

4. The Protestant (Border) Community

- What holds the Protestant community together? What are the cohesive factors?

- What made (then) or makes (now) the Protestant community particular and perhaps peculiar - what are its strengths and its weaknesses?
- Who does the Protestant community look to for leadership and from where does it draw its support/energy/sustenance?
- Why, do you think, were the Protestant Paramilitaries not as active or evident in Clogher Diocese's Border region, as in other areas e.g. North Armagh or Mid Ulster, etc?
- How important and explicit was/is the maxim - 'keep your head down and say nothing' or 'whatever you say, say nothing'?
- What is the future direction (trends) for the protestant (Border) community and how does your analysis make you feel?

5. The Loyal Orders

- What was the role of the Loyal Orders for Border Protestants during the Troubles and how, if at all, has that role changed?
- In your view, what messages were conveyed, intentionally or not, by the Loyal Orders to a. the Border protestant community and b. 'the neighbours'?
- Did the Loyal Orders have or assume a key leadership role in the community? Did you perceive this as a positive or negative influence?
- How would you describe or characterise the relationship between the Loyal Orders and the Church - both then and now?

6. Civic and Political Life

- Did the Border Protestant people look locally or regionally/nationally for community/political leadership and direction during the Troubles?
- What kind of leadership was given/demonstrated by civic and political leaders during the Troubles?
- How has this role changed, if at all?
- What kind of leadership and message is required now as NI attempts to build a more peaceful and 'mature' society?

7. 'The Neighbours'

- Who were your immediate non-Protestant 'neighbours' during the Troubles, if any?
- How did you feel towards 'the neighbours' during the Troubles?
- Who mediated/regulated/informed your thoughts and feelings during those times?
- Have relationships changed or improved, and if so, how?
- Are there unresolved relational legacies of mistrust and betrayal that remain to be fully addressed and can you perceive how these matters can be successfully addressed in times to come?

{Appendix 3}

I was born in Londonderry
I was born in Derry City too
Oh what a special child
To see such things and still to smile
I know that there was something wrong
But I kept my head down and carried on

I grew up in Enniskillen
I grew up in inis ceathlain too
Oh what a clever boy
To watch your hometown be destroyed
I knew that I would not stay long
So I kept my head down and carried on

Who cares where national borders lie
Who cares whose laws you're governed by
Who cares what name you call a town
Who'll care when you're six feet beneath the ground
From the corner of my eye
A hint of blue in the black sky
A ray of hope, a beam of light
An end to thirty years of night
The church-bells ring, the children sing
What is this strange and beautiful thing
It's the sunrise
Can you see the sunrise?
I can see the sunrise

Sunrise - Divine Comedy from the Album 'Fin de Siecle'

{Notes}

“Whatever
you say
say nothing”

{Notes}

“Whatever
you say
say nothing”



**“Whatever
you say
say nothing”**

Contact information:

David Gardiner

M: 0775 383 4247

E: dave.gardiner@btinternet.com

Earl Storey

M: 0775 284 1802

E: earlstorey@hardgospel.net

W: www.hardgospel.net

Funders:

The Department for Foreign Affairs
The International Fund for Ireland

Commissioned by the **Hard Gospel Project**