

## Key points

Welcome opportunity to respond. Want to do three things.

1. Highlight the things that struck me
2. Explain why they struck me
3. Offer some reflections on their significance for N Ireland.

### Things that struck me.

“Justice is social”

“Human rights language is often abused”

“Christians have come to view all talk of rights with suspicion”

“Human beings are of intrinsic worth because of what God thinks of them and how God relates to them”.

“Love the “gerim” extended to love your enemies”

“We need to distinguish between proper critique(where the object of critique is given a voice and invited to respond) and abuse( in which the object of abuse is denied a voice) “

“The early church, as an egalitarian, multinational, socially inclusive polity (*ekklesia*), in which the weakest members were to be the most honoured, stood as a radical antithesis to the politics of both empire and republic. But in the ensuing centuries it was quickly co-opted by empires and republics, and even took on the characteristics of empire in many of its manifestations”

### Why they struck me

“**Justice is social**”. We so often see justice as forensic, something delivered, almost through decision, negotiation, legal process. In this justice is limited to the judicial and becomes a matter for us to seek and the state to deliver.

“**Human rights language is often abused**”. We live in an age of rights, where rights become attached to all manner of things and are used as weapons rather than offering empowerment.

“**Christians have come to view all talk of rights with suspicion**” This has been my experience in both the fields of equality as well as HR. It is for them-uns.

“**Human beings are of intrinsic worth because of what God thinks of them and how God relates to them**”. We have come to value people by their status, race, sex, age, by their intellect or mental capacity. Inherently, we see them as more valuable, more of worth than others. Even in the church, we have fallen for the user friendly approach which is more accommodating of the normal worshipper.

“**Love the “gerim” extended to love your enemies**”. Strangers and enemies are two different things. Some people have a multiple identity in this, but often it is easier to love the stranger than the enemy.

“**We need to distinguish between proper critique(where the object of critique is given a voice and invited to respond) and abuse( in which the object of abuse is**

**denied a voice)”** I will come back this this in more detail later, but it is germane in the wake of the McConnell issue.

**“The early church, as an egalitarian, multinational, socially inclusive polity (*ekklesia*), in which the weakest members were to be the most honoured, stood as a radical antithesis to the politics of both empire and republic. But in the ensuing centuries it was quickly co-opted by empires and republics, and even took on the characteristics of empire in many of its manifestations”**. It reminded me that a good start and good intentions do not necessarily guarantee a good finish of good result. It recalled the slippery nature of compromise and syncretism, of post event justification.

### **The application to this place we call home**

**“Justice is social”**. Human rights are a birthright. They are not earned or granted. If this is so, then we are all responsible to deliver just solutions, offer just interventions, speak with justice and seek justice. This sort of justice needs to permeate, indeed drive our social interactions. Such justice seeks the well being of the other. So what do Unionists offer Nationalists in their manifestos? Why do we seek rights fulfilling responsibilities? For example, we fulfill equality law because it is law and we have to conform. Do we do it because we believe it matters, believe it is the right thing, as well as the lawful thing to do? But law on its own doesn't change attitudes. Attitudes are internally incubated but are externally influenced and displayed. This type of justice is first and foremost personal. Failure to act justly delivers a wrong to the recipient.

### **One example Migrants.**

We have an increasingly diverse community. The 2011 census shows that ethnic minority groups make up just under 2% of the population. ...more than twice as many as was the case a decade ago (c33k- 14k). In addition there are 35k from the A8 countries compared to 700 ten years ago. (Czech Republic Estonia Hungary Latvia Lithuania Poland Slovakia Slovenia)

The NILT surveys showed that positive opinion towards migrants decreased from 53% in 2006 to 26% in 2010. Our own survey showed that 1 in 4 people would mind having a migrant as a work mate. In a recent life and times survey, 42% of pupils stated that they had witnessed racial harassment while at school.

Race motivated incidents are significant in number in N Ireland, and increased by 30% to almost 1,000 in 2013/14. That equates to almost 3 incidents a day. Race hate crimes increased by 47% in the same period to almost 700, nearly two a day. Two thirds of these occurred in Belfast

**Job Insecurity** – The 2011 census showed that E Europeans had the highest rate of employment in N Ireland (73%) Despite this most migrant workers are often on temporary or casual contracts and are particularly vulnerable to economic downturns. In one study, half of the respondents said they were afraid they would lose their jobs as a result of the economic downturn.

**Labour Market Exclusion** – Many are excluded from the labour market or forced into lower-skilled jobs because employers do not recognize their overseas qualifications.

**Childcare** - A recent report by Barnardo's and NICEM has highlighted that the ethnic minority community also experience a number of barriers in accessing childcare including a lack of affordable, flexible childcare provision at local level to meet the needs of parents working atypical hours or zero-hours contracts.

**Qualifications** - Research also suggests that migrant workers may find it difficult to improve their position in the labour market due to the lack of recognition of overseas qualifications by employers and that the critical issue for asylum seekers was exclusion from the labour market while awaiting a decision from the Home Office on their refugee application

### **Benefits of diversity.**

- **Increased Productivity:**
- **Increased creativity and Problem solving:**
- **Attract and Retain talent** Language skills pool - compete in the International global world or to increase its diverse customer base
- **Help to build synergy in teams and enhances communication skills** that brings in new attitudes and processes that profit the whole team
- **It increases market share and create a satisfied diverse customer base** by relating to people from different backgrounds. success in the global business world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Applying the proper diversity& inclusion management strategies is the right thing to do for the business

**“Human rights/equality language is often abused”**. We have only to look at the dialogue on abortion or same sex marriage to see the outworking. Equality of opportunity is not equal to nor does it necessarily deliver equality of outcome. The danger is in one tradition/group claiming the right over and against the other.

**“Christians have come to view all talk of rights/equality with suspicion”** I meet this in my day to day work. Partly to do with understanding, stereotyping, personal experiences, teaching/lack of and failure to engage with “the agenda”.

**“Human beings are of intrinsic worth because of what God thinks of them and how God relates to them”**. As a basis for the outworking of HR and Equality this is the core and needs to be restated and reclaimed. Still a hard debate in certain areas, eg sexual orientation and beginning and end of life matters.

**“Love the “gerim” extended to love your enemies”**. I just love this challenge! What does it mean, love them into the kingdom? Love them because of the kingdom? Love them unconditionally? If so what does this look like in incarnational terms?

**“We need to distinguish between proper critique(where the object of critique is given a voice and invited to respond) and abuse( in which the object of abuse is denied a voice) “** This is of particular interest to me in the wake of the past debate begun by Pastor McConnell. Observations???

Appropriate and proportionate laws  
Strong leadership from all; Challenge and Encourage

Understanding the balance between freedom of speech and responsibilities to wider society as well as conduct

Freedom of speech: (**Freedom of expression** is sometimes used synonymously, but includes any act of seeking, receiving and imparting information or ideas, regardless of the medium used)

**Freedom of speech** is the political right to communicate one's opinions and ideas using one's body and property to anyone who is willing to receive them.

Article 19 ICCPR also says that the exercise of these rights carries "special duties and [responsibilities](#)" and may "therefore be subject to certain restrictions" when necessary "[f]or respect of the rights or reputation of others" or "[f]or the protection of national security or of public order (order public), or of public health or morals

The right to **freedom of speech** is not absolute in any country and is commonly subject to limitations based on the speech implications of the [harm principle](#) including [libel](#), [slander](#), [obscenity](#) and [pornography](#), [sedition](#), [hate speech](#), [classified information](#), [copyright violation](#), [trade secrets](#), [non-disclosure agreements](#). Also freedom of speech is limited in many jurisdictions to widely differing degrees by [religious legal systems](#), [religious offense](#) or [incitement to ethnic or racial hatred](#) laws

The term "**offense principle**" is also used to expand the range of free speech limitations to prohibit forms of expression where they are considered offensive to society, special interest groups or individuals. There is no right not to be offended!

**“The early church, as an egalitarian, multinational, socially inclusive polity (*ekklesia*), in which the weakest members were to be the most honoured, stood as a radical antithesis to the politics of both empire and republic. But in the ensuing centuries it was quickly co-opted by empires and republics, and even took on the characteristics of empire in many of its manifestations”** This is the challenge not to cave in, not to compromise