Faith in the North-East Inner-City

How faith-based communities help Dublin to flourish

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Abbreviations

CSO	Central Statistics Office
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DCC	Dublin City Council
DSP	Department of Social Protection
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ETB	Education and Training Board
FBC	Faith-Based Community
FBO	Faith-Based Organisation
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GP	General Practitioner
HSE	Health Service Executive
IHREC	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
IPAS	International Protection Accommodation Services
NEIC	North East Inner City
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NTA	National Transport Authority
PPSN	Personal Public Service Number
SAPS	Small Area Population Statistics
TCD	Trinity College Dublin

Glossary

Asylum Seeker	A person who has left their country and has made an application for refugee and/or subsidiary protection status. Also called **international protection applicants**.
Ethnicity	Persons possessing some or all of the following characteristics including a common language, history, traditions, religion and a common geographic origin. Their shared identity exists independent of nationality.
Faith-based community	A locally rooted congregation (that may be embedded in a wider network across a greater geographic span) whose common life is animated by worship and communal practices, shaped around shared beliefs and structured leadership.
Faith-based organisation	Charitable endeavours or social enterprises formed by or with a direct or indirect relationship to a specific faith-based community.
Immigrant	See **Migrant**
Integration	The ability to participate to the extent that a person needs and wishes in all of the major components of society without having to relinquish his or her own cultural identity. Integration encompasses participation in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the State suggesting a hybridity,[1] avoiding the binary of relinquishing cultural identity or not. As a two-way process, integration also involves change for Irish society.
Intercultural	Cultural differences are acknowledged, respected and provided for in a planned and systematic way in all systems, processes and practices.
Interfaith	Relations among different world religions, for example, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism.
Migrant	Any person born in another country who has moved to Ireland to work, to study, for international protection, for family reunification, as a refugee, or as a beneficiary of temporary protection.

[1] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 2004).

Glossary

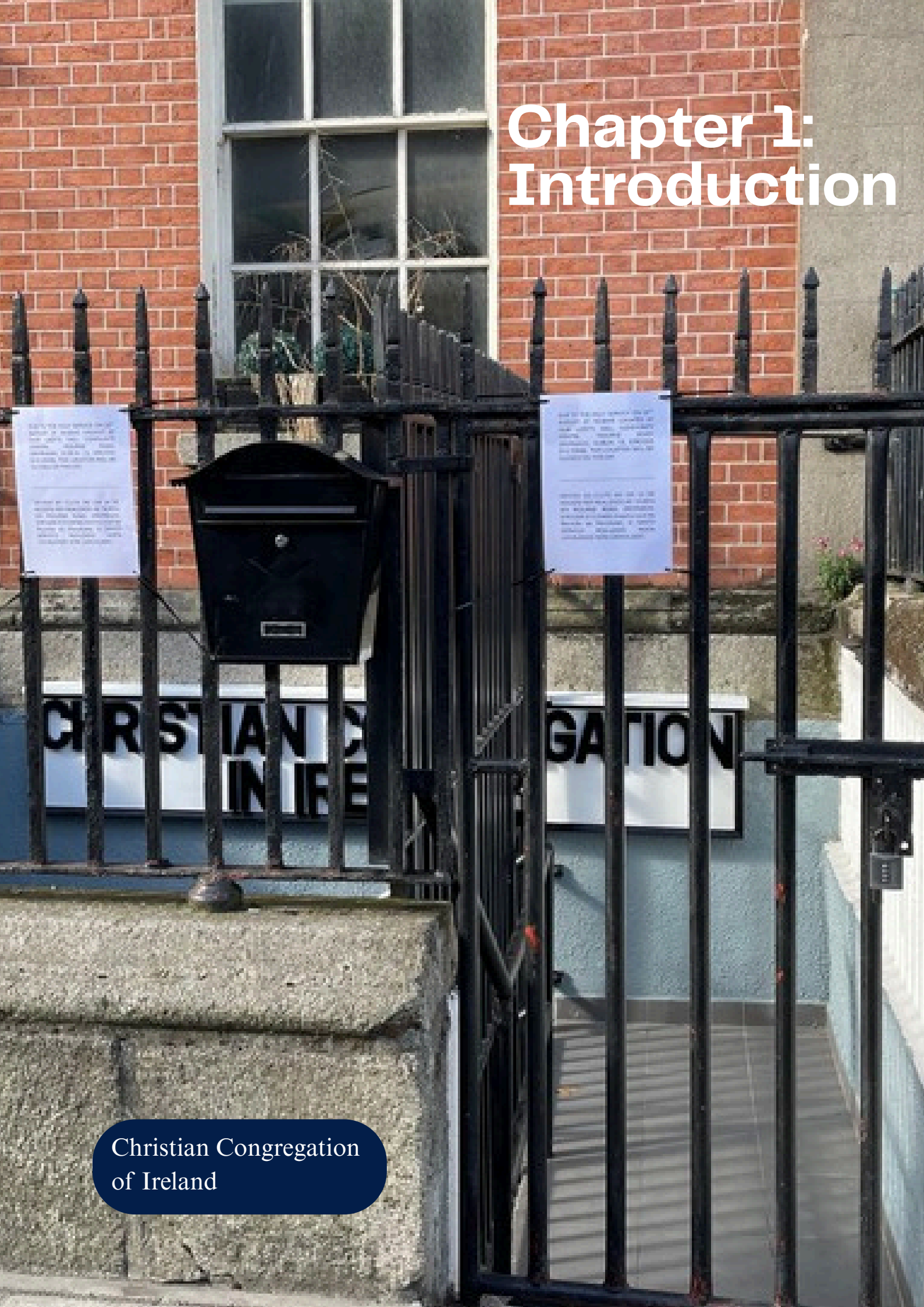
Minority Ethnic	People who are in the minority within a defined population on the grounds of "race", colour, culture, language or nationality.
Multi-ethnic	A society, community, or state that includes people from many different ethnic groups, such as those defined by shared culture, traditions, language, or history.
Nationality	State of belonging to a particular country or being a citizen of a particular nation, attained through birth or naturalisation.
"Race"	A social construct to create hierarchies among peoples. "Races" are created and made real – by "racialising" people – through historical and ideological processes in society, involving the subordination of some groups over others. This means that it is not the existence of "races" which allows racism to exist, but the persistence of the political construct of whiteness, which is at the heart of the system of racism, and continues to create and recreate "races."
Racism	A structurally embedded phenomenon of domination and power, which is reflected through and reproduced by institutional arrangements; an interplay also known as "systemic racism." This domination manifests through power dynamics present in structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin. Systemic racism prevents people from enjoying their rights across many domains, including their economic, social and cultural rights, as well as their civil and political rights. Racism is present whether the exclusion is intentional or not.
Refugee	A refugee is a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside of their own country and cannot or will not return there because of the well-founded fear of persecution. They cannot be protected in their own country.

Glossary

Secularism — A normative political doctrine about how State and law relate to religion. It can be expressed in more and less liberal forms, ranging from the exclusionary approach commonly known as *laïcité* to more pluralist-inclusive models. The aim of the latter is State neutrality from favouring particular religious traditions while protecting freedom of conscience and welcoming diversity in the public square.

Secularity — A description of social conditions in which religious belief and practice are one option among others, and where key institutions in society operate with their own logics independent of ecclesial control.

Secularisation — An empirical sociological process often (erroneously) treated as a single trend. It involves a differentiation of social spheres from religious authority, the (variable) decline in religious adherence and/or practice, and the privatisation of religion.



Chapter 1: Introduction

Christian Congregation of Ireland

Chapter One - Introduction

1.1 A Good Puzzle

In *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom walking down Dorset Street muses that a "good puzzle would be to cross Dublin without passing a pub."[2] It took until 2011 for someone to finally solve the conundrum when a software developer charted a pub-free path from Blackhorse Avenue to Baggot Street.[3] That the solution took so long, and the use of a computer algorithm, indicates the abundance of public houses on Dublin's streets.

Pubs are sometimes understood as a "third place," with the home and work being the first and second places respectively. In *The Great Good Place*, Ray Oldenburg suggests that "third places" are key to the vitality of communities, as they offer places where civil society, democracy, civic engagement, and a sense of place are enhanced.[4] With the local pub in Ireland in decline,[5] Bloom's pub puzzle may need updating for a contemporary Dublin where a diversity of places of worship and faith-based community spaces are increasing with the arrival of new communities.

1.2 New "Third Places"

Migration offers us a helpful window to see two interconnected things that have happened over the past decades, as pubs are an "important cultural landscape of migration."[6] Firstly, to meet the demands of Irish migrants overseas, the Irish Pub Concept programme, created in 1992, led to a rapid expansion of the Irish pub worldwide.[7] With pubs closing in Ireland, they were being exported overseas to new host countries. This was not the only movement to new countries in this period.

Secondly, during this time, Ireland experienced a sustained period of immigration, consistent with a rapidly growing economy, the need for labour, and a safe destination for those seeking refuge. Many came to Ireland from Eastern Europe and the Global South. As the new arrivals established homes and places, they likewise sought "third places" which would provide familiarity and connection with their home country. With the high levels of religious faith and practice among the new communities to Ireland, their "third places" often took the form of faith-based communities. And these places grew rapidly. As the Irish pub was being exported for the needs of an Irish diaspora, a new "third space" was being imported through the needs of those arriving in Ireland.

[2] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Random House Publishing, 1934), 58.
[3] Kevin Martin, *Have Ye No Homes To Go To?: The History of the Irish Pub* (The Collins Press, 2016), 103.
[4] Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Our Vanishing Third Place* (Marlowe, 1999), 203.
[5] Since 2005, almost 2,000 pubs have closed in the Republic of Ireland.
[6] Mary Gilmartin, *Ireland and Migration in the Twenty-First Century* (Manchester University Press, 2015), 103.
[7] Guinness had observed that when an Irish pub opened, sales of Guinness increased in the surrounding areas as other local bars stocked Guinness to compete. They estimate that over 2,000 enterprises were opened in Europe alone in the 1990s as a result of the programme. See Martin, *Have Ye No Homes To Go To?*, 241.

1.3 The Research

Over the course of this research project, we have identified almost fifty faith-based communities in the north-east inner-city of Dublin. In the map of the faith-based communities (see Chapter 2), we have overlaid the official administrative boundaries of the north-east inner-city as recognised by the NEIC Initiative to provide some geographical grounding. But we recognise that such borders, particularly in relation to where people live, work, and worship in the north-east inner-city, are largely arbitrary and entirely porous.

This research project had two primary aims. Firstly, to map and analyse the role of faith-based communities in fostering the integration of migrants, refugees, and immigrants in the north-east inner-city, and how they bridge cultural, linguistic, and social gaps, facilitating smoother transitions into Irish society while enriching the local community. Secondly, this research also aimed to identify any distinctive role faith-based communities play as mediators of integration, addressing needs that are often unmet by government or market services, thereby providing evidence-based recommendations for decision-makers.

Ultimately, the project seeks to inform Dublin City Council and other stakeholders about the positive social impact of faith-based communities, ensuring their contributions are recognised and integrated into the area's urban planning and community development efforts.

Chapter 2: Mapping Faith-Based Communities

Assembly of God Ireland Ministry Dublin

Chapter Two - Mapping Faith-Based Communities in the North-East Inner-City

2.1 Introduction

Mapping the place of faith-based communities in the north-east inner-city is not a new phenomenon[8] and, in many ways, this research project represents not an examination of "new communities" but an exploration of multiple layers of religious diversity across many generations.

This chapter will firstly provide a brief history of the north-east inner-city, providing a fuller and alternative reading than the "official" quite optimistic narrative, separated from the north-east inner-city's very unique history. Then, based on our extensive research, we will provide a map of the 49 faith-based communities we have identified in and around the north-east inner-city.

2.2 Brief History of the North-East Inner-City

Before any decisions, plans, strategies or recommendations could be implemented in the north-east inner-city, the estuary land was subject only to seasonal occupation as mariculturists farmed oysters and other seafood for the neighbouring households of Dublin. With the construction of the Liffey quay walls in the early 18th century, the layered and challenging history of the area properly began. When the swamps and flood plains began to drain across this new suburb, housing, places of worship, and businesses steadily emerged. These included those occupied by both Jewish and Christian refugees who had sought protection in Ireland from religious persecution across Europe. With the Penal Laws casting a long shadow, the opening of the Custom House in 1791, and the work of the Wide Streets Commission on Luke Gardiner's estate, would allow for the now familiar streets to become some of the most sought-after property in a booming Dublin.

The Act of Union in 1801 incited an exodus of capital from Dublin to London. A period of steady decline extended throughout the 19th century. The emergence of Monto – Europe's largest red-light district – signalled the social challenges of a military and maritime metropolitan edge. The migration of much of the rural poor into tenement housing following the Great Famine of 1845-1849 was not just a replacement for those who had moved out to new suburbs. It was a leveraged economy which funded the creation of those spacious suburbs. These tenements provided some of the poorest housing stock of the British Empire. They would still be present when the area was far from a passive observer to the events of the 1916 Rising, the War of Independence, and the Civil War.

The new State that emerged from the conflicts gradually sought to end the tenement era with the building of suburbs in places like Crumlin, to which many of the working classes would migrate. The development of flat complexes for those who remained were needed in what were growing inner-city parishes.

[8] Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Services dedicated 10 pages to details of faith-based communities in 'Find Your Way: A Guide to Key Services in Dublin City Centre', Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service, February 2009, 109–18. Similar detail was made available by All-Ireland Consultative Meeting on Racism, *Directory of Migrant-Led Churches and Chaplaincies* (Irish Churches, 2009).

The mid-20th century offered some levels of employment in the nearby docks and textile factories. But, by the late 1970s, the area was about to be hit by a perfect storm. A regime change in Iran brought a new illicit drug to the edge of western Europe. The mechanisation of the docks, the closure of the textile factories, and a global economic crisis led to massive youth unemployment. Finally, a new virus arrived on the trade routes of capitalism, and the State was unable to meet it with the appropriate public health response. HIV and drug-related deaths would have an enormous impact on the local streets and within families. In the midst of these challenges the Irish Financial Services Centre emerged. Much of it remains in the south-east corner of the north-east inner-city. The financial institutions there today represent trillions of euros of net assets[9] and they sit adjacent to communities, such as Sheriff Street, which epitomise the resilience and localism still alive in the area.[10]

Around 2016, a number of murders linked to a so-called gangland feud led to the publication of the Mulvey Report[11] which, in turn, led to the establishment of the NEIC Initiative led by the Department of the Taoiseach.[12] The past eight years have seen significant demographic changes in the area. The provision of emergency accommodation in response to the housing crisis and new chapters of migration from multiple global locations and contexts have generated a truly diverse landscape. More broadly, the north-east inner-city's story is not circumstantial nor incidental. It collides powers and principalities with people as neglect, hope, agency, resilience, trauma, and poverty are sedimented from the past into the present. An editorial published ten days after the riot of 23rd November 2023, and with specific reference to the Gardiner Street area, points to how that which is outside remains in relationship with that which is within:

> "The truth is that ever since independence successive administrations – and by extension the people who elected them – have treated the population of Dublin's inner city with suspicion and disrespect. From the tenements of the early 20th century onward, people who generally live in the comfortable suburbs have made decisions that affect the lives of those who live in the centre. Too often those decisions have been misconceived. Sometimes they have been disastrous."[13]

2.3 Mapping the Faith-based Communities

Over the course of the research, we identified 49 faith-based communities in the north-east inner-city (see Figure 1 below). This list is not exhaustive and never could be complete. It is merely a snapshot in time based on pre-existing relationships and local knowledge. Faith-based communities in the north-east inner-city are in a constant state of flux:[14] with new communities

[9] The Irish financial sector, primarily based in the IFSC, has grown substantially as measured by its total assets, which reached €8.1 trillion in 2023. For more, see 'Ireland's Role as a Growing Financial Centre in Europe - Remarks by Deputy Governor Vasileios Madouros', Central Bank of Ireland, 20 November 2024, https://www.centralbank.ie/news/article/speech-ireland's-role-as-a-growing-financial-centre-in-europe-remarks-deputy-governor-vasileios-madouros-20-11-2024.

[10] Fintan O'Toole described this juxtaposition of the IFSC and Sheriff Street in stark terms. See Fintan O'Toole, 'A Tiny Area of Dublin Is Ireland's Most Segregated District', The Irish Times, 25 July 2023.

[11] Kieran Mulvey, *Dublin North East Inner City: Creating a Brighter Future* (Department of the Taoiseach, 2017).

[12] 'North East Inner City Initiative', NEIC, accessed 29 September 2025, https://www.neic.ie/.

[13] 'The Irish Times View on Homelessness and Gardiner Street: The Inner City Takes the Burden Again', The Irish Times, 3 December 2023.

[14] During the period of this research some faith-based communities entered the north-east inner-city, some experienced new precarity in their presence in the area, and some moved from one venue within the area to another.

emerging, often starting in living rooms and kitchens; existing communities moving to the suburbs[15] or periphery of the city to secure larger venues; and some of those communities which meet and worship unknown to us.

There are also venues in the north-east inner-city that were once, but no longer, used by faith-based communities and there are venues in refurbishment or redevelopment that may be subject to future use. In this regard, two-dimensional mapping is limited in articulating the reality of faith-based communities in the area. Clancy Willmott's theory of mobile mapping offers one such alternative and is deployed in the report that follows.[16]

Three additional components are provided to assist interpreting the map. A legend outlines the seven main groupings of faith-based communities. In the case of shared locations, the circle icon is divided into two or three sections, each representing a separate faith-based community. In some cases, this was not possible – for example, when both communities were of the same tradition – so additional symbols are provided in the legend to identify other shared arrangements. A table of all 49 faith-based communities is provided below the map which provides the name of each community and is colour coded based on religious tradition (see Figure 2).

The map also provides a signpost to a Roma Pentecostal Church which was present in Parnell St at the St Peter's Bakery site. Before that, they were in the Pavee Point building on Great Charles St but, with a membership of almost 400 people, they quickly outgrew it. They were evicted from Parnell St after the new owners switched use to student accommodation. The community now meet in Inchicore but issues of suitable space remain, and the location is not as central for the many Roma who live in the city centre.

In addition, a short glossary provides additional information on Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Evangelicalism, and Pentecostalism.

[15] The eviction of three churches from the St Peter's Bakery site on Parnell Street in 2019 is addressed in Richard Carson, 'This Is the Air We Breathe: Sharing Suburban Place and Story in the North-East Inner-City of Dublin', *Working Notes*, no. 95 (2024).

[16] Willmott focuses on story (after Doreen Massey) and power (after Michel Foucault) to argue for new understandings and applications of the digital within cartography. This is especially pertinent to our research as each mark on Figure 1 demonstrates a complex story of leadership, accountability, mobility and history played out across regional, national and, often, transcontinental settings. See Clancy Wilmott, *Mobile Mapping: Space, Cartography and the Digital* (Amsterdam University Press, 2020).

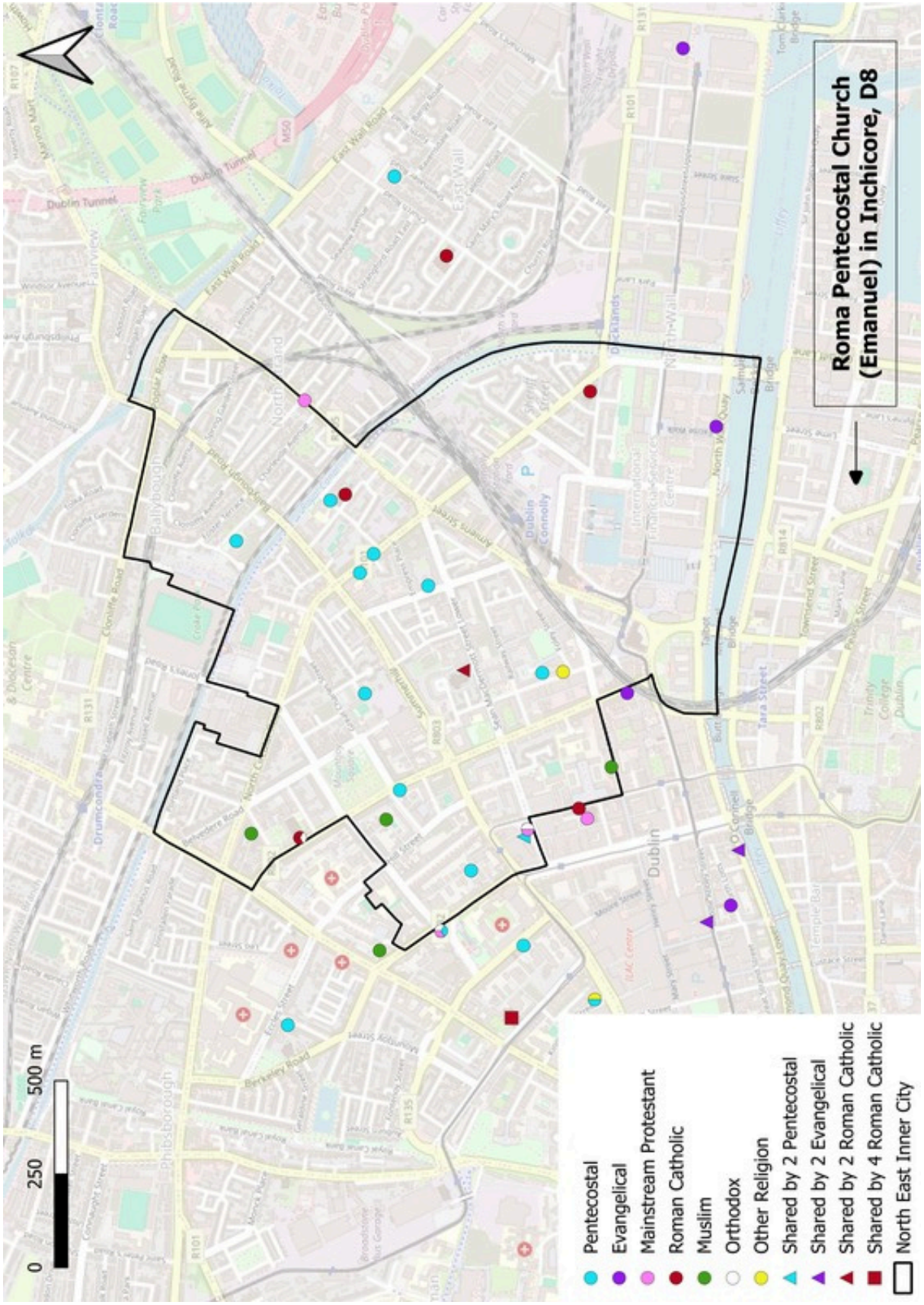


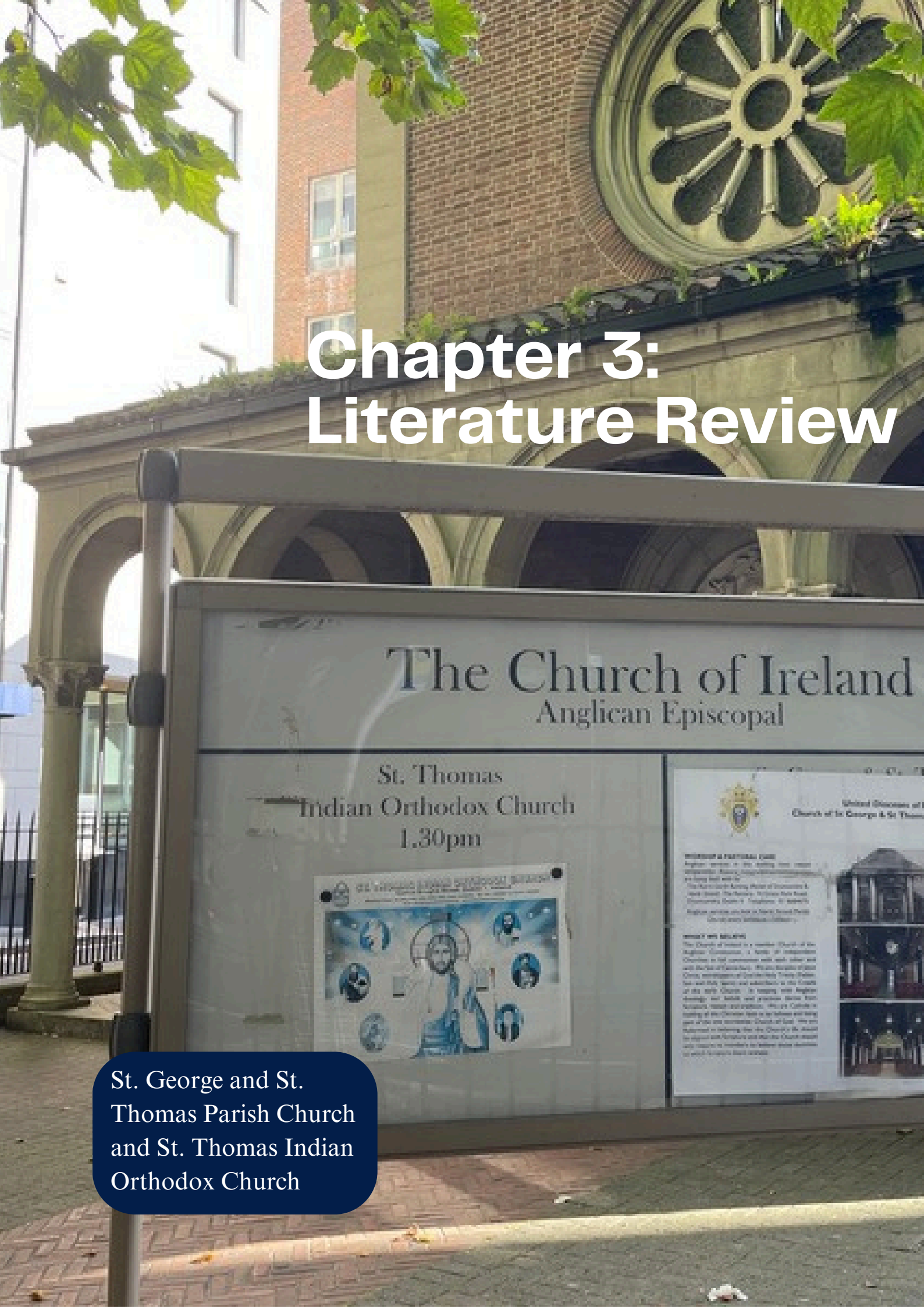
Figure 1: Map of Faith-Based Communities in the North-East Inner-City (Credit: Alexia O'Brien)

Figure 2: Faith-Based Communities by Religious Tradition

2.4 Glossary of Religious Traditions

Evangelicalism	A branch of Protestantism – spanning across specific denominations – which emphasises the role of the bible in the Christian life, with a theology focused on the death of Jesus on the cross and a particular concern for the experience of conversion. Evangelicalism has historically generated a firm commitment among its adherents to social activism.
Orthodox Christianity	The Eastern Orthodox churches (e.g., Greek, Russian, Romanian, Serbian) are self-governing bodies that sustain full communion with each other. They see themselves as preserving the faith and practice of the early church, grounding their communal life in a rich historical memory and a deep sacramental life.
Pentecostalism	A branch of Christianity that took shape in the 20th century and has developed into a multi-faceted global movement centred around the expectation of the on-going "gifts" of the Christian God imparted through the Holy Spirit.
Shi'a Islam	A significant branch of Islam which is distinguished by a commitment to continuing the tradition of Muhammed as passed on through his son-in-law and descendants.
Sunni Islam	The largest branch of Islam, it is a tradition which emphasises following the Qur'an and the example of Prophet Muhammed through the tradition-formed communal consensus and analogical reasoning. Sunni communal life centres on Friday prayers and is typically co-ordinated by local leaders rather than a single, universal hierarchy.

Chapter 3: Literature Review



St. George and St. Thomas Parish Church and St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church

Chapter Three - Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Faith-based communities are a well-examined and valued part of the social life of cities in many countries. This is less so in Ireland. To acquire a fuller understanding of the role of faith-based communities with the integration of new arrivals in Ireland and other regions, this chapter examines relevant reports and academic findings, both domestic and international.

This chapter consists of three main sections. Section One outlines how key research terms – migrants, integrations and faith-based communities – are defined and utilised by academics, statutory bodies, and non-governmental organisations. Secondly, it examines the recognition of faith-based communities in Irish statutory frameworks and reports, particularly in relation to their integrative work through their day-to-day ministry.

Section Two highlights the role of space and place, particularly the role of cities in facilitating faith-based gatherings and encounters, and critical aspects of connection and civic engagement.

Finally, Section Three discusses existing literature on the role of faith-based communities in the integration of migrants with examples of local integrating actions from Europe, consideration of social bonds and social bridges, and a survey of interfaith publications and reports from Ireland.

3.2 Migrants, Integration and Faith-Based Communities

3.2.1 Migrants and Immigration in Irish Policymaking

In a 2023 public consultation to inform a new *Migrant Integration Strategy*, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) defined a migrant, also known as an immigrant, to be "any person who lives in Ireland and was born in a different country."[17] Expanding on this inclusive conceptualisation of the term, the Irish Government understands that a migrant can include:

> "any person born in another country who has moved to Ireland to work, to study, for international protection, for family reunification, as a refugee, as a beneficiary of temporary protection, and for any other reason not mentioned."[18]

In addition, the DCEDIY also makes the distinction that a "person with a migrant background" can include "any person who was born and lives in Ireland and has at least one parent or grandparent that came to Ireland as a migrant."[19]

[17] Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 'Public Consultation to Inform a National Strategy for Migrant Integration', Gov.ie, 20 October 2023, https://gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/consultations/public-consultation-to-inform-a-national-strategy-for-migrant-integration/.

[18] Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 'Public Consultation to Inform a National Strategy for Migrant Integration'.

[19] The usage of the term "country" can create difficulties when considering the political reality of the Irish border and Northern Ireland. For example, a person living in the Republic of Ireland, with a grandparent from Newry or Strabane, is technically considered a "person with a migrant background." See Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 'Public Consultation to Inform a National Strategy for Migrant Integration'.

The 2024 *Monitoring Report on Integration* by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) continues in this vein as migrants are defined as "all those who were born outside the Republic of Ireland."[20] This preferred statutory definition is consistent with international definitions, but it is also a broad definition as it includes those born in Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom, and those born abroad to Irish parents. Previous ESRI reports had utilised nationality (based on citizenship) for its definition of migrants.

While migration informs ethnicity, the two concepts are not interchangeable, as one can be born and/or grow up in Ireland and be of minority ethnicity.[21] Recent data standards by the Central Statistics Office allows much variation in how migration is understood personally by people completing the Census.[22]

Finally, it is necessary to also recognise the use of language on "minority." On a national level, anyone not white-Irish is in the minority, but locally white-Irish people might not be a majority, they might only be a plurality. Dublin City Council use "ethnic minority"[23] while others use "minority ethnicity."[24] Some use "minoritised ethnicity"[25] or even "racialised minority"[26] in some cases, thereby emphasising different levels of agency in who gets to define and/or impose the definitional terms.

3.2.2 Definitions of Integration

Integration, being an area of concern for many governments, statutory bodies, NGOs, and, indeed, communities, is a term that has different definitions depending on the source. Few scholars consider integration to have a single definition, and most identify a range of understandings of the word that do not always wholly align with one another.[27] Concisely, Penninx describes integration as "the process by which immigrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups."[28]

20 Frances McGinnity et al., *Monitoring Report on Integration 2024* (Economic and Social Research Institute, 2025), 3.

21 An earlier report *Securing Roots*, commissioned by Dublin City Council, is lacking in relation to its definitional starting points. The report incorrectly defined "minority ethnic" people as "'new' communities of people who were not born in Ireland or those whose parents were not born in Ireland." See Lourdes Youth and Community Services, *'Securing Roots' Integrating Minority Ethnic People into Local Community Services in the North East Inner City* (Lourdes Youth and Community Services, 2018), 2.

22 Central Statistics Office, 'CSO Data Standard for Ethnicity', Central Statistics Office, CSO, 7 February 2025, https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/classifications/csodatastandardsandclassifications/csodatastandards/csodatastandardforethnicity/.

23 NEIC Initiative, 'Intercultural Development Programme', NEIC, accessed 23 August 2025, https://www.neic.ie/intercultural-development-programme.

24 The term "minority ethnicity" is used by both the National Youth Council of Ireland and the ESRI, see more Anne Walsh et al., 'Working with Young People from a Minority Ethnic Background', in *Access All Areas - a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector* (NYCI and Youthnet, 2012); Gillian Kingston et al., *Ethnicity and Nationality in the Irish Labour Market: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Module 2010*, Equality Research Series (Equality Authority and the Economic and Social Research Institute, 2012).

25 "Minoritised ethnicity" appears to have an increased frequency in the United Kingdom, utilised by the National Health Service and the Samaritans. See both National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health, *Ethnic Inequalities in Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)* (NHS Race and Health Observatory, 2023); Samaritans, 'Samaritans Policy Position: Ethnicity and Suicide', July 2022.

26 "Racialised minority" is a definitional term used by the Irish Network Against Racism. See recent report by the Irish Network Against Racism, *STAND Project: A Report on the Training of Minority Ethnic Leaders to Become Specialist EDI and Anti-Racism Facilitators* (Irish Network Against Racism, 2023), https://inar.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Stand-Report-Final-Document.docx-1-1.pdf.

27 Stephen Castles et al., *Integration: Mapping the Field* (Centre for Migration and Policy Research and Refugee Studies Centre, 2022), 114; David Robinson, paper presented at ECRE International Conference on Integration of Refugees in Europe, Antwerp, *Defining and Measuring Successful Refugee Integration*, ECRE, November 1998.

28 Rinus Penninx, *Integration: The Role of Communities, Institutions, and the State* (Migrant Policy Institute, 2003).

In Ireland, prior to the 2000s, the Irish Government offered a slightly more expansive understanding in *Integration: A Two-way Process* as:

> "the ability to participate to the extent that a person needs and wishes in all of the major components of society without having to relinquish his or her own cultural identity."[29]

In 2004, the Council of the European Union, in *Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU*, defines it as a:

> "dynamic, long-term, and continuous two-way process of mutual accommodation, not a static outcome. It demands the participation not only of immigrants and their descendants but of every resident."[30]

This two-way conceptualisation of the process of integration was made further explicit in national strategies, as stated in their *Migrant Integration Strategy* from 2017:

> "Integration recognises the right of migrants to give expression to their own culture in a manner that does not conflict with the basic values of Irish society as reflected in Ireland's Constitution and in law. As a two-way process, integration involves change for Irish society and institutions so that the benefits of greater diversity can be fully realised."[31]

Interestingly, this later conceptualisation shifted from an ability-centred approach, requiring a share of social goods to integrate, to a rights-based approach, with an increased emphasis on shared responsibility from societal actors. Again, this definition has demonstrated consistency in Irish policymaking on integration. In the 2023 public consultation on the *Migrant Integration Strategy*, the Irish Government reiterated its previous understandings of integration.[32]

Importantly, there is a national action plan against racism, which is indexed to integration policy at national and EU level.[33] The working definition of racism for the Irish Government refers to:

> "a form of domination which manifests through those power dynamics present in structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin."[34]

[29] Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, *Integration: A Two Way Process* (Dublin, 1999). In Department of Justice and Equality, *Migrant Integration Strategy: A Blueprint for the Future* (Dublin, 2017).
[30] Council of the European Union, *Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union*, Press Release 321 (Brussels, 2004), 19.
[31] Department of Justice and Equality, 'Migrant Integration Strategy: A Blueprint for the Future', 13.
[32] Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 'Public Consultation to Inform a National Strategy for Migrant Integration'.
[33] For examples, see European Commission, 'EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025', European Commission, accessed 23 August 2025, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en; UN General Assembly, 'International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination', OHCHR, 21 December 1965, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial; United Nations, *World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* (United Nations, 2002).
[34] Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *National Action Plan Against Racism* (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2023), 8.

This definition, which eschews a sole focus on the individual and focuses on the structural, demonstrates a systemic and institutional focus that can be absent in much of the statutory and community sector in Ireland.

3.2.3 Domains of Integration

Rather than attempting a single, overarching definition, Ager and Strang trace "domains" of integration.[35] The identified domains indicate the kinds of things people mean when they talk about integration. In this way, their framework is better able to encompass a variety of normative understandings of integration than a definition which has the potential to exclude.

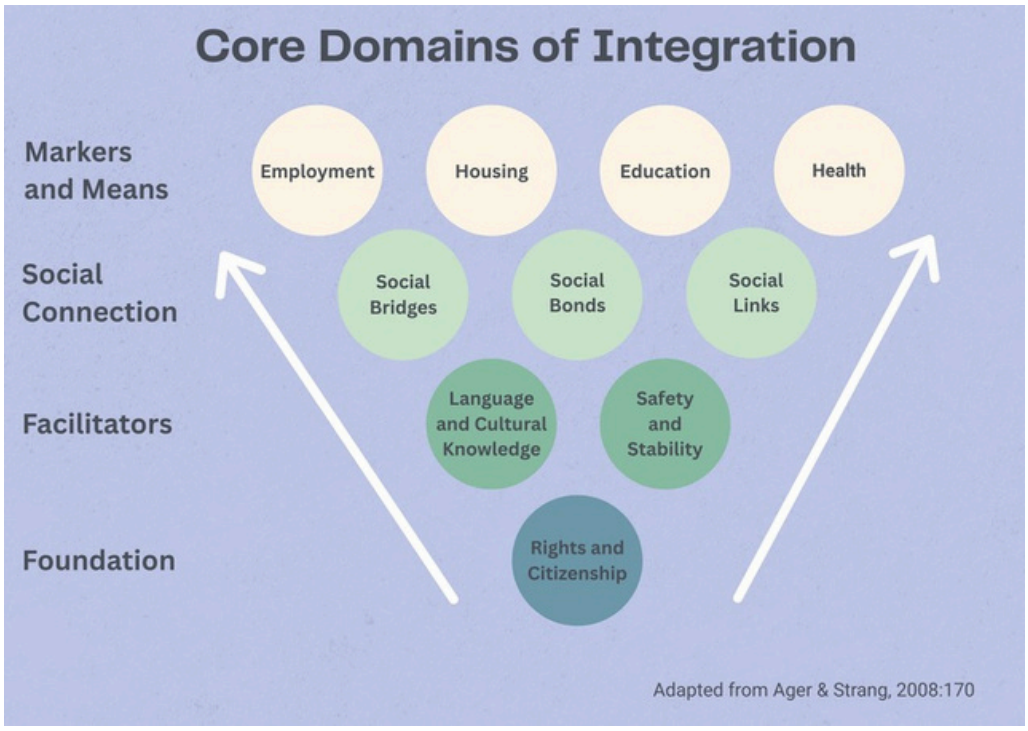


Figure 3: Core Domains of Integration

The first elements of their framework are the areas of public life which often indicate successful integration: employment, housing, education, and health (see Figure 3 above). All of these have consistently been shown to be critical to the security of migrants in their receiving countries.[36] These correlate to the foundational domain of integration – rights and citizenship – as definitions and policies around the rights of migrants and their access to citizenship shape discussions of integration. Such questions of rights also necessarily relate to questions of responsibilities, both of the State and immigrant. This ultimately highlights another key aspect

[35] Alastair Ager and Alison Strang, 'Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21, no. 2 (2008): 167.

[36] The Migrant Integration Policy Index is a unique tool which measures policies to integrate migrants in countries across five continents, including all EU Member States (including the UK), other European countries (Albania, Iceland, North Macedonia, Moldova, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine), Asian countries (China, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, and South Korea), North American countries (Canada, Mexico and US), South American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile), and Australia and New Zealand in Oceania. See 'Ireland | Migrant Integration Policy Index 2020', 2020, https://mipex.eu/ireland.

of normative perceptions of integration: that it is a two-way process.[37] Ryan demonstrates that migrants are compelled to negotiate their religious identities by their new context just as much as receiving communities must negotiate new individuals and new religious identities.[38]

3.2.4 Definitions of Faith-Based Communities

The question of what constitutes a "faith-based community" is vital, and one that is difficult to answer. In the Irish statutory context, the Charities Regulator outlines four categories for the purpose of charities: the prevention or relief of poverty or economic hardship; the advancement of education; the advancement of religion; and any other purpose that is of benefit to the community.[39] The *Charities Act 2009* does not contain a definition of religion but existing case law has established that a religion has two core elements: belief in a "Supreme Being"; and faith in and worship of that "Supreme Being."[40]

The complexities of defining a "faith community" are taken up by Adam Dinham, who assesses four possible approaches.[41] One option defines a faith community by its common location, like a church building or mosque, and the associated relationships. Increasingly, however, people have more choice about which faith community they are involved in and may not necessarily live within walking distance of it.[42] He notes another definition based around common activities, such as community action. This approach assumes that all members of a faith community participate equally in decision making or collective action, which overlooks traditions which are more hierarchical.[43] A third framework might define faith-based communities around a shared history and values. However, Dinham complicates this by arguing that many faiths define themselves against other communities and that even within a congregation there can be disagreements on, for example, theological focus.[44] Indeed, such a definition of faith community would exclude ecumenical groupings. Finally, Dinham considers a definition of faith community as a community of solidarity. This threatens to be a definition so broad; it is difficult to delineate. It also introduces difficult questions of tensions between various groups and the extent to which solidarity can become hostility to others.

Having a clear of understanding of what constitutes a faith-based community helps both policymakers and members. What Dinham demonstrates is how difficult this is. His analysis reveals that faith-based communities are "highly situated and contingent." The contents of this report testify to that reality.

Perhaps a more fruitful definition is offered by the American scholar, Victoria Lee Erickson, who describes faith communities as "shaped by internal forces such as religious beliefs, everyday

[37] Ager and Strang, 'Understanding Integration', 176.
[38] Louise Ryan, 'Exploring Religion as a Bright and Blurry Boundary: Irish Migrants Negotiating Religious Identity in Britain', in *Women and Irish Diaspora Identities* (Manchester University Press, 2016).
[39] Charities Regulator, 'Charitable Purpose', July 2018, https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/media/fuqmu2tb/charitable-purposes.pdf.
[40] Charities Regulator, 'Charitable Purpose', 5.
[41] Adam Dinham, 'What Is a "Faith Community"?', *Community Development Journal* 46, no. 4 (2011): 526–41.
[42] Dinham, 'What Is a "Faith Community"?', 532–33.
[43] Dinham, 'What Is a "Faith Community"?', 536.
[44] Dinham, 'What Is a "Faith Community"?', 534.

practices, theology, philosophy, and a sense of historical purpose; and by external forces such as global (macro) economics, socio-political realities, and the plans of competitors and even of enemies."[45] Building on that description, we utilise the term faith-based community to mean a locally-rooted congregation (that may be embedded in a wider network across a greater geographic span) whose common life is animated by worship and communal practices, shaped around shared beliefs and structured leadership. Membership is diffuse and permeable: it includes formal adherents and regular worshippers as well as those who participate occasionally, identify culturally, support practically, or belong simultaneously to more than one community.

3.2.5 Faith-Based Communities and Integration in Irish Governance

3.2.5.1 Integration Strategies

The years before the Global Financial Crisis were a creative and energised time for diversity, intercultural and integration initiatives, particularly including recognition of the role of faith-based communities in such work. For example, in 2008, the Minister for Integration[46] published *Migration Nation* which, consistent with the policymaking zeitgeist of the time, proposed a "partnership approach between the Government and nongovernmental organisations, as well as civil society bodies, to deepen and enhance the opportunities for integration."[47] In a section on faith-based groups, the report acknowledged the care and support offered to new arrivals; the higher level of religious practice with migrant groups; and that connection with faith-based communities has greatly assisted people with integrating to Ireland.[48] Furthermore, the Government highlighted that "discussions will be held with the groups with a view to putting in place arrangements to financially support that aspect of the groups' activities."[49]

In 2009, the Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service produced *Find Your Way: A Guide to Key Services in Dublin City Centre*. It was primarily written to assist "linking migrants with available and relevant services to help ease their transition and integration into Irish life and society."[50] In Section 10 – "Religion and Spirituality" – the authors provided an extensive list of places of worship and religious organisations in the city, including many faith-based communities which are still present in the north-east inner-city.[51] However, the subsequent programmes of austerity in Ireland had a detrimental effect on this initial ambition on integration. Launched just before the recession, the *National Strategy* ended up mothballed with the intended office and department shut. The *Find Your Way* guide never received a follow-up. Austerity stripped this initial movement of any early momentum and resources, and it has never recovered.

The most recent progress report from the Government, *Migrant Integration Strategy*, was published in 2019 and mentions religion and faith almost exclusively in reference to the

[45] Victoria Lee Erickson, 'Faith Communities', in *Encyclopaedia of Community: From the Village to the Virtual World*, ed. Karen Christensen and David Levinson (Sage, 2003), 2:477.
[46] The Office of the Minister for Integration was created in July 2007 as a response to the recognition of the scale of migration to Ireland in the previous decade, particularly since 2004.
[47] *Migration Nation: Statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management* (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008), 9.
[48] *Migration Nation: Statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management,* 44–45.
[49] *Migration Nation: Statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management*, 45.
[50] 'Find Your Way: A Guide to Key Services in Dublin City Centre', vi.
[51] 'Find Your Way: A Guide to Key Services in Dublin City Centre', 109–19.

Education (Admission to Schools Act) 2018.[52] Beyond ensuring children of minority faiths are able to access education equitably, no real engagement is present. There is no mention of faith-based communities. In the 2024 *Monitoring Report on Integration* by the ESRI, there is a solitary mention of religion in a descriptive table on types of volunteering by citizen groups.[53]

In *Ethnic Minorities and Mental Health in Ireland* by Cairde, the author highlighted the potential key role of religious leaders and communities in helping to provide adequate and culturally sensitive care.[54] The consideration of the importance of religious practice in the lives of migrants by the Health Service Executive (HSE) has been inconsistent. The first *National Intercultural Health Strategy* was in 2007, while the second *National Intercultural Health Strategy* began in 2018 and ended in 2023.[55] Two years later, in 2025, the next iteration of the Strategy has not emerged. Yet, commendably, the HSE has continued to engage with religious belief and practice as it has recently published an updated *HSE Intercultural Guide* which seeks to respond to "this continued need for intercultural knowledge, skills and awareness in the current working environment."[56] Also, the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration's 2025 Integration Fund highlights "faith-based groups" as eligible applicants in its Guidance Note.[57]

Article 17 of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*[58] is an important mechanism for churches, faith communities and philosophical organisations to engage in a regular, structured dialogue with national governments. The Irish Government's last meeting with churches, faith communities and philosophical organisations took place in July 2019, in a plenary meeting with 30 different representatives. The accompanying press release noted that the plenary meeting "reflects the increasingly diverse range of faith-based communities in Ireland and the important role they play in our society."[59] No further explanation of this important role was provided.

Dublin City Council were founding members of the Dublin City InterFaith Forum, so demonstrating a tacit understanding of intercultural and interreligious facilitation being a component of wider integration work. Yet the Council have no integration strategy, with opportunities missed in the post-Covid era as the *Integration and Intercultural Strategy for Dublin City Council 2021-2025* did not generate significant outcomes.[60] Despite stakeholder consultations beginning in 2021 with the then-Lord Mayor Hazel Chu, the impetus was quietly

[52] Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration, *Progress Report to Government: The Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020* (Government of Ireland, 2019), 36.
[53] McGinnity et al., *Monitoring Report on Integration 2024*.
[54] Sara Bojarczuk et al., *Ethnic Minorities and Mental Health in Ireland: Barriers and Recommendations* (Cairde, 2015), 16, 27.
[55] Health Service Executive, *Second National Intercultural Health Strategy 2018-2023* (Health Service Executive, 2018).
[56] Health Service Executive, *HSE Intercultural Guide: Responding to the Needs of Diverse Religious Communities and Cultures in Healthcare Settings.* (Health Service Executive, 2025), 8.
[57] Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, '2025 Integration Fund Guidance Note', 2025, 3.
[58] Alina-Alexandra Georgescu, 'Article 17 TFEU: Dialogue with Churches, and Religious and Philosophical Organisations', European Parliament, December 2024, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/be-heard/religious-and-non-confessional-dialogue/home/en-article17-the-ep-implementation.pdf. An important new contribution to this conversation has recently been made by the EU Parliament official, Fearghas O'Beara: Fearghas O'Beara, 'Understanding Why European Union Institutions Have Adopted a Post- Secular Approach to Dealing with Religion' (PhD Thesis, Gregorian University, 2024).
[59] Department of the Taoiseach, 'Church State Dialogue - Plenary Meeting with Churches, Faith Communities and Non-Confessional Organisations', Gov.ie, 4 July 2019, https://gov.ie/en/department-of-the-taoiseach/press-releases/church-state-dialogue-plenary-meeting-with-churches-faith-communities-and-non-confessional-organisations/.
[60] Dublin City Local Community Development Committee, *A Framework towards an Integration and Intercultural Strategy for Dublin City Council 2021-2025*, no. 177 (Dublin City Council, 2021).

dropped as there was no mention of the new integration strategy in Local Community Development Committee minutes in 2022 and 2023.[61] Furthermore, the vacant post for the NEIC intercultural development coordinator would remain unfilled for 18 months.[62]

3.2.5.2 Public Sector Duty

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty places a statutory obligation on public bodies to have regard to human rights and equality considerations in the performance of their functions.[63] It is legislated for in Section 42 of the *Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014*. In short, a public body must consider the following identified groups protected under the Equality Acts and human rights law:

> "gender (including transgender persons or persons transitioning to another gender), civil status, family status (including lone parents and carers), age, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion, membership of the Traveller community, and people in receipt of housing assistance."[64]

Interestingly, despite providing guidance for other public and statutory bodies, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission have not provided an example around religion. In the Public Sector Duty documents, "religion" gets no mention outside of the listing of the nine grounds for equality.[65] Again, in their *Strategy Statement 2025-2027*, "religion" gets a single mention in a very broad (and unspecific) aim of having a "better understanding needed of the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of people who use our services."[66]

In response to the Public Sector Duty, Dublin City Council are required to make legally mandated consideration of "religion" when designing, developing, and delivering their respective functions, but "religion" only gets a mention once and then only in the list of the nine grounds.[67] The NEIC gets a mention in the Department of Taoiseach's document but there is little evidence of "due regards" to the duty.[68]

3.2.5.3 Structures in the North-East Inner-City

There is no mention of "religion" or "faith" in the 2022 Annual Progress Report, but it does have a section on the work of the Intercultural Coordinator outlining the work of Intercultural Ambassadors and the organisation of intercultural events.[69] The *2023 Annual Progress Report*

[61] This article was written two weeks before the November 2023 riots in the north-east inner-city: Shamim Malekmian, 'What Happened to the Council's Promised Integration Strategy?', Dublin Inquirer, 8 November 2023, https://www.dublininquirer.com/what-happened-to-the-councils-promised-integration-strategy/.
[62] Malekmian, 'What Happened to the Council's Promised Integration Strategy?'
[63] Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, *Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty: Civil Society Guidance* (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2025).
[64] Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, *Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty: Civil Society Guidance*, 6.
[65] Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, *Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty: Civil Society Guidance*.
[66] Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, *Strategy Statement 2025-2027* (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2025), 25, https://www.ihrec.ie/publications/strategy-statement-2025-2027.
[67] Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Department, *Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues: Dublin City Council Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty* (Dublin City Council, 2025).
[68] Department of the Taoiseach, *Department of the Taoiseach: Public Sector Duty Equality and Human Rights Assessment* (Department of the Taoiseach, 2021), 4.
[69] NEIC Programme Implementation Board, *NEIC Progress Report 2022* (NEIC Programme Office, 2023), 30–31.

has a solitary mention of "multi-faith" within one of the priority areas of the Local Community Safety Partnership of the North East Inner City. The *Local Community Safety Partnership Plan* has multi-faith work as a named area among integration of those from different backgrounds and inclusion of gender, but no details.[70] The action plan for integration and the inclusion of multi-faith groups is limited to increasing representation and information.

In the *2024 Annual Progress Report*, there is no mention of religious identity or a substantive discussion of integration, except for the proposed development of an NEIC Intercultural Team in 2025.[71] When the position of the NEIC Intercultural Coordinator was advertised in 2024, it outlined as a key element of the role that "[m]igrants are enabled to celebrate their national, ethnic, cultural and religious identities, subject to the law."[72] While this element is consistent with aims described in the national strategy,[73] there is no discussion or mention of the local faith-based communities, faith-based organisations, or any communal structures that tie faith and religious practice to the local population. Aims such as integrating migrants in the NEIC so that they can "participate, prosper and grow in a diverse, welcoming and friendly environment"[74] were addressed through intercultural events like Africa Day and a Global Village Concert.[75] In summary, the available progress reports by the NEIC Initiative have no meaningful mention of integration and role of religious practice in the lives of new arrivals. The solitary mention in a 2023 report refers to the aims of another network.

The NEIC Initiative's *2024-2027 Strategic Plan* on the social and economic regeneration of Dublin had no mention of religion in relation to new arrivals.[76] From the perspective of the public garnered in the *NEIC Public Consultation* in the same year, there was similarly no mention of "integration," "faith," or "religion."[77] It is noteworthy the Partnership is in the process of establishing a "working group on migrant integration" which is seeking to solidify its vision and work.

3.3 City as a Complex Space

Core to our understanding of integration and religious affiliation is the idea that the city is a complex space, wherein civic, political and social domains are not separate from religious and cultural ones. If we were categorising things as belonging either to the public or private realms, religion is more often than not relegated to the latter, being seen as a personal and individual choice rather than something which would concern others.[78]

[70] Dublin's North Inner City Community Safety Partnership, *Community Safety Plan 2023-2026* (Dublin's North Inner City Community Safety Partnership, 2023).
[71] NEIC Programme Implementation Board, *NEIC Progress Report 2024* (NEIC Programme Office, 2025).
[72] Dublin City Council, 'Intercultural Development Coordinator - Information Booklet', 2024, 2.
[73] Department of Justice and Equality, 'Migrant Integration Strategy: A Blueprint for the Future'.
[74] NEIC Programme Implementation Board, *NEIC Progress Report 2024*, 41.
[75] In the appendices of the NEIC Progress Reports, there is mention of small funding provided by the NEIC for ACET and the Dublin City Interfaith Forum, but their integration work does not feature in the main body of the reports.
[76] Dublin North East Inner City, *The Social and Economic Regeneration of Dublin's North East Inner City: 2024-2027 Strategic Plan* (North East Inner City Programme Office, 2024).
[77] NEIC Initiative, *NEIC Initiative Public Consultation: Report of Findings* (North East Inner City Programme Office, 2024).
[78] Annavittoria Sarli and Giulia Mezzetti, 'Religion and Integration: Issues from International Literature', in *Migrants and Religion: Paths, Issues, and Lenses. A Multidisciplinary and Multi-Sited Study on the Role of Religious Belongings in Migratory and Integration Processes* (Brill, 2020), 445. For more on religion, integration and secularism, see Ager and Strang, 'Understanding Integration', 101–5; Luca Mavelli and Erin Wilson, *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security and Hospitality in Question* (Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2016); Susanna Snyder, *Asylum-Seeking, Migration and Church* (Routledge, 2016).

This perspective seemed dominant in the 20th century. One can think of how the deeply influential urban planning and architecture work associated with Le Corbusier saw no need for designated religious spaces. He was not hostile to faith; indeed, some of his greatest masterpieces were churches. Yet he saw the practice of religion as internalised, a part of the inner, individual life, effectively removing it from the public square.[79]

Such a viewpoint now seems destructively dismissive; a utopian commitment that could never be successfully enacted even if was not morally problematic. Among many who have called it into doubt is Michel de Certeau SJ, who focused on memory, narrative, and practices to illustrate that cities, when encountered rightly, must be places where religious expression sits in complex relationship to all it surrounds.[80] Similarly, Charles Taylor strongly rebuffs the "subtraction stories" that imagine religion is bound to simply recede from public and political life with the onward march of progressive Modernity.[81]

3.3.1 Faith-Based Communities as Locative and Translocative

Considering the role of physical spaces in forming religious identities and how it affects social interactions, Rhys Williams makes the point that for migrants, a faith-based community is both "locative" and "translocative." The former locative element connects an immigrant to their immediate surroundings and the receiving community, placing them squarely in their current community. The latter "translocative" element connects the individual to their homeland symbolically, by engaging with their religious community, which transcends national borders. For those travelling to faith-based communities to worship, it is not only "national borders," as many migrants travel across county/provincial and other administrative borders to find "home." A faith-based community thus has both a "horizontal" dimension – connecting people to multiple locations – as well as a "vertical" one, which connects them to the transcendent.[82]

In Abel Ugba's foundational research into the lives of African Pentecostals in the Republic, he explores that centrality of the role that migrant-led faith-based communities and churches play in the lives of African migrants.[83] Despite concerns of emerging immigrant enclaves, Ugba notes the dual aspects of connection with a faith-based community. The religious sphere assists immigrants to feel "at home," which the social sphere provides a sense of familiarity and belonging in a new country.[84]

Furthermore, Williams goes on to point out that the city as a space is one in which various religious communities have no option but to encounter one another. This challenges Mary Gilmartin's assertion from an Irish context that new landscapes of religions are "rarely in the

[79] For a detailed study of Le Corbusier's theories of self and society, see Simon Richards, *Le Corbusier and the Concept of Self* (Yale University Press, 2003).
[80] de Certeau proposes urban walking as a key practice through which to encounter the complexity of a city, with no little relevance to the relatively small area of the north-east inner-city of Dublin. See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 1988), 99.
[81] Though recognising how a 'disenchantment' and dominance of 'the immanent frame' have shaped contemporary thinking through the various chapters of urbanisation and industrialisation of the past 500 years, Taylor leaves a complex and nuanced array of how these ideas can and are challenged. For more, see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Harvard University Press, 2007).
[82] Rhys H. Williams, 'Religion, Community, and Place: Locating the Transcendent', *Religion and American Culture* 12, no. 2 (2002): 255–56.
[83] Abel Ugba, *Shades of Belonging: African Pentecostals in Twenty-First Century Ireland* (Africa World Press, 2009).
[84] Ugba, *Shades of Belonging*.

urban centres but instead are more likely to be found in the suburbs."[85] The interfaith encounter in the city has the capacity to engender integration as it introduces and can promote core principles of acceptance and diversity that are closely held in many receiving European countries.[86]

Similarly, Levitt, reinforcing this observation, discussed how communities, when worshipping together, may include both migrant and native-born co-religionists.[87] The faith-based community, therefore, becomes a space ripe with interactions between people who have different ways of worshipping and different ways of living. This is seen across Ireland, where there is a "diversity of new congregations" and older churches also find themselves transformed as their numbers have been "swelled by immigrants."[88] This echoes Williams claim of different spheres of connection. Ultimately, this results in a complex space of interaction, where novel ways of connecting with one another arise from the blurry boundaries between identities, places, and individuals.[89]

3.3.2 Integration and Civic Engagement

In addition, Levitt claims that there is a widespread consensus on what constitutes a good society, and that collaboration between immigrants and native populations, or, indeed, collaboration between heterogeneous immigrant communities is not only possible, but it is likely, and that it happens all the time. The:

> "vast majority [of religious immigrants] are open to partnerships around major social issues, such as education, health and employment. Religion is an under-utilised, positive force that social scientists and activists can no longer afford to ignore."[90]

Faith-based communities also offer support to migrants and frequently educate them in civic matters. Well-established faith-based communities, in particular, are able to offer long-established networks of connection and affiliations which directly results in the support of migrants and their integration into these networks. Moreover, attending worship or faith-based community events may well expose congregants to fundraising, organising, and leadership skills, even if the faith-based community is not explicitly oriented towards such activism, which equips migrants with tools to apply elsewhere in their lives.

More recently, and in a European context, Lyck-Bowen and Owen identify three conclusions in their study of multi-religious cooperation.[91] These integration efforts range from providing shelter, organising food drives and language classes, to practical support accessing services available to immigrants in the receiving country.[92] Firstly, the language skills of the faith-based

[85] Gilmartin, *Ireland and Migration in the Twenty-First Century*, 101–2.
[86] Williams, 'Religion, Community, and Place', 259.
[87] Peggy Levitt, 'Religion as a Path to Civic Engagement', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 4 (2008): 766–91.
[88] Gladys Ganiel, *Transforming Post-Catholic Ireland: Religious Practice in Late Modernity* (OUP Oxford, 2016), 2.
[89] Levitt, 'Religion as a Path to Civic Engagement', 786.
[90] Levitt, 'Religion as a Path to Civic Engagement', 766.
[91] Majbritt Lyck-Bowen and Mark Owen, 'A Multi-Religious Response to the Migrant Crisis in Europe: A Preliminary Examination of Potential Benefits of Multi-Religious Cooperation on the Integration of Migrants', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 1 (2019): 24.
[92] Research based on four case studies in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany, and Poland. The identified initiatives involved at least two organisations with differing religious affiliations working together to integrate migrants into their local communities.

organisations[93] as well as their intimate knowledge of the cultures of new migrants were instrumental in providing adequate support.[94] Another benefit was the dialogue which emerged between different religious communities, leading to a better understanding, and the improvement of the relationships between them at all levels.[95] Finally, the broader community or societal benefits included the challenging of narratives which position Muslims and Christians as fundamentally opposed to one another. This narrative is especially prevalent in Europe[96] and multi-religious cooperation makes visible the collaboration of two communities so frequently imagined in opposition to one another.[97]

3.4 Faith-Based Communities and Integration

3.4.1 Local Integrating Action

In La Gout D'Or, a historically impoverished area of Central Paris, the *Saint Bernard de La Chapelle* church hosts a volunteer organisation, *Soldarités Saint Bernard* which supports migrants in the local area.[98] De La Ferrière investigates how faith and justice intersect with issues of migration. The area in which the church is situated hosts a large North African and sub-Saharan migrant population, a population very visible in the number of Muslim prayer halls and African shops in the neighbourhood.

Most infamous in this area, however, is the camp of migrants which has, since 2009, gathered under the aerial metro not far from the church. Since the first encampment, the largest number of people who lived there numbered several thousand. Though the camps themselves have mostly been dismantled, the population of unhoused migrants still congregates in the area and are served by the *Soldarités Saint Bernard*, which provides them with a place to gather and socialise and not be met with hostility.[99] The faith-based community provides meals, and shelter during the winter months, distributes clothing and provides basic lessons in French to local migrants.

[93] Faith-based organisations are distinct from faith-based community, though many maintain ties and connections. Many faith-based organisations are present and active in the north-east inner-city. The most widely used definition of FBOs is "those humanitarian relief and development organisations formed by or with a direct or indirect relationship to a specific faith community." See Riham Ahmed Khafagy, 'Faith-Based Organizations: Humanitarian Mission or Religious Missionary', *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 5, no. 1 (2020): 13. In their pioneering work on religion and social impact, Clarke and Jennings define faith-based organisations as "any organization that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of… [a] faith." See G. Clarke and M. Jennings, 'Faith-Based Organizations and International Development: An Overview', in *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular*, ed. T. Shaw (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 6. The European Parliament identifies three different types of FBOs; congregations affiliated with physical structures; national networks of congregations; and unaligned or freestanding religious organisations, which are separate from congregations and national networks. For more detail on this typology, see Phillipe Perchoc, *The EU and Faith-Based Organisations in Development and Humanitarian Aid*, Briefing (European Parliament, 2017).

[94] Lyck-Bowen and Owen, 'A Multi-Religious Response to the Migrant Crisis in Europe', 30.

[95] Lyck-Bowen and Owen, 'A Multi-Religious Response to the Migrant Crisis in Europe', 31.

[96] Muslims have been consistently regarded with suspicion as "potentially non-integratable citizens." See Sarli and Mezzetti, 'Religion and Integration', 447.

[97] Lyck-Bowen and Owen, 'A Multi-Religious Response to the Migrant Crisis in Europe', 32.

[98] 'Solidarités Saint-Bernard | Aide, Entraide & Actions Sociales', Solidarités Saint-Bernard Site Officiel, accessed 9 August 2025, https://solidaritessaintbernard.fr/.

[99] Alexis Artaud De La Ferrière, 'Somewhere Between Love and Justice: A Roman Catholic Church in Paris Responds to the European Migration Crisis', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 31, no. 4 (2018): 397–417.

Although the *Soldarités Saint Bernard* is hosted in the church, its members are diverse: parishioners, atheists, Muslims, and people from other faith traditions. Volunteers find that the organisation helps them live out their values, be they religious or secular.[100] In fact, half of the volunteers are beneficiaries of the *Soldarités Saint Bernard's* ministry to the poor. Similar to the conclusions made by Lyck-Bowen and Owen, De La Ferrière makes the point that the group is able to achieve its goals of social action through the collaboration between volunteers of diverse backgrounds and the church as an institution with resources which can act as a hub for the local community.[101]

3.4.2 Social Bonds and Social Bridges

A common criticism (and suspicion) of faith-based communities in the realm of integration lies in the assumption that they isolate migrants into their own communities and prevent their integration. The sociological terms of "social bonds" versus "social bridges" are instructive here to distinguish between different kinds of social connection.[102] These terms are utilised by Ager and Strang, who consider them an integral part of their (previously discussed) "core domains of integration" framework. Social bonds are the kinds of connections made between families, co-ethnics, co-nationals, etc. Essentially, a bond is exclusive. Social bridges, on the other hand, are connections made outside of one's community; that is, a social bridge is inclusive.[103]

Both social bonds and social bridges are important for integration. Ager and Strang find, in their study of refugees in the UK, that social bonds are important for feeling "settled" in the receiving country and point to further research which implies that immigrants without social bonds are up to four times more likely to experience depression.[104] Likewise, social bridges were greatly valued by the refugees they interviewed. These bridges included even the simplest gestures of friendliness from the receiving community: recognition, greetings, small talk. On a larger scale, "bridging" activities greatly improved a sense of integration and belonging among refugees, and long-term, intense involvement of migrants in the local community results in social capital which could even offer employment opportunities.[105]

Many aspects of an immigrant's wellbeing are addressed by faith-based communities, as Zhu finds that attending church services helps equip Chinese migrants in Ireland to deal with cross-cultural adaptation, by positively impacting their well-being.[106] Not only does it provide spiritual satisfaction, attending church helps them deal with loneliness, homesickness, and even enables them to relate better to their Irish-born peers.[107] These are all social bonds contributing to the formation of social bridges.

[100] Artaud De La Ferrière, 'Somewhere Between Love and Justice', 410.
[101] Artaud De La Ferrière, 'Somewhere Between Love and Justice', 415.
[102] These terms were popularised hugely by Putnam in his book Bowling Alone but had been in use by Gitell and Vidal beforehand. For more, see Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Simon and Schuster, 2000); Ross J. Gittell and Avis Vidal, *Community Organizing: Building Social Capital as a Development Strategy* (Sage, 1998).
[103] Ager and Strang also identify social links which connect people to the structures of the State, see Ager and Strang, 'Understanding Integration', 178.
[104] Ager and Strang, 'Understanding Integration', 178–79.
[105] Ager and Strang, 'Understanding Integration', 180.
[106] Liwei Zhu, 'Personal Mental Impacts of Christian Faith in Cross-Cultural Adaptation of Chinese Migrants in Ireland', *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 25, no. 4 (2022): 453–55.
[107] Zhu, 'Personal Mental Impacts of Christian Faith in Cross-Cultural Adaptation of Chinese Migrants in Ireland', 453–55.

Regular attendance at organised worship is not a symptom of non-integration into the culture of a receiving country. While faith-based communities, particularly of a minority religion, may be dominated by particular ethnic groups, studies show that strong social bonds do not preclude strong social bridges. In a study of Romanian migrants and church attendance, Gherghina and Plopeanu found that "those without cultural and social accommodation problems and migrants who spend more time in the host country are likely to have regular religious attendance."[108] In other words, religious attendance does not, based on this multinational study, imply maladaptation.

Considering the relationship between integration processes and religious participation in migrant churches in Milan, it was observed how religious communities have become significant urban hubs for immigrants, providing opportunities to socialise, developing welfare services, and supplying places for family activities.[109] After describing the practical and social functions of the churches, the researchers concluded that religion represents an "alternative and mediating force, able to support migrants' integration."[110] Research from Denmark notes that African female members from migrant churches found that they benefitted from the security and acceptance of a faith-based community, thereby allowing them to invest themselves "both physically and emotionally in their adoptive country."[111] Allen concluded that the religious belief and practice of new arrivals "challenges the notion that integration requires sameness."[112]

3.4.3 Interfaith Publications and Resources

In April 2024, the Irish Council of Churches launched *From Every Nation* for local churches and their members to equip them with an understanding of diversity and inclusion, and to "support actions at the local Church level to improve inclusion and work towards racial justice through faith."[114] The handbook reflected on the different approaches to helping integrate new arrivals and migrants into the worshipping life of a congregation,[115] yet also outlining the practical ways – such as language courses or exchanges – such groups could help refugees and asylum seekers integrate into the wider community.[116]

Earlier, in 2010, the Irish Inter-Church Meeting[117] published the *Irish Churches' Affirmations on Migration, Diversity and Interculturalism* which aimed to "[assist] churches and faith communities in their efforts to promote the integration of migrants and foster intercultural

[108] Sergiu Gherghina and Aurelian Plopeanu, 'Social Networks, Attachment and Integration: Understanding the Church Attendance of Romanian Migrants', *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 42, no. 1 (2021): 120.
[109] Maurizio Ambrosini et al., 'How Religion Shapes Immigrants' Integration: The Case of Christian Migrant Churches in Italy', *Current Sociology* 69, no. 6 (2021): 823–42.
[110] Ambrosini et al., 'How Religion Shapes Immigrants' Integration', 823.
[111] Julie K. Allen, 'Migrant Churches as Integration Vectors in Danish Society', *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies* 25 (2018): 116–34.
[112] Allen, 'Migrant Churches as Integration Vectors in Danish Society'.
[113] The Irish Council of Churches was founded in 1923 after the civil war and is a national body through which its member churches engage, dialogue, and act on a wide variety of social issues. Its present-day membership reflects the changing landscape of Christianity across Protestant, Orthodox, Reformed, Pentecostal Independent and Migrant–led churches.
[114] Irish Council of Churches, 'Churches & Belonging', Irish Council of Churches and Irish Inter Church Meeting, accessed 23 August 2025, https://www.irishchurches.org/our-work/churches-belonging.
[115] *From Every Nation? A Handbook for a Congregation's Journey from Welcome to Belonging* (Churches in Ireland, 2024), 15, https://www.irishchurches.org/cmsfiles/From-Every-Nation-.pdf.
[116] *From Every Nation? A Handbook for a Congregation's Journey from Welcome to Belonging*, 24.
[117] The Irish Inter-Church Meeting is the name given to when the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland joins with the Irish Council of Churches.

dialogue, mutual understanding and respect."[118] This was preceded by the more substantive *Unity in Diversity* in 2008 which recognised that faith communities play important roles in society, in particular that this "significant social responsibility … ought to ensure positive steps towards social cohesion."[119]

The Dublin City Interfaith Forum has produced a number of resources in recent years on intercultural issues. In 2012, understanding faith communities as important partners in working for the common good, *Integration and Interfaith: Faith/City Engagement in a Multicultural Context* explored the concepts necessary to set up an interfaith structure within Dublin City Council boundaries.[120] Furthermore, in 2013, *Come and see for yourself: Dublin's Sacred Spaces* offered a guide for people when visiting sacred spaces in Dublin city.[121] It was a collaboration of nine different faith traditions.

In the academic field, Patricia Kieran edited *Connecting Lives - Interbelief Dialogue in Contemporary Ireland* which introduced the concept of "interbelief dialogue" imagining positive communication, cooperation and collaboration between people of religious faiths and those identifying as having none.[122] The collection reflects on the place for interfaith dialogue in the public square, particularly education, and why respectful dialogue is essential to the building of a healthy, intercultural society.

3.5 Conclusion

This literature review has described the interconnections between migrants, faith-based communities and integration to new countries. To provide a steady footing and shared understanding, it firstly examined the definitions and usage of the terms – migrants, integration, and faith-based communities – in academic, statutory, and non-governmental literature. There has been a consistent understanding of integration as a "two-way" process since the early 2000s, with a recognition of the role which faith-based communities play in this societal process, particularly in the *Migration Nation* report in 2008. It is now equally notable how absent the issues of "faith" and "religion" are from policymaking decisions and statutory interventions related to integration of migrants in the post-austerity decades. Most worryingly, is the delay in updating strategy documents at national level and the subsequent failure to implement such strategies in local authorities.

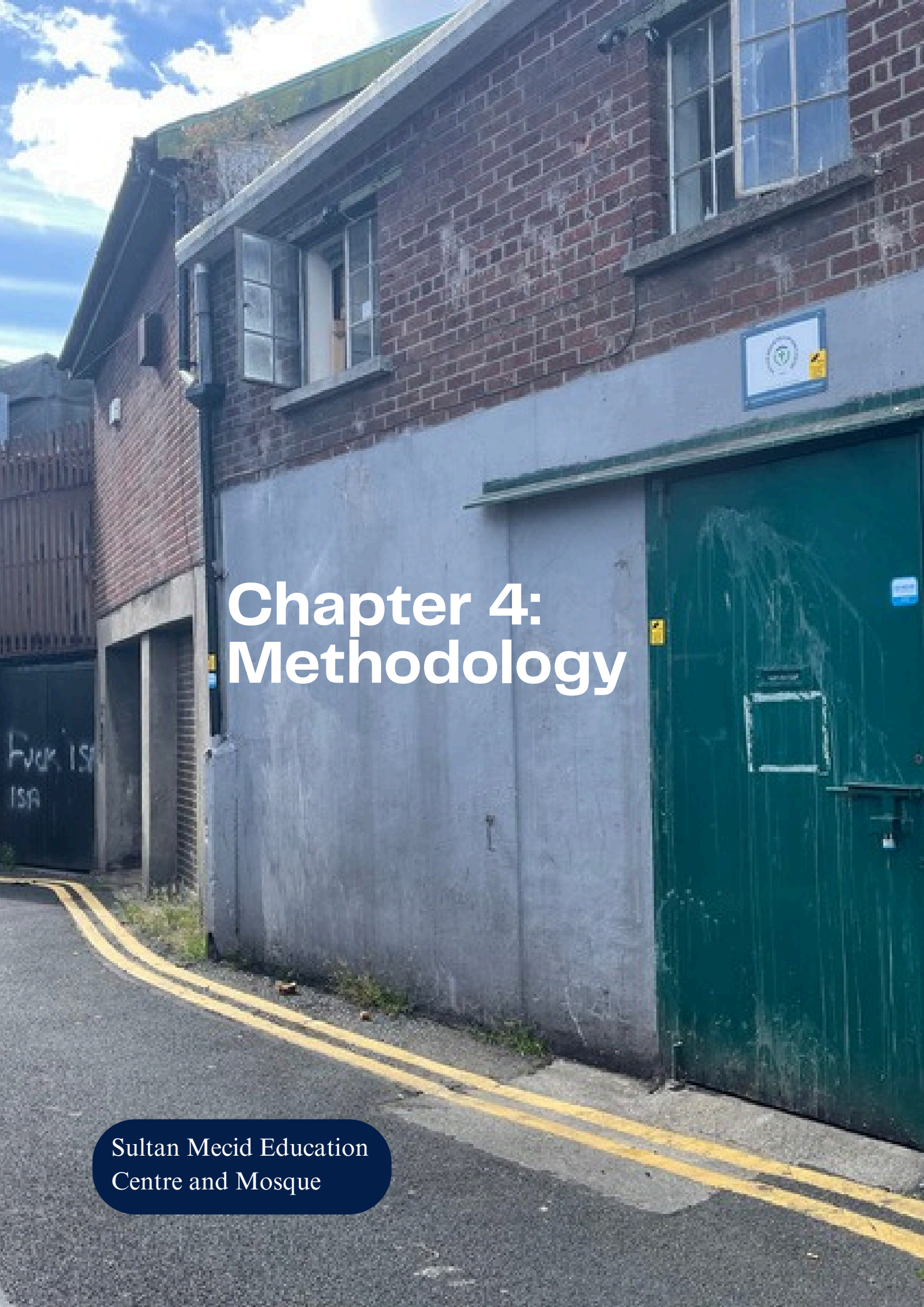
What may be emerging here is what might be called an unintentional regime of "secular governance," which relegates the place of religion to the private realm and crudely simplifies the city space, which is naturally complex due to the many ethnic and religious affiliations in daily

[118] 'Irish Churches' Affirmations on Migration, Diversity and Interculturalism', Irish Inter-Church Meeting, March 2010, 1, https://www.irishchurches.org/assets/files/resources/download/affirmations.pdf.
[119] Adrian Cristea, 'Unity in Diversity In Our Churches', Inter-Church Committee on Social Issues, 2008, iv, https://www.irishchurches.org/assets/files/resources/download/PIPmanual.pdf.
[120] Adrian Cristea, *Integration and Interfaith: Faith/City Engagement in a Multicultural Context* (Irish Council of Churches and Dublin City Interfaith Forum, 2012), https://www.irishchurches.org/assets/files/resources/download/DCIF-Project-Report.pdf.
[121] Dublin City InterFaith Forum, 'Come and See for Yourself: Dos and Don'ts of Dublin's Sacred Spaces', 2013, https://www.dcif.ie/_files/ugd/b5fa3c_92c3f5b23f8b4478857d5f6037e6ad5a.pdf.
[122] Patricia Kieran, ed., *Connecting Lives: Inter-Belief Dialogue in Contemporary Ireland* (Veritas Books, 2019).

proximity.[123] The reviewed literature highlights faith-based communities' role in a changing societal landscape; providing not only for basic needs – food, shelter, language course – but the creation of a religious sphere where migrants are able to feel at home in a new country. Drawing on case study research in section three, the literature review synthesises research on the migrant work of faith-based communities in France, Italy, and Denmark, alerting particular attention to the social bridges which are created among those who are not family members or co-nationals. Finally, a survey of interfaith publications and reports from Ireland reveals that interfaith and ecumenical networks have been reflecting and advising on inward migration and integration for almost two decades.

This collation of available research illuminates faith-based communities' capacity to contribute to the wider response of integration, such as the initial welcome, signposting to services, and the creation of a sense of "familiarity" in a new place. As Ireland continues to evolve socially and culturally, the insights gained here call for a renewed exploration of what faith-based communities can offer, and are already offering, to new arrivals to Ireland in a culturally-sensitive, prompt, and holistic way.

[123] What we have in mind here is the influential work of the English academic, Luke Bretherton. He distinguishes between "secularity" which "entails the commitment to, and institutional configuration of, a religiously plural and morally diverse common life, the construction and conceptualization of which vary by historical and cultural context" and "secularism" which is "a governmental and hegemonic project [that] generates specific configurations of divisions between public and private, depends on a monistic and centralized conception of political sovereignty, and looks to the nation-state as both the normative form of polity and the primary focus of identity." Luke Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life* (Eerdmans, 2019), 251.



Chapter 4: Methodology

Sultan Mecid Education Centre and Mosque

Chapter Four - Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This research project, exploring the role which faith-based communities have in the integration of new arrivals to the north-east inner-city, began in April 2025. It followed discussions between three organisations – Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice (JCFJ), AIDS Care Education and Training Ireland (ACET Ireland), and the Dublin City Interfaith Forum (DCIF).

After initial planning meetings, a five-member research team formed and commenced work. Members are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1: Research Team Members

Research Team Members

Member	Role	Institution
Keith Adams	Project Manager	Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice
Dr Kevin Hargaden	Lead Researcher	Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice
Sophie Manaeva	Research Assistant	Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice
Edmond Grace SJ	Interviewer	Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice
Richard Carson	Interviewer	ACET Ireland

Table: Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice • Created with Datawrapper

4.2 Research Aims and Objectives

The "Faith in the North-East Inner-City" research project had two main objectives to guide its methodological considerations. Firstly, this research project set out to map and analyse the role of faith-based communities in fostering the integration of migrants and refugees in the north-east inner-city. Specifically, it sought to understand whom faith-based communities are supporting and how they contribute to social inclusion by providing tangible resources (e.g., food, shelter), emotional support, and a sense of belonging for both newcomers and longer-term residents. The study examined how faith-based communities bridge cultural, linguistic, and social gaps, facilitating smoother transitions into Irish society while enriching the local community.

Secondly, this research also aimed to identify any distinctive role faith-based communities play as mediators of integration, addressing needs that are often unmet by government or market services, thereby providing evidence-based recommendations for decision-makers. Ultimately, the project seeks to inform Dublin City Council and other stakeholders about the positive social impact of faith-based communities, ensuring their contributions are recognised and integrated into the area's urban planning and community development efforts.

The research project had five key objectives:

1. To identify and document the presence, activities, and geographic distribution of faith-based communities in the north-east inner-city.
2. To analyse the population groups served by faith-based communities, with particular attention to the ways they support migrants and refugees through tangible and intangible resources.
3. To evaluate how faith-based communities address integration challenges, including language barriers, racism, and bureaucratic obstacles, by offering refuge, respect, and resources.
4. To explore the unique contributions of faith-based communities in fostering community building and reducing social isolation.
5. To provide evidence-based recommendations for Dublin City Council and other stakeholders on how to incorporate the work of faith-based communities into urban planning, integration policies, and social support frameworks.

4.3 Research Phases

The research was conducted over a six-month period, beginning in April 2025 – following initial planning meetings – and concluding with publication of the report in October 2025. The project was operationalised through four overlapping phases (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Research Phases

Research Phases

Phase	Objective
1	Preparation
2	Documentary Analysis
3	Individual Interviews
4	Analysis/Writing

Table: Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice • Created with Datawrapper

4.3.1 Phase One – Preparation

This preparatory phase involved the creation of a literature review drawing on available formal and informal (grey) literature, the refinement of the research methodology and the development of a recruitment strategy for interviewees.

4.3.2 Phase Two – Documentary Analysis

Core documents, outlining national, local, and statutory understanding of integration and the north-east inner-city, were identified from an online search. These included official strategies and reports by the North East Inner City Initiative, North East Inner City Programme Implementation Board, the Health Service Executive, and various Government departments.

4.3.3 Phase Three – Individual Interviews

In this phase, the research team conducted semi-structured individual interviews. Interview schedules were developed for two primary cohorts – members of faith-based communities (leadership or lay) and other stakeholders (civil servants, policymakers, academics, NGO members etc.)– drawing on knowledge gained through the documentary analysis phase.

Interviews investigated the following areas **(target groups in bold)**:

1. Life of faith-based communities **(Faith-based community members)**.
2. Understanding of faith-based communities **(Other stakeholders)**.
3. Integration and social inclusion **(All interviewees)**.
4. Health, wellbeing and social services **(All interviewees)**.
5. Engagement with policymakers **(Faith-based community members)**.
6. Policymaking, planning and inclusion **(Other stakeholders)**.

4.3.4 Phase Four – Analysis and Report Writing

This final phase brought together all the emerging themes present in the data collected from the semi-structured individual interviews. We coded all interviews to the core domains used across the study. The coded material was then clustered inductively around recurrent issues and themes that cut across interviews.

Alongside the analysis of findings, a series of actionable recommendations were made in line with the wider objectives of the "Faith in the North-East Inner-City" report.

4.4 Data Collection and Sampling

Overall, 30 individuals participated in the data collection for individual interviews (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: Individual Interviews

Individual Interviews

Interviewees	Number
Faith-Based Community Leaders	18
Faith-Based Community Lay Members	3
Other Stakeholders	9
Total	**30**

Table: Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice • Created with Datawrapper

Due to the importance of existing relationships to interview this particular cohort, the research project utilised non-probabilistic convenience sampling[124] with an additional snowball research strategy[125] in order to recruit further interviewees. This latter approach was utilised when recruiting lay members of faith-based communities from the leaders.

Both sampling approaches have challenges in relation to representativeness and researcher bias, with the research cohort potentially being biased towards the inclusion of individuals with interrelationships.[126] However, these disadvantages have been mitigated due to the high number of interviews which were conducted relative to the total number of faith-based communities in the north-east inner-city: 21 interviewees from a total of 49 identified faith-based communities.

Due to the time constraints of the study, both sampling approaches offer practical advantages, which outweigh the disadvantages, particularly as the overall aim of the study was explorative, qualitative and descriptive.[127] Having previously identified the lack of research about this cohort in Chapter Two, these sampling approaches are a "valuable tool in studying the lifestyles of groups often located outside mainstream social research."[128]

Richard Carson (ACET Ireland) and Adrian Cristea (DCIF) utilised both their long-established and newly emerging work-based connections and networks to recruit faith-based community members and other stakeholders for interviews with the JCFJ researchers.

In some cases, due to the importance of prior relationship with this community, Richard Carson interviewed a number of faith-based community members. Interviews were conducted in-person or online based on the availability of the interviewee.

4.5 Composition of Review Cohorts

The section will provide more granular details of the composition of the individual interview of faith-based community leaders. Due to the number of interviewees, no details of other stakeholders will be provided as people may be easily identifiable.

The research team interviewed 18 different faith-based community leaders in the north-east inner-city (see Table 4 below). Traditional denominations (Roman Catholicism and Mainstream Protestantism) only represent slightly more than a third of the interviewees.

[124] Data is collected from members of the research population due to their ease of access and proximity.

[125] Snowball sampling can be defined as "a technique for finding research subjects. One subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on." See W. Paul Vogt and Robert Burke Johnson, *The SAGE Dictionary of Statistics & Methodology: A Nontechnical Guide for the Social Sciences* (SAGE Publications, Inc, 2016).

[126] P. Griffiths et al., 'Reaching Hidden Populations of Drug Users by Privileged Access Interviewers: Methodological and Practical Issues', *Addiction* 88, no. 12 (1993): 1617–26.

[127] Vincent M. Hendricks and Peter Blanken, 'Snowball Sampling: Theoretical and Practical Considerations', *Snowball Sampling: A Pilot Study on Cocaine Use*, 1992, 17–35.

[128] Rowland Atkinson and John Flint, 'Accessing Hidden and Hard-to-Reach Populations: Snowball Research Strategies', *Social Research Update*, no. 33 (Summer 2001): 4.

Table 4: Faith-Based Community Leader by Religious Tradition

Faith-Based Community Leader Interviews by Religious Tradition

Religious Tradition	Number
Roman Catholic	4
Mainstream Protestant	3
Pentecostal	7
Muslim	1
Orthodox	1
Salvationist	1
Independent Evangelical	1
Total	**18**

Table: Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice • Created with Datawrapper

Of the 18 faith-based community leaders, only one member was female with the remainder being male. While being a gap in the potential knowledge, this does reflect the primary leadership within faith-based communities. Two females were interviewed as part of the lay member cohort, and a further three as part of the stakeholder cohort. Concerted efforts were made by the research team to recruit female interviewees to capture any gender-based distinctions in relation to integration into the north-east inner-city.

4.6 Data

The section will outline steps taken regarding data storage, data transcription, and data anonymisation.

4.6.1 Data Storage

All research data – audio files and anonymised transcriptions – were stored on a single, password protected desktop computer in the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice offices. Files were backed up regularly to a secure, password protected external drive which was stored in a locked cabinet. At the end of each working day, any physical files were stored in a locked cabinet.

4.6.2 Data Transcription

All interviews were audio-recorded, and transcripts of the conversation between the interviewer and participants were produced. The audio files of the interviews were transcribed using NoScribe[129] which is an AI-based software that transcribes interviews for qualitative social research or journalistic use. NoScribe is open source and ran completely locally on a JCFJ computer. No data was sent to shared cloud space.

[129] kaixxx, Kaixxx/noScribe, Python, 12 May 2023, released 12 August 2025, https://github.com/kaixxx/noScribe.

4.6.3 Data Anonymisation

All collected data was pseudonymised, with the name and other identifying details removed from the data and a unique code used to identify the transcripts. Only anonymised quotes from data were used in this review report. Every effort was made to remove all identifying details from these quotes.

4.7 Review Mechanism

A mechanism for review was built into the research project methodology to ensure the production of a high quality, actionable report. A review group consisting of relevant expertise was established to provide oversight at the draft stage.

This Draft Report Review Group served a vital role in ensuring the production of a high-quality report reflective of the stated aims and objectives. This role had three main components:

1. Identification of any errors or inaccuracies within the draft report.
2. Identification of any sections which may be unclear and require further clarity.
3. Consider whether recommendations are constructive and addressable.

The review group consisted of three experts from academia, community development and anti-racist work. The members are:

- Bukky Adebowale (Irish Network Against Racism).
- Prof. Siobhán Garrigan (Trinity College Dublin).
- Noel Wardick (Dublin City Community Co-Op).

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis

Chapter Five - Findings and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out what the interviews show about faith-based communities in the north-east inner-city. The focus is practical. We look at how these communities work as first ports of call, how they are already embedded in the fabric of the area, and how space and time shape what they can do. We then consider co-delivery around health, the effects of low religious literacy in public bodies, and the difference they can make in times of societal stress. As one community activist[130] observes: "quite frankly, they [faith-based communities] are filling a space the public services are not filling. Like, that is really obvious."[131]

Faith-based communities are a key part of the social infrastructure of the north-east inner-city. They widen access to services, shorten the time it takes for newcomers to become established, and steady communities under stress. This chapter will fulfil objectives one to four of the research project:

1. To identify and document the presence, activities, and geographic distribution of faith-based communities in the north-east inner-city.
2. To analyse the population groups served by faith-based communities, with particular attention to the ways they support migrants and refugees through tangible and intangible resources.
3. To evaluate how faith-based communities address integration challenges, including language barriers, racism, and bureaucratic obstacles, by offering refuge, respect, and resources.
4. To explore the unique contributions of faith-based communities in fostering community building and reducing social isolation.

5.2 The First Port of Call

We found that faith-based communities are often the first place where newcomers to the north-east inner-city turn. While offering important support in spiritual and social matters, they are "door openers"[132] who can point to services and help people on day-one needs. They complement State bodies, especially in how they can respond quickly and have intrinsic trust. This mirrors the role played by the Roman Catholic Church for many Irish emigrants in mass-migration sites like London and Boston.

The help that is offered differs based on need. As one interview subject explained, someone arriving in the International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) and someone arriving as a skilled worker in the medical system represent "two completely different individuals, worlds apart, but faith-based communities offer an awful lot to both."[133] Both find a reliable welcome and the support needed to flourish.

[130] Quotations are used here as illustrative anchors rather than as an exhaustive catalogue. They indicate the pattern reported by multiple interviewees and help ground the discussion in lived practice. Footnotes accompanying the quotations will also indicate whether the interviewee was a member of a faith-based community or an interested stakeholder.
[131] Stakeholder 4.
[132] Stakeholder 5.
[133] Stakeholder 4.

One faith-based community member gave a concrete example of how he and members of the congregation had supported an IPAS family in multiple ways through difficult circumstances. They had received an email informing them that a family would be arriving in Ireland from Central America. Their baggage was delayed so they had absolutely nothing after being taken to City West. The faith-based community arranged for clothing, airbeds, sleeping bags, toiletries, and "whatever we thought they would need."[134] What could have been a crisis became an opportunity as these newcomers went from having no one in Ireland – and nothing to their name – to having a social network and their basic material needs met.

The contribution that these communities make may be primarily spiritual, but also practical. They run English classes, or direct people to such educational opportunities. They help with forms and navigating officialdom. They accompany people when that is needed. As one leader put it, "it's knowing where to signpost people."[135] This is a social navigation that saves time, lowers stress, and increases the potential of a newcomer to establish roots in Irish society. These services also avoid duplication because they route people into existing services. One community leader talked about how faith-based communities "were very quick, a lot quicker to respond to newcomer's needs than the State."[136]

Over time, those who first arrived in vulnerability become anchors for the wider community. One leader spoke about how their congregation – which includes about 25 nationalities – welcomed a number of people seeking asylum 15-20 years ago who now have become central to the church and to the wider neighbourhood:

> We're cross-cultural and cross-generational and everybody stays together, and we try our best to, to work everything in around that and bearing in mind that the levels of English[-fluency] vary enormously as well.[137]

In practice, this means that there is usually a pathway through whatever problem has presented. As a community leader put it: "There's always someone in the church who knows somebody."[138] The leader of one faith community noted the demand for services in people's home language as "they are feeling like home, so they have a unity, so they have a good relation and they feel welcomed, and the atmosphere is like home."[139] This is often as much a cultural or political expression of agency as well as a linguistic preference. The leader continued to explain that this is a "key support that they are giving to people. That actually, during such hard times, they can be comforted by others."[140] Sometimes, solidarity can only be spoken in the mother tongue.

A longer view shows how this plays out in ordinary acts of care. We spoke with one member who moved to Ireland more than 20 years ago and quickly began attending their present community, in a large part because it was familiar to what they knew from their culture of origin. Their membership of this community has been significant in their life:

[134] FBC Member 18.
[135] FBC Member 2.
[136] Stakeholder 1.
[137] FBC Member 7.
[138] FBC Member 4
[139] FBC Member 19
[140] FBC Member 19

> I would describe it as a very supporting community. And because of their belief and because of what they believe in, they try as much as possible to bring people together. It doesn't matter where you are from or who you are. They accept you as a person that God loves. And they help you to be in the community with confidence. … It's not about only people who have faith. We welcome people who have no faith, which we believe that their faith can be developed along the way.[141]

This particular faith-based community is diverse and includes people who have lived all their lives in the area. This created a context for them to develop local links within the longer story of the north-east inner-city: "sometimes I give them a lift if they want to come to church. And when they finish, we drop them back home."[142]

These accounts show how faith-based communities help people act on day-one needs and then keep pace with them as they settle. The value added is not so much the provision of a new service – although some of these communities run a range of supporting ministries. Rather, it is the combination of presence, local knowledge, language and cultural fluency, and the kind of trust that allows people to accept help and settle.

5.3 Identity and Embeddedness

Faith-based communities in the north-east inner-city are not new, imported, or marginal.[143] They are already part of the area's social fabric. People live locally, raise families here, and travel in from across the city because the centre is a reachable hub. Participation in these communities is multi-national and multi-generational. They bring together students, shift-workers, recent arrivals, and those who are long-settled in the area.

The scale and density of commitment can be hard to see from outside. As one city official put it, the "inner city is very densely populated by faith groups" but this "social infrastructure and social support"[144] is often overlooked.

Most leaders and many members live locally. Even those members who do not live locally, often did once and their connections to the area are so rich that they do not move their worship affiliation to a location closer to their new residence. Children attend local schools, play in local clubs, and participate in the neighbourhood projects. This is in contrast to many decision makers. As one leader put it: "I think that the people making decisions about the inner-city of Dublin don't live there."[145] Their observation did not intend to undermine the legitimacy of city officials, but rather to illuminate why faith communities often read their neighbourhood more closely. They are in it every day.

[141] FBC Member 12
[142] FBC Member 12
[143] Faith-based communities are not marginal for member's lives as they often have an intrinsic trust because they have been directly in contact with the religious tradition before. In their country of origin, they attended a particular denomination, which has a "branch" in the north-east inner-city. For example, the Indian Salvationist finds the local Salvation Army church to join.
[144] Stakeholder 3.
[145] FBC Member 9.

It is important to note that religious diversity is not only a function of recent migration. Older forms of practice persist and mix with newer modes.[146] Sharing buildings is routine. It is unremarkable for a single site to host a mainline Irish congregation, a Romanian church, and an Indian church of different traditions.[147] Gatherings with twenty or more nationalities are common.[148] Inter-faith cooperation is normal. One interviewee described a negotiation to extend under-used Catholic space to Muslim neighbours. The concern was not doctrinal dispute but public reaction from those who largely have no allegiance to any faith-based community. The fear was that the response might take the form of: "Look! They're taking over our churches now!"[149]

Across the research, what we have found is that tensions are more likely to arise with those who have no religious practice than between communities of faith. Vibrant inter-faith forums already exist. One community leader described how such interactions mean "You'd have Muslims from North Africa sitting down with Christians from Eastern Europe around a table." These are not debates for their own sake. "It's actually [about] hearing people."[150] Out of that, friendships form. Mutual hospitality also appears between congregations. Speaking of Goan practice, one interviewee noted that:

> there are a few immigrants of the Hindu religion. They also come to the church because they don't get much company-experience over here. … They pray with their own belief.[151]

The wider context can be difficult. As one stakeholder who was interviewed phrased it, one of the challenges facing these communities is a combative nationalism which excludes as "it's a very strongly proud, nationalistic community that would still see an othering of other religions."[152]

While many of these faith-based communities describe various levels of hostility from neighbours who resent their presence, a consistent aspiration is also found throughout the research. Newly arrived people are eager to embed fully in Irish society. Even those still applying for protection will, according to one leader, "become reliable citizens that can contribute"[153] in many ways. The self-description we encountered was consistently active. The people we spoke with do not see participation in wider society as a topic around which they should be passive. One leader explained: "We want to be part of what the communities are doing. We are not outside. … We want to make sure that we are playing our role in the community"[154] of the north-east inner-city.

What we have discovered is a diverse religious eco-system that is networked across the city and rooted in local life. It does not fit simple binaries. Faith is not confined to one demographic. It is

[146] The way change functions in a specific tradition addressed in this study - Irish evangelical Christianity - is superbly addressed in a recent study by the Irish theologian, Patrick Mitchel: Patrick Mitchel, 'Evangelicalism in the Republic of Ireland', in Evangelicalism in Europe: Unity in Diversity, ed. Frank Hinkelmann and Pieter J. Lalleman (Langham Global Library, 2025).
[147] FBC Member 13.
[148] FBC Member 3.
[149] Stakeholder 6.
[150] Stakeholder 5.
[151] FBC Member 11.
[152] Stakeholder 4.
[153] FBC Member 15.
[154] FBC Member 4.

not only a feature of newcomers. Nor is it a fixed source of social contention. For many residents, faith communities are part of what the north-east inner-city is.

5.4 Finding Space, Finding Time

Space is the single biggest factor that decides what congregations can do in the north-east inner-city. With buildings hard to find, it is not uncommon for the practice of religion to spill on to the streets. As one community leader notes, "there's an actual shock of seeing faith on the street."[155]

The visibility of communities grows when they have a stable place to gather. Yet many groups lack that stability. As they rent here and there, adapting their ministries to buildings that are not particularly suitable, their activities become fragmented and hard to find. The same community leader noted that "you can't actually keep track of where they are, because they don't have the spaces."[156]

Where a congregation has a building, it may suit worship, but not weekday ministries. Layout, insurance, difficulties with planning permission around listed buildings[157] – the ambitions and capacities of these communities can be thwarted by these very physical constraints. Evictions and rent-hikes add insecurity. Many groups patch together interim arrangements, with services in one venue, classes in another, and outreach in a third, while they look for a suitable, more permanent home.

The effects of this pressure are real. One community that had hosted recovery meetings, counselling, English classes, and respite for people sleeping rough lost its premises suddenly on grounds of safety. One of their leaders explained that they now rotate through four rented spaces with a "limited" programme where "Sunday morning is the big focus."[158] Another leader noted that they were unable to run a marriage seminar as their rented space was unavailable on a Saturday.[159] The lack of suitable space narrows what the wider neighbourhood gains from the work. Then some with permanent premises find their potential ministry hampered by heritage regulations: "it's fairly run down … it's also a kind of protected structure, so we're very limited in what we can do to create space that's more user-friendly for today's community."[160]

Another interviewee noted that the only place where children could meet during the Sunday service was in a kitchen and now, as the community grows, there are not enough spaces for the different age cohorts: "we want to group them according to ages … we cannot just put them in one space … it is such a challenge."[161]

[155] Stakeholder 4.
[156] Stakeholder 4.
[157] The State, including Dublin City Council, have a significant relationship with many churches as they provide various heritage and conservation grants. Churches are beneficiaries. The once established church (Church of Ireland) is often a grantee, and a deeper analysis might provoke questions of how newer faith communities do not have quite the same opportunity to renovate their places of worship to the appropriate standards. See 'Built Heritage Investment Scheme 2025: Recommended Grant Offers', Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2025, https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/app/uploads/2025/02/Built-Heritage-Investment-Scheme-2025-Recommended-Grant-Offers.pdf.
[158] FBC Member 3.
[159] FBC Member 20.
[160] FBC Member 18.
[161] FBC Member 20.

Costs affect smaller minority faith communities hardest. One interview subject, who is a well-placed official, noted that "access to space is very important and particularly not just for worship, but for the element of support for their community."[162] Their

> concern is always that if we're not acknowledging that work, and for some reason that work fades away – because, for example, there's a lack of premises – then … the State will end up with a hell of a lot more work to do because those initial points of contact and points of support won't be there.[163]

Leaders report that it seems as if no attention has been paid to religious communities as the north-east inner-city has changed. One interview subject suggested that since the influx of increased religious diversity, there has been no purpose-built space for worship constructed.[164] Some congregations have converted emptied churches or other buildings and are doing well. Many others are in "desperate spaces, including halls and garages that are not fit for purpose," and some are "real health hazards."[165] This results in a loss of capacity to gather, to speak heritage languages, to build friendships. They explained that it has actually become much worse as:

> It's close to impossible with finding a proper space to worship, to be a community, to be together, to reminisce about their own background, speak their own language, meet or make friends. That opportunity is now kind of disappearing.[166]

A recurring theme is that congregations are off the radar of officials in the city. One leader, whose community has a building that is very centrally located, noted that many protests and events in Dublin begin at their premises and yet they receive no notifications from the City Council. As a result, at times members have actually been blocked from going to worship. The freedom to express religious belief sits at the very heart of the human rights framework, but the leader's view is blunt: "I think basically the notion of churches now doesn't come into [their] reckoning."[167]

Unsuitable locations complicate important life events. One north-east inner-city community now rents a warehouse in Dublin 12. Their pastor described the practical difficulties around baptisms and funerals. External premises are needed for many rites. At these critical moments in people's lives, when the church seeks to provide certainty to people, instead "we [have] lots of uncertainties."[168] Another leader describes how they have moved baptisms to public spaces like Portmarnock Strand, but funerals are especially difficult. "[n]ormally we do talk to maybe our Catholic friends. They can give us a place, maybe do it there."[169]

[162] Stakeholder 3.
[163] Stakeholder 3.
[164] Stakeholder 1.
[165] Stakeholder 1.
[166] Stakeholder 1.
[167] FBC Member 7.
[168] FBC Member 10.
[169] FBC Member 4.

Time pressures layer on top of space pressures. Most public transport services run Monday-to-Friday. Most congregational life peaks either on Friday or Sunday. Transportation options can be overcrowded, or thin on the ground. Faced with these concerns, it is easier to see why city-centre spaces are very important. As one interviewee explained it,

> most minority communities end up geographically scattered and the city centre is the one place they can all get to because a lot of them are also in life transport poverty of some sort. They're not able to drive. And, as we know, like, if you're in Christian faith, then Sunday mornings are where the transport services of Ireland are at their worst.[170]

A further interviewee highlighted transport as the basic need of some of his community members, after they were forced to meet far from the city centre:

> the basic need of transport … when we're speaking about the City West, there are some disabled people … it's quite difficult to get there for like mothers with kids, disabled kids. So, such transport that could bring them to the congregation would be great."[171]

Another participant added that some groups will always prefer to meet in the city centre – despite perceptions around crime – because "they feel less other" there.[172]

Housing instability amplifies the problem. One interviewee reported that asylum seekers and students are "relying on mosques, masjids, and churches to different extents for basic things as a roof over their head when they've nowhere else to go."[173] When venues shift to outer suburbs, time and cost barriers rise, and some members within the IPAS system are moved without warning to other counties. One leader told of a congregation member who was relocated suddenly to Carlow and left entirely bereft in isolation.[174]

The situation uncovered in this research is not uncritical. Faith communities – like all communities – can turn inwards. One interviewee warned that where a group is othered, isolation grows. "There is this thing of the Othering, they're not really integrated."[175] Space plays into that dynamic. Without a place to call their own, community formation is truncated. The question put to us was pointed: "Do you need the physical building for people to go to make community? Because obviously there's no physical building. So, there's not community made."[176]

The challenges that faith-communities face around finding space to gather shapes the difficulties they face around finding communal time. Venue scarcity and public transport provision shape what congregations can deliver. When space is insecure, programmes contract, visibility drops, and access becomes patchy across the week. Being off the City's radar compounds those limits.

[170] Stakeholder 3.
[171] FBC Member 19.
[172] Stakeholder 4.
[173] Stakeholder 3.
[174] FBC Member 3.
[175] Stakeholder 6.
[176] Stakeholder 6.

Across interviews, a recurring idea was a central shared facility in or near the north-east inner-city. In the map of the faith-based communities (see section 2.3), there are examples of nine shared spaces: one space accommodating four communities; two spaces accommodating three communities; and six spaces accommodating two communities. Sharing is also already happening across religious traditions and denominations. For example, a Pentecostal, Orthodox and Mainstream Protestant church has their separate, and distinct, ministries in one location.

5.5 Health Access and Support

Health is social. Trust, language, and cultural factors shape whether people seek help and how they follow through. Faith-based communities can contribute in this space. They are not substitutes for public services. They are trusted points of contact that help people enter the system and stay in it.

Leaders described health as part of their everyday pastoral concern. One set out their community's perspective: "Our goal, our vision, is to minister to the total man [sic]; spirit, soul, and body. So, we are not just looking at the spiritual aspect."[177] A community activist described how faith communities can "become not so much just a place of support, awareness, staff and volunteers, but actually – potentially – a place of health and integration and all that goes with that."[178] This aligns with a wider civic concern. As one person associated with the city put it:

> "If we just think about physical resources as the entirety of a person, we've really misunderstood people. I think that has been a road that we've been going down in policy terms that has been wrong."[179]

For many, basic navigation of the available systems is the first hurdle. A faith leader spoke of people who were unsure how to access care and so turned to familiar faces in their congregation "who knew a little bit about the system in the country, who could advise them."[180] They went on to clarify that this kind of interaction is "really a key part of the social life."[181] In this role, the faith-based community is essential for making the healthcare system usable in the first place.

The social trust that is invested in faith communities could be a significant benefit for public health provision. When a service or policy is communicated in conjunction with the faith community, there is an openness and commitment that otherwise might not be achieved. One leader, with a congregation made up largely of people seeking International Protection talked about how many of their congregation see health providers as people who are "just doing their job."[182] They experience care in terms of bureaucracy. When health concerns are more embedded in the life of the faith community, people can more fully "open their hearts"[183] to the system. For obvious reasons, some new arrivals in Ireland are slow to trust authorities. A leader made one

[177] FBC Member 4.
[178] Stakeholder 2.
[179] Stakeholder 4.
[180] FBC Member 10.
[181] FBC Member 10.
[182] FBC Member 15.
[183] FBC Member 15.

interesting suggestion: "The first people to talk to the asylum seekers [who have a faith identity] should be the faith-based organisations. The government should include the faith-based communities"[184] to reach better outcomes.

A public health professional who is also active in a local faith-based community articulated the cultural bridge that is often lacking:

> Concepts like medicine, health, choice, authority – they are culturally bound and will be understood differently in groups. And so, in spaces like faith communities, they're both having and not having those discussions. They're trying to process all of that and they're almost burdened with trying to figure it out a bit all the time together, and that's the gap.[185]

Another faith community leader acknowledged the mental health impact of the uncertain journey facing those seeking asylum and intimated that faith-based communities could have a role in linking people with services, if those services did indeed exist:

> not everybody knows that this [Ireland] is where they're going to end up, getting here and navigating the mental health impact must be huge … and accessing those types of services is nigh on impossible … that kind of therapeutic type of environment to support is fairly non-existent.[186]

Bridging that gap improves uptake and reduces misunderstanding. There is precedent for such an approach. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Health Service Executive (HSE) engaged with faith leaders as trusted messengers. A community activist recalls that the:

> response that was needed, that the HSE was looking for, was improved by actually bringing in faith leaders, because they were able to communicate messages to their communities and also deal with particular concerns.[187]

Interviewees also pointed to routine work already underway: sessions on hypertension and diabetes, links with local drug task forces, groups for people struggling with their mental health, and referral pathways to specialist services such as HIV support. Faith-based communities have also made their wisdom available at an institutional level, such that when a hospital, for example, seeks to develop culturally appropriate norms around end-of-life chaplaincy or provide particular faith groups with tailored prayer spaces, the leaders and members of congregations have offered sensitive guidance on such matters.

Space intersects with health. When faith-based communities have secure, accessible venues, the activities that support wellbeing are easier to run and easier to find. When asked what would follow if space were available, leaders often named health-adjacent provision. For example, one leader enthusiastically declared: "Part of our dream is to have a food bank where we can have food and give it to those that are in need."[188]

[184] FBC Member 15.
[185] Stakeholder 2.
[186] FBC Member 18.
[187] Stakeholder 5.
[188] FBC Member 4.

What this research demonstrates is that faith-based communities already help people understand, trust, and use health-services. They do this through their rich web of relationships, their reliable presence, and their open dialogue. That work reduces friction for public providers and can reach groups that might otherwise hold back from accessing the health care that they need.

5.6 Religious Literacy and Liaison

A recurring theme in the interviews we conducted is low religious literacy in public bodies and weak routine liaison with faith-based communities. The effect is that these communities become invisible to the official city. They are there, but not seen as relevant to the day-to-day life of Dublin or to the provision of services to residents. One community leader put it plainly: "I think there's almost been a formalisation in people's minds of 'We don't bring religion into work, ever.'"[189] As a city official confessed, "State bodies of various types are uncomfortable dealing with faith groups."[190] One senior representative of the city acknowledged that faith communities might have some "expertise," but when asked to name any sense in which that might be expressed, conceded, "I'm going to be honest. I can't."[191]

This inarticulacy around the religious life of the city is striking. It shows up as a vagueness about basic issues. Where congregations meet, what they do during the week, how they link to wider services – this is not information that City offices or officials seem to have readily to hand. At the same time, new social-inclusion structures often end up as unintentionally "reinvent[ing] the wheel"[192] rather than connecting with existing networks. This leads to missed referrals and cancelled or awkward engagement, along with low take-up or buy-in from some sectors of the community. Interviewees referred to examples like a "Festival of Faiths" that was planned but then cancelled at short notice.

There is a sense that local government responds to questions of faith practice at a remove from the lived reality. A community worker summarised this by saying that faith communities had internalised the ways in which their presence would be tolerated. Practices that look familiar are tolerated, but anything unfamiliar is perceived as a threat: "You can give them bells but you can't have a call to prayer."[193]

The frame officials bring to "religion" often seems dated. The default assumption is that Ireland is now "secular," and so, as one official put it, religion "just wasn't something that we had to be familiar with."[194] The result is a poor read of present realities. One participant described this tension more accurately: "We are less religious. We are a lot more religiously diverse. … How do we bridge this gap?"[195]

In this context, faith communities cannot be conflated with buildings for worship. They are points of information. They are places where languages and cultures are preserved and adapt.

[189] Stakeholder 4.
[190] Stakeholder 3.
[191] Stakeholder 7.
[192] FBC Member 10.
[193] Stakeholder 4.
[194] Stakeholder 7.
[195] Stakeholder 1.

They are hubs that connect people to places where they can embed themselves in their new home. The same interviewee quoted above pointed to the early response of religious orders to immigration. They offered language classes, housing help, and school places before the State had a coherent response.

Some of the friction is small in appearance but large in meaning. An interviewee shared a story about a student who used a prayer room at their school one day and found it locked the next day. The janitor reportedly said, "To be honest, I was told to lock it because… you must be an extremist because you're going to pray."[196] The participant did not present this as a typical experience, but as a telling example of how hard it can be to get people to see religious practices as "a legitimate dimension of people's lives."[197]

A related pattern is the relabelling of religious space to avoid naming what happens there. One leader described funding rules that blocked the use of the term "Prayer Room": "Sometimes we can be restricted to what we can do, faith-wise… cause of [the risk of] offending others… and that can affect our funding sometimes."[198] Prayer remains the activity inside that room, and prayer is a practice that welcomes people from many traditions and none. In this case, the church is "literally all Africans and Indians."[199] The request to rename the room was interpreted as inhospitable. The community at hand found the direction ill-considered and it communicated that spiritual practice was barely tolerated, not even welcomed.

We heard about efforts to retrofit a listed building so that it would be fit for contemporary use. The community wanted to provide accessible bathrooms but quickly discovered that they did not necessarily have a committed partner when they engaged with the city council. In dialogue with a planner, they were told that the official in question didn't "want to deal with churches."[200] This was reported as "quite a vociferous reaction."[201] Again, it was not presented as an average reaction. But such outlying responses appear to be quite common and when we dwell on the implications, it represents an important signal that if Dublin City Council and its associated bodies are concerned with inclusion and integration, a different approach on this topic may be required.

When these topics arose, interviewees stressed that they were not seeking special treatment. It is, rather, a request for equal treatment. A community activist described attempts:

> to get the Council to understand that, you know, if they have a diversity or inclusion strategy… it doesn't really matter what they think about religious communities or not. They are a factor. They are a reality, you know?[202]

The same interviewee suggested that religious commitment should be seen not as "a disruptive challenge, but … as a positive contribution?"

[196] Stakeholder 5.
[197] Stakeholder 5.
[198] FBC Member 2.
[199] FBC Member 2.
[200] Stakeholder 4.
[201] Stakeholder 4.
[202] Stakeholder 5.

Subsidiarity is a theological concept that might be of use for summarising the patterns we encountered in our research. It means solving problems at the lowest effective level.[203] In practice, people go first to trusted, local experts. In one interview with a city official, the practice on the ground was captured well: "There is a lot of work that is going on, but we're not going to be aware of it because it's happening within the context of faith."[204] People go first to someone they trust, find help there with whatever is their problem – housing, employment, language acquisition, school connections – and then find the support offered by State services. What the official was describing was how faith-based communities support the provision of universal services by shortening the path to the right door and by building the confidence among residents to engage with the services on offer.

The city's engagement on critical issues would be strengthened if it could more effectively and consistently tap into the social reserves of faith-based communities. Some interviewees pointed to frameworks that already allow for structured dialogue with religious communities. Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty was mentioned as an example of a basis for regular contact. The point here is descriptive. The interviews show that engagement improves when officials have a way to recognise faith communities as routine partners to engage regularly rather than exceptional cases that need to be handled with great care.

These matters are not abstract. They shape outcomes for residents. As one leader put it, "people are lost sometimes in the system. They don't know what to do. And it's the church that is the place where they could find advice."[205] What this research shows is a blindspot within Dublin City Council and associated bodies to the reality and centrality of faith in the north-east inner-city. The cost of that blindspot is missed connections, slower support, and unnecessary ineffectiveness in the delivery of services and implementation of policies.

5.7 Crisis Readiness

The November 2023 riots exposed a gap. Several congregations cancelled services, and Gardaí seemed to lack a working map of where faith communities actually gathered. In the words of one city official, many of these sites were effectively "hidden,"[206] so delivering necessary support and reassurance was much harder. Interviewees put it plainly: Gardaí "wouldn't have known where to go."[207]

Faith-based communities also functioned as trusted channels for reliable information. One leader described using Sundays around the riots as an opportunity to "provide information on anything that is maybe important for the community,"[208] guiding responses away from fear and panic. The value here is not ad hoc. It rests on week-to-week presence.

[203] Kenneth R. Himes, OFM, *Sacred and Social: Theological Foundations for Catholic Social Teaching* (Georgetown University Press, 2025), 240-254. It is important to note that subsidiarity may be a theological category, but its political relevance is not in doubt. It is a central concept in European Union legal structures, playing a key role in Article 5(3) of the Treaty on European Union.
[204] Stakeholder 3.
[205] FBC Member 10.
[206] Stakeholder 3.
[207] Stakeholder 2.
[208] FBC Member 10.

Interviewees linked the weakness in official response to the absence of routine liaison. One participant offered their opinion: "I really think that voice of the church in these matters is very important, especially now where there's more and more sort of anti-immigrant stuff happening."[209] The same point was made in operational terms. A community leader recalled that while "the Gardaí can be very good at the face-to-face reassurance"[210] that was needed, closer on-going engagement with faith-leaders would have allowed that to happen sooner and more effectively.

That calming capacity is cultivated by long-standing, on-going pastoral work. Pastoral care builds the trust needed for influence when things become tense. As one member of a faith-community describes it:

> They [the Faith community] always think of you. They will always think of what next you need, even if you don't ask. They will want to know where you live, they want to know what kind of food you eat, they will want to know if there is any way [to help]. … when you meet people of faith basically, they will always want to help. They will always have something to give to offer.[211]

This is the texture of help that stabilises communities and reduces potential flashpoints.

The picture that emerges is not romantic. Not every interaction is positive. But scale matters. The groups that engaged with this research serve people across the generations and socio-economic categories. They are reaching many of the people we rightly identify as particularly vulnerable: newly-arrived migrants, people in the IPAS system, people without homes, women, children, and older residents. One interviewee captured that breadth when they observed that these are "the largest – certainly collectively – cradle-to-grave gathering spaces in the area."[212] In practice, this means points of contact already exist before trouble begins.

The risk of a crisis will diminish if officials cultivate relationships with faith-based communities. The leaders will pick up on tensions earlier than those working in centralised offices. They can correct rumours and challenge misinformation. They can steer people towards calmer face-to-face responses. If official knowledge about the eco-system of faith in the north-east inner-city remains thin, responses will continue to lag and fear can spread. Where links are developed, stability can follow.

[209] FBC Member 5.
[210] Stakeholder 2.
[211] FBC Member 12.
[212] Stakeholder 2.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter displays how faith-based communities are part of the north-east inner-city's social infrastructure. They are trusted first ports of call, locally rooted, and active across generational, class, and ethnic divides. Faith-based communities support integration in twelve primary ways (see Figure 4 below).

Figure 4: How Faith-Based Communities Support Integration

Their capacity is limited by the difficulty of finding suitable locations to meet, thin visibility with the officials, and the background challenges of growing racist discourse.

A simple theory of change can be presented:

- **Inputs are already present**: existing networks, trust, multilingual leaders.
- **Activities are on-going**: signposting and accompaniment, health messaging and screening, pastoral care through the landmark moments of life and the spiritual and social benefits that come from gathered worship.
- **Outputs are measurable**: Higher service uptake, shorter time to support, steadier reassurance in crises, and more effective inter-cultural engagement.
- **Outcomes are achievable**: Stronger integration, less duplication of services, safe and more vibrant public spaces, and a more resilient social fabric in the city's north-east neighbourhoods.

One of the crucial obstacles to be overcome is the illiteracy of the City Council and its associated bodies around "religious" matters. As one city official confessed, staff of the Dublin City Council:

> couldn't describe 'secular' versus 'non-secular' space. They couldn't define what a 'Republic' is. They couldn't describe pluralism. None of these lessons are ever thought about or taught.[213]

The result is that people operate with assumptions and sustain blindspots. Religion is read as a private matter, and therefore not of public concern or importance, rather than as a normal part of how many residents live.

From the community's side, the message is direct. One faith leader said, "They don't know what we are doing. It looks like they are not even interested."[214] The same interviewee put it as a basic claim of citizenship: State services are "supposed to serve people living in Ireland. And we are here. We also live in Ireland. Don't overlook us. … Don't ignore us."[215] Interviewees also noted there is "no forum to share these issues with city officials."[216] That lack of a channel leaves many opportunities for fruitful collaboration undeveloped.

The merit case is clear in the research undertaken. These communities operate at a scale that official interventions struggle to reach alone. They do so in a fashion that integrates with people's lives. As one community activist described it, what matters is "also the manner of delivering a service, the manner of engaging with somebody who doesn't speak a language, who doesn't understand the culture."[217] The vitality of these communities is a good in itself, not just a tactical response to rising racism. Failing to see this means failing to see residents as they really are.

More consistent and considered engagement avoids the risks of isolating new communities or pressuring a conformist mode of assimilation. One community leader declared that:

> I really don't want Ireland to become a society of many cultures that are not connected to each other. … But I also don't want Ireland to believe it needs to be a homogenous group.[218]

The middle ground is harder to find, but it is practical, and it is shared. Faith-based communities are ready to play their part. As one faith leader put it, "We have the resources to offer," with the hope to "make Dublin a better place for all of us."[219]

A caution exists in the search for this middle ground. The faith-based communities' connection to city officials is contextualised by opposing ideologies on how community work should take place. The move from community development principles towards service provision models, that are informed by the logic of marketisation, has been explored in local[220] and global[221] settings.

[213] Stakeholder 3.
[214] FBC Member 10.
[215] FBC Member 10.
[216] FBC Member 10.
[217] Stakeholder 1.
[218] Stakeholder 6.
[219] FBC Member 6.
[220] Patricia Kelleher and Cathleen O'Neill, *The Systematic Destruction of the Community Development, Anti-Poverty and Equality Movement (2002-2015)* (2018), https://uniteforarealalternative.blog/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/kelleheroneill-destruction-of-community-development-1018.pdf.
[221] Bryan Evans et al., 'Structuring Neoliberal Governance: The Nonprofit Sector, Emerging New Modes of Control and the Marketisation of Service Delivery', *Policy and Society* 24, no. 1 (2005): 73–97.

Any move away from community-oriented approaches in funding and governance has particular significance for faith-based communities.[222] In our findings, "first port of call", "identity", and "embeddedness" carry particular meaning and significance for the faith-based community. They should not be merely understood as demonstrations of effective service provision, though the evidence may indeed show such effectiveness. They are fundamental indicators of the community-oriented approach which is in tension with service-provision logic (see Figure 5 below). For example, many of the faith-based communities operate as expressions of diaspora, whether as multi-ethnic congregations or with formal links to overseas countries of origin. In this regard, diaspora should not be understood as a geographical or migratory particularity, useful to achieve an integration goal.

Figure 5: Community-Oriented Approach of Faith-Based Communities [Image Credit: Douglas Carson]

The concept of diaspora is, rather, a core understanding of many religions' identity[223] and therefore should be handled with the sensitivity of patient community development in such a way that may require an eschewing of the key performance indicator. The faith-based communities gather around ancient texts and express themselves in word and music in such a way that has both cosmic and parochial significance. Their community-oriented logic weighs heavily. Therefore, there must be utmost caution to avoid folding the faith-based communities' presence and actions into the logic of service provision, and even into the general theme of intercultural work. The recommendations to follow cannot be tokenised for their usefulness in achieving "value for money" but should be viewed as part of a deeper bridge building across the rivers of exclusion, isolation, and illiteracy that have been highlighted.

Chapter 6 sets out how Dublin City Council and its partners can organise around that vision.

[222] Andrew Williams explores how in the UK, FBOs have been co-opted, expressed resistance and are seeking new understandings of secularity in how the move to service provision is handled. See Andrew Williams et al., 'Co-Constituting Neoliberalism: Faith-Based Organisations, Co-Option, and Resistance in the UK', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 44, no. 6 (2012): 1479–501.

[223] For example, the prominent theologian Willie James Jennings, reflecting on the earliest weeks of the Christian church, explores how diaspora is the central idea at the church's birth with direct implications for its relationship within the surrounding civic and political hegemony: "Faith is always caught between diaspora and empire. It is always caught between those on the one side focused on survival and fixated on securing a future for their people and on the other side those intoxicated with the power and possibilities of empire and of building a world ordered by its financial, social, and political logics that claim to be the best possible way to bring stability and lasting peace." See Willie James Jennings, *Acts: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 2017), 4.

Chapter 6: Recommendations

Chapter Six - Recommendations

6.1 Introduction of Purpose and Scope

In this chapter we develop the discussion of the interview evidence elaborated in Chapter 5 into concrete steps that local government could take to support faith-based communities in the north-east inner-city as they foster community-building and reduce social isolation.

Each section follows the same pattern: a goal, a small set of actions, and for each action an owner, what to do, how to measure it, and guardrails. We use existing systems where possible. This chapter meets our fifth objective: To provide evidence-based recommendations for Dublin City Council and other stakeholders on how to incorporate the work of faith-based communities into urban planning, integration policies, and social support frameworks. In total, this report makes 15 recommendations grouped across six steps (section 7.2).

The sequence mirrors Chapter 5. We consider how to support faith-based communities in their "first-port-of-call function" (section 6.3), how to integrate the wisdom of these communities into the consultative democracy of the city (section 6.4), and how to alleviate the pressure around space and buildings that these communities experience (section 6.5). We also have recommendations around collaborating with faith-based communities to enhance public health provision (section 6.6), develop the religious literacy of local government staff (section 6.7), and how to ensure that faith-based communities play a calming role in times of societal tension (section 6.8).

The recommendations weave across each other. Specifically, we note three proposals that have subsidiary effects. In section 6.3, we propose the creation of a faith-based register for the north-east inner-city which would play a central role in the deployment of the recommendations in sections 6.4 and 6.8. The suggestions around a "planning clinic" and a "minor works fund" in section 6.5 unlocks mid-week use of buildings used by faith-based communities and thus has implications for the possibility of public health supports (section 6.6). The proposal to establish a half-time role of Faith Liaison Officer and a roundtable would help maintain alignment across the recommendations.

Each action names measures and owners, which can encourage appropriate tracking and reporting structures in each instance. This is a practical suite of recommendations that can start immediately – allowing time for the creation of the Faith Liaison Officer role (either new hire or transfer from extant role) and practical support around safe space – using existing channels to support faith-based communities and strengthen everyday life in the north-east inner-city.

6.2 Principles and Conditions

This section clarifies the operating assumptions at play in subsequent recommendations. It describes how this report secures neutrality on questions of religious doctrine while fostering an inclusive, pluralistic mode of secularity.

6.2.1 Principles

At all times, the recommendations made in this chapter assume the following ten principles:

1. **Equal treatment:** Faith and non-belief groups engage on the same terms.
2. **Public purpose:** Activities supported by the city must serve the common good. This means, for example, that they encourage groups to embed in Irish society, they increase access to services, they build community cohesion, they enhance collective safety, or they strengthen public health.
3. **Use what exists:** We will work through existing channels, not establish parallel systems. This includes where high-level expertise in faith and interfaith community work already exists through the likes of the Dublin City Interfaith Forum and other faith-based organisations.
4. **Voluntary:** Groups opt in and can opt out.
5. **Plain and accessible:** Simple language, key translations, and disability access should be standard.
6. **Evidence and pilots:** Start small, measure, adjust, scale only if it works.
7. **Local first:** Act at the lowest level that can deliver well (subsidiarity).
8. **Transparent:** Publish criteria, timelines, and results.
9. **Safeguarding:** Safety and protection policies are non-negotiable.
10. **Time sensitivity:** Align activity with real gathering times, especially Sundays and Fridays.

6.2.2 Conditions

At all times, the recommendations in this chapter are made with the understanding that supports extended to faith-based communities have limits. This protects the city from bias on questions of religion and protects faith-based communities from the over-reach of a centralised authority. These conditions include:

1. **Funding:** Ring-fence public spend to buildings, safety, cleaning, management, and neutral information. No city funding for worship, catechesis, proselytising, or political activity. Costs should be published.
2. **Partnership Obligations:** Any group that partners with the city council will agree written terms. The public purpose, current insurance, safeguarding policies, and (where required) staff vetting of the activity will be confirmed. A clear commitment must be made that the faith-based community will treat people equally. They will avoid any proselytising in city-funded activity.[224] They will respect shared spaces, and cooperate with light monitoring and spot checks. These terms will be renewed on a regular basis.
3. **Data and privacy:** In all recommendations in this report, what is expected is that the minimal amount of data will be collected, with purpose-limited consent, and full GDPR compliance.
4. **Non-endorsement:** Use of city facilities does not imply endorsement of beliefs or views. Standard disclaimers should be displayed.

[224] In European law, there is a viable distinction between "proselytism" and "evangelism" based on the 1993 ruling in the Court of Human Rights in the case of Kokkinakis v. Greece. The court drew a line between legitimate "bearing Christian witness", which is protected by the human right to have and practice a religion, and "improper proselytism" which involves coercion, manipulation, inducements, or other forms of undue pressure which are incompatible with others' freedom of religion. Kokkinakis v. Greece, 57818/10, 57822/10, 57825/10, 57827/10, 57829/10 (ECtHR 25 May 1993). Maintaining this distinction is essential for preserving

By implementing these principles and guidelines, the recommendations listed below protect neutrality, respect individual citizen's rights, while making possible the appropriate support that faith-based communities need to fulfil their potential as catalysts for social cohesion in the north-east inner-city.

6.3 First Contact Recommendations

Involve faith-based communities to make navigation faster and easier for newcomers.

Many new arrivals in the city see establishing links with a faith-based community as a higher priority than arranging bureaucratic matters. Gatherings for worship on Fridays and Sundays are the regular touchpoints. That is where clear contact routes, small practical help, and simple information make the biggest difference.

Recommendation 1: Develop a Faith-Based Community Register for the North-East Inner-City

What: Develop an opt-in list of faith-based community contacts, languages, Sunday service times, and referral links. Provide one central email address and a dedicated phone number for frontline staff, managed by DCC Community.

Measure: Groups enrolled; referrals made; time from first contact to appointment.

Guardrails: Open to all faith and belief groups on equal terms, minimal data, GDPR compliant, opt in and opt out at any time, no client data held.

Review: Quarterly

Frontline staff in DCC, HSE, Gardaí, Intreo, and the ETB often do not know who to call in a congregation or when they meet. The register gives them a current contact and usual meeting times so messages reach the right person before the weekly gathering. Update quarterly. Share the register with relevant DCC units, HSE community teams, Intreo, and the ETB. Route queries through a central email address and a dedicated phone number, managed by DCC Community.

democratic vitality and restraining the potentially coercive power of the State. While approached from a Christian perspective, the joint declaration from the Catholic church, the World Council of Churches, and the World Evangelical Alliance about appropriate conduct in evangelism is illuminating. World Council of Churches, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and World Evangelical Alliance. *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct: World Council of Churches Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue World Evangelical Alliance.* World Council of Churches, 2011. Extensive literature exists that describes how this distinction is keenly understood within faith-based communities, for example: Sam Victor, 'Proselytizing Is Not Evangelism: Epistemic Virtue and Religious Suasion at a Post-Fundamentalist Church in Nashville'. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 30, no. S1 (2024): 77.

Recommendation 2: Create Referral Micro-Grants

What: Small grants to cover bus fares, printing, translation, and child-minding to complete referrals.

Measure: Completed appointments; drop-off rates along the pathway; cost per completed referral.

Guardrails: Documented reimbursements, per-case and per-group caps, no cash to individuals, no-proselytising conditions, open to any community group using the pathway. Check for overlap with existing supports before approval. Simple audit trail tied to Referral ID.

Review: Quarterly

We know that the reasons why people do not successfully access the systems that can support them are often prosaic. Faith-based communities can be equipped to help people get established in Dublin by serving as the mediating point for basic supports around referrals. Removing, or lessening these costs can turn the advice offered on Friday or Sunday into attendance at a clinic or workshop on Monday.

This could be achieved through a lightweight application process linked to a Referral ID. Approval can be secured quickly. Spending can be tracked, along with outcomes, for auditing purposes. Review caps after the first quarter.

Recommendation 3: Generate Welcome Brief for Newcomers

What: Short multilingual leaflet and WhatsApp pack used by faith-based communities, sign-posting health, housing, education, and rights.

Measure: Downloads and distribution; service uptake following use.

Guardrails: Clear, neutral content, co-branded, no data capture, materials would be public and shareable beyond faith settings.

Review: Review twice a year to keep links current.

The questions people have and the challenges they face when they first arrive tend to follow a certain pattern. Accurate, short guides in the languages people use could be distributed through faith-based communities – though not written specially for that context or distributed exclusively there. This can prevent misinformation and reduce repeat queries. What is imagined here is a simple one-page leaflet and a matching WhatsApp pack in priority languages. Include key steps for securing a PPSN number, GP registration, accessing English classes, engaging with Intreo, tenants' rights, and safeguarding contacts.[225]

[225] There is work already happening in this space so adapting/liaising for faith-based communities might be the best step. Cairde and the Irish Refugee Council are places with experience of connecting people and communities to services. For an example, see Cairde, 'HealthConnect', accessed 29 September 2025, https://healthconnect.ie/.

6.4 Identity and Embeddedness Recommendations

Recognise faith-based communities as part of local social infrastructure.

Many faith-based communities are active in the north-east inner-city but are not on the radar of the city government. Venues move. Contacts change. As a result, notices about plans, transport changes, safety forums, or events do not always reach the people who will feel the impact. This is a practical gap, not a matter of special status. The proposed fix is the cultivation of pathways that brings faith-based communities into the consultation channels the city already uses.

Recommendation 4: Create Pathways for Faith-Based Community Engagement

What: Building on the faith-based community register (section 6.3), extend invitations to groups to join the Public Participation Network. Add them to mailing lists for the Consultation Hub items that affect the north-east inner-city – such as area plans, roads and transport updates, safety forums, event notices, and emergency communications. Provide a short onboarding pack and a help clinic on how to make submissions.

Measure: Invitations issued; submissions received; attendance logged.

Guardrails: Open to all faith and belief groups on equal terms. Minimal data. GDPR compliant. Opt-in and opt-out at any time. Same timelines and rules as any other group.

This recommendation builds on the development of a faith-based community register (section 6.3) to extend invitations to the leaders of these communities to learn about the Public Participation Networks and to receive City consultation notices. Provide a short onboarding pack in plain language that explains timelines, contacts, and how submissions are made. Offer a brief help clinic to complete registration where needed. Confirm contact details quarterly. The NEIC Faith Liaison could field questions and route input to the right unit.

The key development here would be the establishment of a robust set of communication channels with faith-based leaders without undue administrative overheads (for either side).

6.5 Finding Space, Finding Time Recommendations

Reduce venue insecurity and Friday and Sunday barriers.

The contribution that a faith-based community can make – both to its own members and to the wider area – is keenly limited by the suitability and security of its venue. This report demonstrates that insecurity on this topic is a central concern for many of these groups. The below actions address this set of challenges.

Recommendation 5: Planning and Property Clinic for Faith-Based Communities

What: Pre-application advice, protected structure guidance, insurance basics, and licensing signposts. The development of resources to guide faith-based communities in the compliant development of their premises.

Measure: Cases advised; follow-ups lodged; issues resolved.

Guardrails: Open to all faith and belief groups on equal terms. No fast-tracking, same rules and timelines as any other applicant.

The leaders of faith-based communities often face challenges around developing the facilities they do have. A standing clinic gives clear routes through planning, fire safety, accessibility, and guidance about other matters. The provision of tailored resources would encourage the development of the capacity of faith-based communities and has precedent, for example, in the *Planning Advice Notes* prepared by some British local authorities for faith-based communities.[226]

The key gain here would be the establishment of a predictable pre-application route for the development of religious facilities in the area.

Recommendation 6: Minor Works and Accessibility Fund

What: Small grants for toilets, ramps, fire safety, storage, and simple fit-outs that open mid-week use and create a context for the premises of faith-based communities to serve the wider neighbourhood.

Measure: Compliant hours added; mid-week activities delivered; users served.

Guardrails: Capital grants only. No funding for current costs or developments dedicated towards proselytising. Planning permission secured where required. Works must benefit wider community.

As this report demonstrates, some of the most vulnerable population groups in the city rely on faith-based communities as pillar supports in their lives. Providing the assistance needed for them to improve the usability, accessibility and safety of their facilities serves the wider common-good. The scheme can be structured with a capped amount per-site, prioritising works that add compliant hours to a facility while reducing risk. Things covered would include fire alarms, emergency lighting, ramps, accessible toilets, secure storage, acoustic treatment.

Participation in the scheme would foster relationships and trust with the city and create a context for wider governance gains by committing beneficiaries to rigorous levels of safeguarding policies. In order to streamline any process, statutory bodies should explicitly include faith groups on the list of potential recipients of existing grants, similar to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

[226] The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, *Planning Advice Note for Religious Meeting Places*, No 4 (The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 2012), https://lbbd.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s59433/Appendix%201.pdf.

Recommendation 7: Develop a Friday and Sunday Transport Pilot

What: Assessment of service provision with a particular attention to servicing worship communities on Friday evenings and Sunday mornings. DCC's role would be initiatory and supportive of a process that ultimately would be designed and guided by the NTA.

Measure: On-time arrivals; ridership.

Guardrails: Make any changes based on time-limited pilots to inform evidence-based decision-making. Publish results. Keep changes if they prove their value against a clear threshold.

Sundays are the main gathering time for many Christian groups, but the public transport provision is at its thinnest. The Islamic communities gather on Fridays when services are more regular, but they may face overcrowding challenges. Assessments may not lead to increased services but the commitment to regularly consider this question will demonstrate the real recognition that the city has that the expression of religious belief is a significant and protected element of the lives of many residents.

Recommendation 8: Shared NEIC Faith and Community Hub

What: The development of a central, compliant facility with flexible worship spaces, breakout rooms, shared offices, and bookable mid-week capacity.

Measure: Feasibility completed, co-design workshops held, site option secured, occupancy and usage hours once open.

Guardrails: Publish a neutral public purpose statement and prioritise use by faith-based communities, while allowing belief and non-belief groups on equal terms when capacity is free. Ring-fence City funding to the building, safety, cleaning, and management; no City money for worship, religious instruction, or proselytism, and groups fund any faith-specific items. Keep shared areas free of permanent religious symbols, allowing temporary symbols only inside booked rooms and only for the duration of the booking, with neutral wayfinding throughout. Operate a transparent booking system with a visible calendar, rotation of peak slots, and no exclusive capture. Publish quarterly reports on usage and compliance and run the first two years as a pilot with an independent review of neutrality, cost, and impact.

The city should develop a dedicated faith-based community space where different groups from across the faith traditions represented in the north-east inner-city can ground their worship events and administrative functions. There are a number of examples of shared religious spaces in continental Europe, such as Vienna, Berlin, Hanover, and Bern (see Figures 6 to 9 below)

Figure 6: Campus Der Religionen, Vienna

Many congregations will continue to rent small or shifting spaces. But a central hub gives reliable, compliant rooms for peak days and mid-week work. It reduces isolation, supports cooperation across groups, and gives officials a clear place to meet communities. It also creates a steady platform for health outreach, training, and reassurance work during tense periods.

Figure 7: House of One, Berlin

Clear, transparent governance structures would be essential but could be created through a small steering group with DCC, HSE, Gardaí, and representatives from faith-based

communities. Adopt a neutral charter: open access, equal treatment, no proselytising in DCC-funded activities (while maintaining religious freedom in the ordinary activities of the community), with participation bound to a high rigour on safeguarding. Publish booking rules and usage reports. Align the hub with emergency planning so it can serve as a focal point for information if required.

Figure 8: Haus Der Religionen, Bern

No other single measure would be as effective for communicating the city's commitment to an inclusive, pluralistic, secular Republic where people of faith were welcome to express their religious beliefs in a context of respect and mutual flourishing.

Figure 9: Haus Der Religionen, Hanover.

6.6 Health Access and Support Recommendations

Collaborate with faith-based communities to improve the delivery of public health services across the north-east inner-city

Faith-based communities are often the first-place people ask for help. Leaders are trusted and able to relate to people in a fashion that is readily understood. The recommendations that follow seek to direct that authority to support public health measures, especially by bolstering credibility and shortening and clarifying the paths for users towards care.[227]

Recommendation 9: Health "Bridge People" Established with Faith-Based Community Venues

What: Individuals employed to work with and within faith-based communities, addressing health and wellbeing needs. The focus is on dialogical cultural-code translation that can patiently handle the complexities and life of the faith-based community while also operating from a deep awareness of health promotion and health systems in Ireland.

Measure: Interventions completed; screenings completed; referral uptake.

Guardrails: HSE clinical governance. Neutral co-branding. No proselytising in any DCC or HSE funded activity. Standard safeguarding and site risk assessment. Equal offer across faith and belief groups.

"Bridge people" do not only signpost or disseminate information, nor solely translate languages or operate as a peer support.[228] They rarely host health interventions but more usually are guests within the faith-based community space. They are expressions of two-way integration that is *with* the faith-based community more than giving access *to* health services or information. They understand that barriers to health inclusion lie in both directions and therefore dialogue is their key indicator with experience and expertise that overcomes any limitation of religious illiteracy.

Recommendation 10: Training to Champion Public Health in Faith-Based Communities

What: Short modules on consent, safeguarding, data sharing, and referral pathways.

Measure: Attendance; pre- and post-confidence scores; referral quality.

Guardrails: Free and optional, not clinical training, standard safeguarding and GDPR rules, certificates of completion provided.

[227] Examples proliferate from the recent pandemic of how the trust invested in faith-based communities can be harnessed for public health effectiveness. See, for example: Shahana Ramsden, *Equality Stories from the Covid-19 Vaccination Programme* (NHS South East Region, 2021), especially pages 4–7.

[228] Bridge people have similarities to Peer Support Workers, as already operated by the HSE, but have important differences in how integration and heterogeneity is understood and applied. For an exploration of Peer Support Work, see Daryl Mahon, 'A Scoping Review of Interventions Delivered by Peers to Support the Resettlement Process of Refugees and Asylum Seekers', *Trauma Care* 2, no. 1 (2022): 51–62.

Offer two half-day sessions each year which equip leaders in faith-based communities with skills to be champions for public health. The content provided would be practical, dedicated towards listening skills, how to make a good referral, how to spot crisis signs, how to handle misinformation, and when to step back. Include a simple directory of local services and an emphasis on the two-way approach of integration with a focus on how such champions can become teachers to our health service. Adopt an equitable approach that acknowledges the bi-vocational role of many faith leaders and the limited capacity to engage with activities outside their existing events.

6.7 Religious Literacy and Liaison Recommendations

Make day-to-day engagement with faith-based communities routine, clear, and fair.

Recommendation 11: Appoint an NEIC Faith Liaison Officer and Establish a Roundtable

What: Appoint a (half-time) liaison to manage the faith-based communities register, run a quarterly roundtable between the leaders of faith-based communities and relevant services, and maintain a simple venue map for operational use. Core work will be liaison with DCIF, ACET, and other faith-based organisations.

Measure: Register completeness, meetings held, issues logged and resolved, time from query to response.

Guardrails: Open invitation to engage across faith and belief groups; notes and actions published; privacy flags respected for the venue map.

A named liaison and a regular forum turn one-off calls into steady working links. It reduces "who do I ring?" delays and helps catch issues before they grow. A roundtable meeting can be used to share information about upcoming plans, safety forums, and major events. This roundtable should respect the independence of the well-established Dublin City Inter-Faith Forum, while building on its considerable success. Shared actions can be deliberated and developed in this forum.

This initiative could draw inspiration from other contexts, such as drawing on the All-Party Parliamentary Group "Faith Covenant" which guides routine, neutral partnership between British governmental bodies and faith-based communities. The maintenance and cultivation of the faith-based register is an essential task for the other goals being pursued in these recommendations and requires the attention of a dedicated staff member.

[229] New York City has a permanent Mayor's office for faith partnerships: Mayoral Office of New York City, 'Center for Faith and Community Partnerships', The Office of Faith and Community Partnership, 2025, https://www.nyc.gov/site/cfcp/index.page. On this island, the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, the key umbrella group for the community and voluntary sector in the North, has a faith-engagement project, see 'Faith Based Engagement', Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, accessed 15 September 2025, https://www.nicva.org/faith.

[230] 'About the APPG', APPG on Faith and Society, accessed 3 September 2025, https://www.faithandsociety.org/about/.

Recommendation 12: Engagement with Religious Literacy Training

What: Targeted, practical education for frontline staff on the meanings of secularity, equal treatment, local faith landscapes, and referral norms. This may best be achieved by commissioning a micro-credential on intercultural fluency with a focus on religion, aimed at public and civil servants. TCD already runs micro-credentials and offers relevant postgraduate programmes, including an M.Phil. in Theology and Social Justice, so their expertise may represent an ideal partner.

Measure: Attendance, pre and post confidence scores, case application in supervision, reduction in avoidable friction cases.

Guardrails: Clear, neutral content; case-based learning from NEIC scenarios; no faith promotion; align with IHREC Public Sector Duty guidance.

Recommendation 13: Develop a Three-Year Interfaith and Integration Strategy

What: Three-year strategy would provide the policy basis to hold many of these recommendations together, adding coherence and timelines for agreed actions

Measure: Reporting after Year 1, 2 and 3

Guardrails: Such a strategy will need to carefully interact faith with the related areas of integration, migration, and anti-racism at local and national levels. It will do this in a way that synergises those interactions yet avoids the folding in of faith in a way that fails to acknowledge the need to work with existing expertise or allows religious illiteracy among key stakeholders to dilute the focus on faith.

6.8 Crisis Readiness Recommendations

Promote calm and timely communication in times of crisis

Recommendation 14: Develop Confidential Map of Venues and Contacts

What: Opt-in map and contact tree, updated quarterly, used for reassurance visits and urgent engagements.

Measure: Venues reached within 24 hours; contact success rate.

Guardrails: Draws only from the faith-based community register with specific consent for crisis use; minimal data (group, venue, key contact, phone, usual gathering times); access limited to DCC Emergency Planning and Gardaí; no public release; GDPR compliant; opt in and opt out at any time.

During the November 2023 unrest, officials struggled to find some congregations quickly. A live, confidential map and a current contact tree would cut that delay in the future. It would ensure the right doors are reached early with reassurance and accurate information. Venues could be geocoded and linked to a specific named contact. A hard copy list could be maintained as backup. The maps and list could be refreshed every quarter. After any local incident, the contact tree could be used to schedule reassurance visits and share key updates.

Recommendation 15: Start a Rumour Control Channel

What: WhatsApp broadcast list for faith-based community leads with short, verified updates during incidents, with matching messages in priority languages.

Measure: Messages sent; corrections logged; forwards tracked.

Guardrails: Incident use only; plain, non-sensitive text; approval by DCC Communications with Garda input; no reply-all; contacts drawn from the faith-based community register with consent for this purpose; opt out at any time.

Bad information spreads fast. The leaders of faith-based communities can correct it inside their networks if they get a clear line from city officials and other authorities. A broadcast list sends one message to many trusted points at once.

This can be established quite simply with a broadcast list of opted-in faith-based community leads. Prepare short templates for common needs: reassurance visits, transport status, area cordons, clinic openings, helplines. Core messages can be translated. When an incident occurs, this line can become a bulwark against the panic and confusion sown by misinformation.

6.9 Conclusion

These recommendations are informed by the lived experience of residents of Dublin's north-east inner-city and can serve as practical steps the city council can make now. They recognise faith-based communities as part of the north-east inner-city's social infrastructure, not as marginal institutions to be kept at a distance. The recommendations would make it easier for newcomers and vulnerable residents to navigate the city and State services, improve everyday coordination, and serve as a calming influence should tensions flare up again in the area.

If adopted, some advances would be visible within months. The proposed faith-based community register would shorten the path from first contact to first appointment. The planning clinic and minor works fund would add compliant hours in buildings that already serve local life. Educational upskilling for civil servants and elected officials, with a focus on religious literacy and intercultural fluency, will aid communication with stakeholders and implementation of goals. "Bridge people" based in trusted settings would increase screening and referral follow-through. A named liaison, a roundtable, a venue map, and a rumour channel would make routine contact and crisis communication faster and more predictable.

The proposed programme protects neutrality. Equal treatment applies to belief and non-belief groups. Public money is ring-fenced to building, safety, management, and neutral information. There is no proposed support for worship or proselytising. Data collection is minimal and consented. Safeguarding and transparency are standard, indeed the protocols presented here would increase both.

Most actions are low-cost process changes that use existing systems and existing expertise. The minor works fund is targeted and capped. The shared hub is the one capital item and is subject to feasibility, co-design, and clear guardrails. Pilots and quarterly notes keep the work evidence-led and open to review.

Immediate actions are straightforward: authorise the initial recommendations, support feasibility work on the shared hub, and recruit a suitable Faith Liaison Officer. These are modest steps. If carried through, they should make access to services simpler for some of the city's must vulnerable residents, reduce space for misinformation and tension, and support a more flourishing civic life in the north-east inner-city.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Our Lady of Lourdes Church and the Romanian Greek Catholic Church

Chapter Seven – Conclusion

7.1 Solving the Puzzle

This report opened by remembering Leopold Bloom's challenge in Ulysses – the puzzle of crossing Dublin without passing a pub. In the north-east inner-city today, we can reformulate that puzzle about crossing that neighbourhood without passing a faith-based community.
Our research demonstrates it could be difficult. Nearly fifty identified communities – churches, mosques, temples, and meeting rooms – mark out the area as a place where faith is lived publicly and daily. These communities are not holdovers from an Ireland of the past, nor are they enclaves imported by newcomers. They are an intrinsic and authentic part of the complex weave that makes this part of the city what it is.

To "solve the puzzle" does not mean charting a route that avoids them. Rather, this research presses decision makers to recognise that faith-based communities are as much a part of the neighbourhood as schools, sports clubs, or, indeed, pubs. They are institutions of belonging that cut across ethnicity, class, nationality, and generations. To the extent that they are bypassed, the city is weakened, because what we have discovered is that in a myriad of ways, these communities not only absorb some of the most intense consequences of social change, but they actively contribute to the flourishing of our city.

7.1.1 From Overlooked to Considered

The preceding chapters have shown that faith-based communities function as public goods within the local ecosystem. They are first points of contact; gateways of welcome where new arrivals can find their bearings, develop language skills, discover companionship, and find support for the range of mundane and extraordinary challenges that come with arriving in a new culture. They also serve as anchors of continuity, giving longer-term residents and newly-arrived migrants alike a vocabulary for belonging and civic responsibility. And perhaps most critically, in times of crisis they will be revealed as reservoirs of trust. They are able to move quickly, adapt flexibly, and reassure with credibility when emergencies arise.

They do not replace statutory agencies. They do complement them, however. They can do what bureaucratic systems struggle to do: combining effectiveness with empathy. With the unique and rich combination of spiritual practice and practical mutual aid, these communities shorten the distance between being an outsider and becoming a neighbour. It would be a folly for official institutions to continue passing over these communities.

The State's repeated position is that integration is a two-way process. If this is the case, then civic structures must be open to the real, actual existing social actors already mediating that process on the ground. Faith-based communities are doing the business of integration – in historic listed buildings, rented rooms, and borrowed kitchens. To strategise about the future of the area without engaging them is to ignore one of the city's most effective instruments for social cohesion.

7.1.2 A Civic Resource Hidden in Plain Sight

Each interview, from church leaders to city officials, pointed to the same paradox: faith communities are practically everywhere but are basically invisible in policy. They deliver English classes, they educate on public health, they run youth clubs and counselling services, and when a crisis hits – whether domestic or communal – they are on the scene. But their existence is rarely even alluded to in official reports, and they appear to be at best an afterthought in the ordinary proceedings of the City Council. We argue that this invisibility is not inevitable. Neither is it the product of anti-religious malice. It most likely emerges from a kind of conceptual lag.

A vague understanding of what it means to be secular appears to be pervasive throughout the city's official functioning. The simplistic distinction that religion is a "private" matter and not of public concern seems to be an operating assumption.[231] The result is an often unspoken – even unrecognised – presumption that secular neutrality means avoiding engagement with faith actors. Yet, as this study shows, in a pluralistic city that prizes diversity, it is incumbent on city officials to develop their fluency when discussing such matters. Silence ends up being discriminatory against some of our most vulnerable neighbours, who are taught that a significant element of their life must be muted if they ever want to access their civic rights or participate in civic deliberation. Ignoring the reality of lived religion is not neutrality; it is a refusal to see.

Recognising faith-based communities does not mean endorsing their beliefs. It does not require that city officials become theologians. It does not prejudice those who have no religious belief or practice. It simply means acknowledging that faith is a form of social infrastructure. It creates places where people gather, share stories that make sense of their suffering and renew them as they face their own challenges, and cultivate the kind of networks that actually build and sustain civic trust. In a context where isolation, mistrust, and misinformation increasingly fracture community life, this is not a reality that the city can afford to overlook.

7.1.3 The Geography of Belonging

Spatial questions emerged as the hinge of this study. In interviews, "space" was named more often than "funding". This struggle for space is more than a logistical challenge. It poses a moral and political challenge. When zoning, heritage regulation, or commercial rent pressures squeeze these communities to the margins, it is not just religious expression that is diminished. This crisis around space represents the reduction of our public capacity for belonging.

A renewed appreciation of worship spaces as part of our civic infrastructure is required. While we have made recommendations about modest supports and guidance that might alleviate the pressure in the worst of situations, the city does need to wrestle with the wisdom of following the examples of a growing number of European cities and establishing public space that would be

[231] As we finalised this report, Pope Leo XIV published his first formal teaching. We cite it here not because the Pope should be considered a source of authority for all our readers but because the office he occupies functions with authority for many, many people who live in Dublin. In a tightly reasoned section, he argues, "Yet we must never forget that religion … cannot be limited to the private sphere, as if believers had no business making their voice heard with regard to problems affecting civil society and issues of concern to its members." Much could be said about any political ideology that denies this reality but we could neither call it progressive nor inclusive. Pope Leo XIV, *Dilexit Te* (Vatican, 2025), §112.

available for use by religious and philosophical groups. Continuing to insist that this is simply a private matter for these communities to resolve for themselves runs the risk of hollowing out precisely the networks that keep vulnerable residents connected to wider society.

7.1.4 Faith and Wellbeing

Health is another thread running through the research. Faith-based communities are already delivering low-threshold, culturally fluent support for physical and mental wellbeing. Pastors accompany people to medical appointments. Imams translate medical guidance. Congregations fundraise for funerals. These activities lie outside formal service design yet sit squarely within the human ecology of care.

The HSE's own intercultural strategy recognises the need for partnership with faith-based communities but often lacks a mechanism to make that commitment real. This study suggests that collaboration with faith-based communities should be treated not as a nice-if-we-get-around-to-it activity but as intrinsic to the public health infrastructure. A trusted messenger can achieve in minutes what an official information campaign may struggle to achieve in months.

7.1.5 Faith Communities as Stable Points in Crisis

The past decade has seen moments when the social fabric of the north-east inner-city came under intense strain – from drug-related violence to xenophobic misinformation. In those moments, faith-based communities have provided quiet, decentralised stability. They have called for calm, convened prayer services, and passed accurate information through naturally cross-cultural and multi-lingual networks. That is to say nothing of the pastoral care and spiritual solace that they have offered.

This capacity for communication – grounded in trust rather than authority – cannot be easily replicated by the State. It demonstrates that religious communities, far from being potential flashpoints, are often firebreaks. Religious extremism was simply absent from the evidence we gathered. These communities may have distinct identities but repeatedly – and often quite spontaneously in our interviews – we saw how they overlap and intersect, offering support not just to their members but building bridges to the wider community. Supporting them in advance of crises is a prudent investment in civic peace.

7.1.6 Structures of Engagement

Across Europe, municipalities are beginning to integrate faith-based communities into their vision of local governance. Projects like Berlin's *One House*, Vienna's *Campus der Religionen*, and Bern's *Haus der Religionen* are tangible demonstrations of what happens when policy and pluralism meet. Dublin city can learn from these models and consider what is appropriate in our historical and cultural moment.

What matters is the principle that secularity does not exclude the possibility of engagement with faith-based communities. On the contrary, plural engagement strengthens democratic legitimacy

by bringing the city's moral and spiritual diversity into the open, where it can be discussed, appreciated, and consulted with rather than denied.

For Dublin, the opportunity is immediate. The data and testimonies gathered here justify a pilot model of structured engagement between faith-based communities, Dublin City Council, and the NEIC Initiative. Such a model would not require major funding. What it would demand is a confidence – from all sides – that the partnership is legitimate.

7.1.7 How Integration Happens

Integration is not achieved when every migrant has a PPS number. It is achieved when newcomers and locals can imagine their futures as brighter together. Faith-based communities do this imaginative work daily. They tell stories of hope, interpret suffering, and frame belonging in ethically rich ways. Their contribution cannot be reduced to "service delivery." It is the patient cultivation of civic meaning.

If Ireland's integration policy is to reflect the reality on the streets, it must consider this holistic horizon. There is no risk of a return to confessional privileges being extended to one tradition at the expense of others. What lies before us is the possibility of recognising the simple reality that faith continues to shape the rhythms of life for many in our city. Engaging this positively creates the context to develop solidarities within these communities, between these communities, and with the wider society which can only help Dublin to flourish.

7.2 Recommendations

The preceding analysis leads to a set of practical recommendations for policymakers, civic partners, and community leaders. These are summarised in the below infographic (see Figure 10 below). Each proposal is modest in scale but high in potential return, designed to strengthen recognition, communication, and collaboration between faith-based communities and statutory agencies in the north-east inner-city and the wider city. Together they form an incremental roadmap made of small steps that, taken collectively, can deepen trust and widen participation across the area's rich diversity of faith and culture.

Figure 10: Six Steps to Support Faith-Based Communities

7.3 Final Reflection

The research points towards a simple insight: partnership with faith-based communities offers proximity to policy. Ultimately, what is presented here is a set of "easy asks": listening, dialogue, and local interventions to reach people where they are at. The practical steps proposed in the previous chapter are instruments of proximity. But their core significance lies less in what they might achieve administratively but in what they would secure symbolically. They would signal that faith communities (by which, ultimately, we mean their members) belong within the civic conversation about this city's future.

Considering the argument presented in this report, it may be appropriate to close with language that might be more familiar in a worshipping space than a civic chamber. But what is proposed here is that the official organs of Dublin City have fallen short of their own standards. They have preached about welcoming diversity but overlooked one of the major sources of diversity in our city. The remedy to this shortcoming cannot be reduced to a policy plan. It requires a conversion of sorts and the cultivation of specific virtues.

The virtue that would allow official bodies to recognise the contributions that these communities are making is called "attentiveness" and it is understood in all the major religious traditions of an expression of love. The virtue that would allow official bodies to recognise that effective integration can only be strengthened by engaging those communities that can reach where the State can't, is called "humility", and the major religious traditions see it as the ground of wisdom. The virtue that allows official bodies to imagine a Dublin where plural worshipping practices and beliefs is seen not as a challenge to cohesion but as its condition is "imagination", and all the major religious traditions grant it a central place in how social harmony is achieved.

These habits – as any pastor, imam, or priest will tell you – practiced over time, will transform an individual from the inside-out. Is it unreasonable to suggest that our city would be stronger if we could recognise the truth in such approaches?

While the challenges faced by the north-east inner-city are unique, there is a sense in which the patterns at play here can be found all over Ireland. Resilience amid hardship, solidarity amid change, and a fundamental openness to new opportunities is common across our nation's cities, towns, and villages. Each faith-based community embodies that story in miniature. They remind us that social cohesion is not engineered from above but nurtured in rooms where people sing, share food, and pray together.

To walk across the north-east inner-city without passing a faith-based community is difficult. To plan for its renewal without engaging them is impossible. If Dublin is to remain a city of welcomes, it must see its faith communities not as holdovers, or as guests, but as neighbours. They are co-builders of the common good, bearers of hope, and indispensable partners in shaping a city worthy of all who call it home.

Appendices

Power of God Ministries

Appendix 1 - Census 2022 Analysis: North-East Inner-City

The "official" NEIC boundary as understood by Government departments and statutory organisations broadly consists of 88 small areas in the Census 2022 (see Figure 11 below). While not a perfect replication of the official boundaries, it can provide some insight into the ethnic diversity of the area.

The data contained in this appendix does not have lofty ambitions. It is not for planning or organisational purposes. There are many issues with the completeness of census data in Ireland, particularly for migrants and the Traveller Community. The purpose of this appendix is, by providing a snapshot, demonstrate the diversity of the north-east inner-city, and the intra-diversity of the areas within.

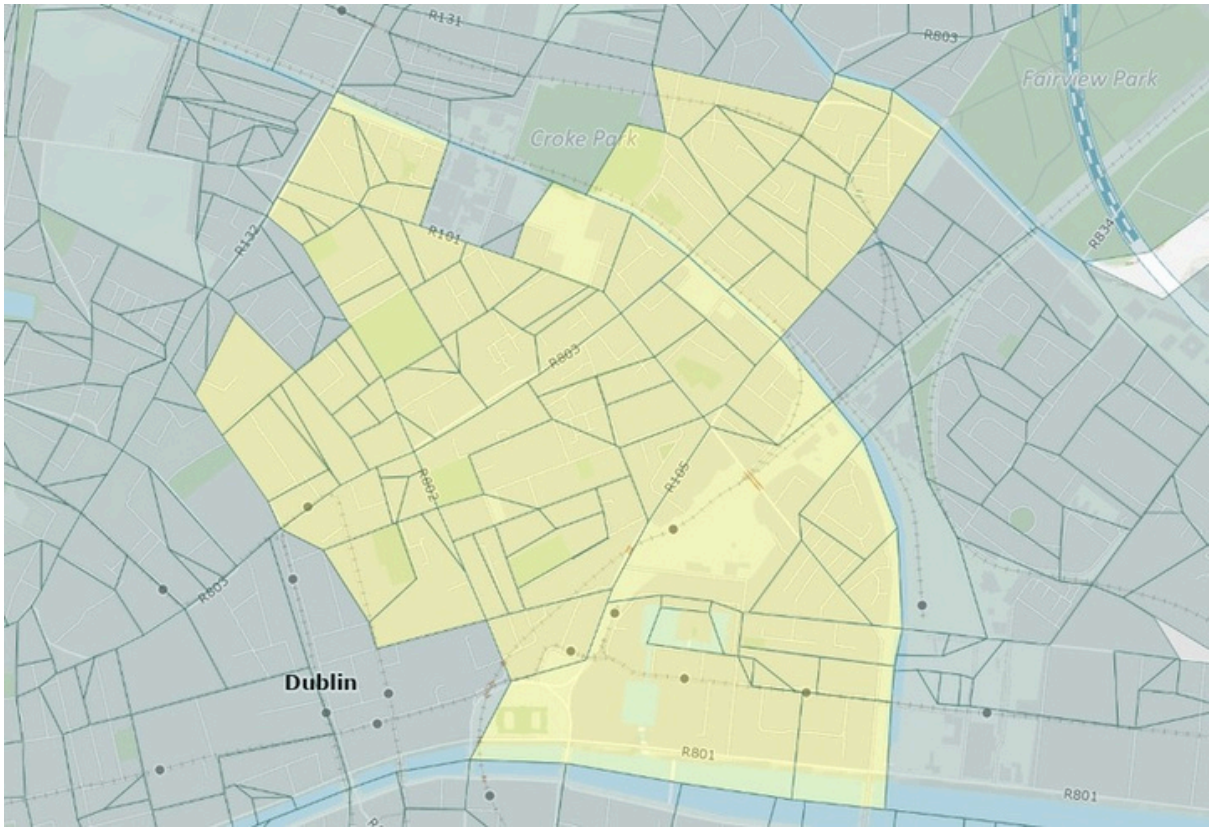


Figure 11: North-East Inner-City Small Areas, Census 2022

On the night of the census, there were a total of 27,118 residents in the 88 small areas. There were 13,987 males and 13,011 females.

[232] Small Areas were first published for Census 2011 and were designed as the lowest level of geography for the compilation of statistics and typically contain between 50 and 200 dwellings.

[233] Census 2022 captured those resident in an area on the night of Sunday, 3rd April 2022. There are consistently low completion rates of the census in the north-east inner-city and this has implications for what conclusions can be drawn. In relation to this particular research, some members of faith-based communities worship within the NEIC, while others leave the area very weekend to worship outside at faith-based communities we have not identified, which challenged the particularly Catholic understanding and experience of worship, exemplified in the "parish" that dominates thinking in Ireland.

In Table 5 below, there is a breakdown of the available CSO categories based on birthplace. Those born in Ireland (47.7%) remain the largest cohort, but residents from "Rest of World" constitute 25.4 % and those from India alone make up 4.2%.

Most people in Ireland are located within a homogenous framework – born in Ireland, white-Irish, Roman Catholic and Irish citizens. Anyone who is not one of these things is "different." With many families who moved to Ireland in the 1990s, now into their second and third generations, it is vital more than ever that being "Irish" and "white" are not essentialised together in meaning. Ethnicity, citizenship, and religion are too in flux for rigid categorisations.

Table 5: Place of Birth in North-East Inner-City, Census 2022

Place of Birth in North-East Inner-City, Census 2022

Place of Birth	Nunber	%
Ireland	12,947	47.7%
United Kingdom	666	2.5%
Poland	469	1.7%
India	1,126	4.2%
EU27 (excl. Ireland and Poland)	3,537	13.0%
Rest of World	6,885	25.4%
Incomplete	1,488	5.5%

Table: Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice • Source: CSO • Created with Datawrapper

Table 6 below provides a selection of 14 of the small areas to reflect the diversity of streets and areas within the north-east inner-city. For example, numbers 1 to 3 represent areas where over 90% of the residents were born in Ireland. While numbers 4 to 6 highlight area where those born in Ireland is less than 20% and residents born in the "Rest of World" is almost half.

Migrants tend to follow where their co-ethnics live in a host country and this is possibly the case with small areas 7 to 9, as the proportion of residents born in India hovers around 20%. Small area 10 represent an area where residents born in "Rest of World" is two-thirds of the total residents. While numbers 12 to 14 display the areas with the highest proportion of residents born in the EU27 (excl. Ireland and Poland).

Table 6: Selected Small Areas in North-East Inner-City, Census 2022

Selected Small Areas in North-East Inner-City, Census 2022

Percentages are based on completed Census 2022 data.

No.	SAP Code	%Ireland	%India	%Other EU27	%Rest of World
1	A268009009	97.5%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%
2	A268104007	95.1%	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%
3	A268109005	93.8%	3.1%	0.8%	1.2%
4	A268105011	17.3%	12.8%	19.0%	46.5%
5	A268105010	19.6%	3.2%	25.1%	45.0%
6	A268138001	19.7%	9.9%	17.2%	51.5%
7	A268109007	34.5%	21.6%	12.9%	25.7%
8	A268109008	35.4%	16.5%	16.0%	20.8%
9	A268109009/A268109018	36.5%	16.4%	14.1%	25.4%
10	A268104003	28.1%	1.1%	4.0%	65.8%
11	A268138014	24.7%	0.3%	17.2%	55.3%
12	A268104006	23.7%	10.4%	36.0%	24.2%
13	A268105003	25.4%	3.6%	33.3%	33.3%
14	A268105016/01	20.9%	4.6%	30.6%	37.2%

Categories will not add up to 100% as a number of categories have been excluded for clarity.

Table: Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice • Source: CSO • Created with Datawrapper

Finally, and interestingly, when those born in India, EU27 and Rest of World are collapsed together into a single category, they represent over 50% of the residents in 41 of the total 88 small areas in the north-east inner-city.

Appendix 2 - Information Form for Research Participants

Section A: The Research Project

Title of Project: Faith-Based Communities in the Life of the North East Inner City

1. What is the purpose?

The aim of this research project is to map and understand the role of faith-based communities in helping the integration of migrants, refugees, and immigrants in the North East Inner City of Dublin.

2. Who are the researchers?

The research team are members of three different organisations — ACET Ireland, Dublin City Interfaith Forum, and the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice — in the area.

The team members are:

- Richard Carson, CEO, ACET Ireland;
- Adrian Cristea, Executive Officer, Dublin City Interfaith Forum;
- Sophie Manaeva, Research Assistant, Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice;
- Dr Kevin Hargaden, Social Theologian, Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice;
- Keith Adams, Researcher, Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice.

3. Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been approached as a person who is either involved directly with a faith-based community or has an interest in the role of faith and integration in society.

4. How many people will be asked to take part?

Around 20 one-on-one interviews will be conducted by the team

5. Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part in the research project. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to end your participation at any point.

6. Will I be identifable in the project?

No, all interviews are confidential and your name and role will be removed from the final report.

7. How is the research project overseen?

An oversight group consisting of three people— Siobhán Garrigan, Noel Wardwick, and Maria Elena Costa Sa —will provide guidance to team and ensure the research is carried out to a high quality.

8. What will happen to the results of the study?

The research team aims to provide a short report with recommendations to Dublin City councillors based on the findings. The findings will also be used for academic papers and presentations.

Contact for further information:

Richard Carson, ACET Ireland
Mobile: 086 048 2094 Email: richard.c@acet.ie

1

Participants should be given a copy to keep, together with a copy of the consent form.

Section B: Your Participation in the Research Project

1. What will I be asked to do?
You will be invited to a one-on-one interview with a member of the research team which will take between 40-50 minutes.

We will ask for your views on the following areas:

- Your opinions/experiences of faith-based communities and integration;
- The needs of faith-based communities as they help migrants, refugees, and immigrants.

2. What will happen to your data?
The interviews will be audio-recorded by the interviewer and then changed into a transcript (a written account of the conversation). Your name and other identifying details will be removed. This is to protect your identity and minimise the chance of your being identified.

Your interview will be analysed by the researchers to develop an understanding of faith-based communities and integration in the NEIC. The data will be stored for twelve months after the interviews have finished to allow different ways of sharing the learning – papers, conferences etc.

3. Will I receive any payment to take part in the research?
No payments will be made for participating in the research.

4. Are there any possible disadvantages or risks to taking part?
There are minimal risks in taking part in the research. If it raises sensitive issues for you, you can pause or withdraw from the interview. Taking part does not affect your legal rights.

5. What are the likely benefits of taking part?
The research is designed to increase understanding of the lives of faith-based communities in the north east inner city, and the role they play in integration. The report to the Dublin City councillors will make recommendations about how this vital role can be supported as required.

6. Can I withdraw at any time, and how do I do this?
You can stop participating in the review at any time and without giving a reason. You can choose not to answer any question in the interview if you do not wish to.

7. Can I withdraw my data from the study?
Yes, your interview can be removed up to the point where it is being analysed (end of May 2025)

Contact details for complaints
If you have any complaints about the review, you are encouraged to contact:
Keith Adams, Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice
Mobile: 086 165 2917 Email: kadams@jcfj.ie

2

Participants should be given a copy to keep, together with a copy of the consent form.

Appendix 3 - Consent Form for Research Participants

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: _____

Title of Project: **Faith-Based Communities in the Life of the North East Inner City**

Research Team: ACET Ireland, Dublin City Interfaith Forum, and the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice.

Contact Details: Richard Carson, ACET Ireland
Mobile: 096 048 2094 Email: richard.c@acet.ie

1. I agree to take part in the above research project. I have read the Participant Information Sheet and I understand what my role will be in the research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to leave the review at any time, without giving a reason.
3. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the interview.
4. I understand what information will be collected from me for the research.
5. I understand what will happen to the data collected from me for the research.
6. I have been told about any disadvantages or risks of taking part.
7. I understand that quotes from me may be used in the research report and other papers/presentations.
8. I understand that the interview will be recorded.
9. I have been informed how my data will be processed, how long it will be kept and when it will be destroyed.
10. I understand how I can withdraw from the research project.
11. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet (dated 28th April 2025).

1

Participants should be given a copy to keep, together with a copy of the information sheet.

Participant Name (print): .....

Signed: .....

Date: .....

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY.

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please speak to the researcher or email them at kadams@jcfj.ie stating the title of the research or send them this withdrawal slip.

You do not have to give a reason for why you would like to withdraw.

Please let the researcher know whether or not you are happy for data that has been collected up to this point to still be used. You are completely free to ask for any data to also be removed should you wish it to be, as long as the data has not been analysed.

Participant Name (print): .....

Signed: .....

2

Participants should be given a copy to keep, together with a copy of the information sheet.

Appendix 4 - Interview Schedule

Interview Questions: Faith-Based Communities in Life of the NEIC

1. Member of Faith-Based Community (can be leadership or not)

Opening Questions - FBCs

Interviewer: My first question would be, can you tell me about your role in your faith community?

Interviewer: If someone asked you to describe your faith community, how would you describe it?

Interviewer: How long have you been involved with this particular faith community? How did you come to join?

Life of the FBC

Interviewer: Who are the people who come to your faith community? Are they mostly families, individuals, newcomers, long-time residents? Where do you meet as a community? Is the space you use good for your needs, or are there any challenges?

Interviewer: What kinds of things normally happen during a regular week in your community?

Follow-up: Are there any specific ministries or activities that you are involved with?

Interviewer: When your faith community has festival periods or special religious celebrations, how is this different from a normal week?

Interviewer: Lastly, in relation to the life of your faith community, outside of meeting for prayer and worship, what sorts of things do you do? How does the community celebrate important life moments like births or weddings, or mourn deaths of members?

Integration

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little more about your experience either growing up in Ireland or moving to Ireland as an adult?

Follow-up: what role did faith communities have during this time?

Interviewer: Thinking about how people join your community — especially those new to Ireland — how does the community welcome them?

Prompt, if needed: Do people learn English here, get help with papers or housing, or just feel like they belong?

1

28th April 2025

Interviewer: What are the most important things that individuals or families need when they move to Dublin?

Public Health

Interviewer: How much are you able to use space you have?

Prompt: Do you own or rent the building, or do you sublet the weekend slot from other faith-based community?

Interviewer: How do you use space to engage with the health and wellbeing needs of your congregation or the wider community?

Interviewer: Do you think the space that is available to you is adequate or appropriate to fulfil how you wish to respond to the health and wellbeing needs you encounter?

Engagement with "Official" Dublin

Interviewer: Do you think people outside your community understand what happens here?

Interviewer: How do you think the City Council, State bodies, and local services sees your community?

Interviewer: Have you had good experiences (or difficult ones) with local services or city officials?

Interviewer: If you could ask city leaders to listen to one message from your community, what would it be?

Interviewer: Thinking to the future of your faith community and the role you have in helping people to settle, is there more your faith community would like to do?

Interviewer: Are there particular needs that your faith community has at the moment that would help your ministry or activities in the north east inner city?

Closing

Interviewer: Is there anything else you would like to add, that you maybe have not had an opportunity to say?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

28th April 2025

Interview Questions: Faith-Based Communities in Life of the NEIC

2. Stakeholders (civil servants, policymakers, academics, NGO members etc.)

Opening

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your role and how your work relates to the North East Inner City?

Interviewer: Have you had any contact or experience working with faith-based communities in this area?

Understanding of Faith-Based Communities

Interviewer: What comes to mind when you think about faith-based communities in the NEIC?

Interviewer: Do you think they play an important role in the life of the community? Why or why not?

Interviewer: Who relies on these communities? What kinds of groups are involved?

Integration and Social Inclusion

Interviewer: From your perspective, how do faith-based communities help new arrivals settle into life in Dublin?

Interviewer: Are there ways you've seen them help with things like language learning, cultural navigation, or building friendships?

Interviewer: Do you think they fill gaps left by public or private services? Can you give an example?

Health, Wellbeing, and Social Services

Interviewer: Have you seen or supported any collaboration between FBCs and health or social services?

Interviewer: Do you think faith communities could be more involved in promoting wellbeing or delivering services? What might help that to happen?

Interviewer: What capacity do they have to use space?

Prompt: Do they own or rent the building, or do they sublet the weekend slot from other faith-based community?

Interviewer: Do you think the space that is available to them is adequate or appropriate to respond to the health and wellbeing needs they encounter?

Policy, Planning, and Inclusion

Interviewer: Do you think faith-based communities are visible in local planning or policy conversations?

Follow-up Question: Can you think of a time when a faith-based group was invited into — or left out of — a decision-making process?

Interviewer: Are there obstacles — practical, political, or cultural — that make partnership difficult?

Interviewer: If you could change one thing about how government or local services engage with faith communities, what would it be?

Closing

Interviewer: What do you think is the most valuable contribution that faith-based communities make in the NEIC today?

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to add about the role of faith in city life, or in building stronger communities?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

28th April 2025

Appendix 5 - Interviewer Debrief Form

Post-Interview Debrief Form

Mapping Faith-Based Communities in the NEIC

Basic Information

Interviewee Name/Code:

Date of Interview:

Location (or format): ☐ In person ☐ Phone ☐ Zoom/Online

Role of Interviewee: ☐ Faith community member ☐ Faith leader ☐ Stakeholder (specify):

Interview Quality & Flow

How comfortable did the participant seem?

☐ Very comfortable ☐ Fairly comfortable ☐ A bit hesitant ☐ Uncomfortable

Was the participant able to understand the questions easily?

☐ Yes, no issues ☐ Mostly, a few clarifications needed ☐ No, struggled with understanding

Did you need to rephrase or explain questions often?

☐ Yes ☐ Occasionally ☐ Rarely

Reflections on Content

1. What were the most interesting or surprising insights from this interview?
(*Note themes, quotes, or stories that stood out.*)

2. Did the participant raise any new themes not covered by the questions?
(*If yes, what were they?*)

3. Did any questions seem confusing, irrelevant, or particularly powerful?
(*Which ones? What would you change?*)

Notes for Analysis & Follow-up

Are there follow-up questions or people the participant recommended we speak to?

☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, details:

Any concerns about data quality, consent, or ethical issues?

☐ No concerns ☐ Yes (explain):

Final Notes

Any other observations, hunches, or notes not captured above?
(*e.g. body language, background context, environment*)

The former Welsh Church on Talbot Street was a place of worship from 1839-1939.

Disclaimer

This research project was funded by the Irish Jesuit Province and partly supported by the NEIC Initiative. Research was also conducted in partnership with the Dublin City Interfaith Forum.

JCFJ
JESUIT CENTRE
FOR FAITH & JUSTICE

The Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice is an agency of the Irish Jesuit Province.

The Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice exists to promote justice for all through theological reflection, social analysis and research, action, education, and advocacy.

Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice
54-72 Gardiner Street Upper, Dublin 1

Phone: 083 806 8026
Email: info@jcfj.ie

ACET

ACET (AIDS Care Education & Training) Ireland is a faith-based organisation in the Christian tradition operating a range of projects responding to HIV, addiction and migrant health.

The work takes place not at a distinct venue or centre but at kitchen tables, community cafés, to and from hospital appointments and with established diaspora settings, particularly faith-based communities.

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