

**Generous Love in Multi-faith Ireland:  
Towards mature citizenship and a positive pedagogy for the Church of Ireland  
in local Christian-Muslim mission and engagement**

**Abstract**

The aim of the dissertation is to identify hindrances to Christian-Muslim engagement in Church of Ireland parishes and dioceses, with a view to stimulating the future development of a contextualised teaching resource on Christian-Muslim engagement for use by clergy and laity in the Church's changing mission context. The envisioned pedagogy is a practical, Bible-based resource, in which all members of the Church can be confident. It will enable the Church in a positive praxis of intentional presence, generous engagement, witness and service towards its Muslim neighbours.

The dissertation is grounded in the theologies of *Generous Love* and *Presence and Engagement*, identified through the three theological strands undertaken in the project: Biblical, Systematic, and Pastoral. The central themes are the theologies of the kindness of God, friendship, hospitality, pardon and embrace, superabundance and gift – evident in the Trinity, Incarnation, Cross, and the Eucharist. These themes are supported by the work of Jürgen Moltmann, Miroslav Volf, Paul Ricoeur and Janet Soskice.

The dissertation straddles the fields of Missiology and History of Religions, and is influenced by Moltmann's Theology of Hope, Volf's Theology of Embrace, and by the biblical hermeneutics and theological ethics of Ricoeur (inhabiting the text, equivalence, superabundance and economy of gift). It reflects on the creative approach of 4<sup>th</sup> century saint, Ephrem the Syrian, to interpreting Scripture and teaching orthodoxy.

The research identifies as a theological concern for some Christians, the question of the oneness and plurality of God, and whether the referents 'God' and 'Allah' are to the same God though differently understood. It considers the contribution of Volf and others to this debate. It considers the theology and eirenic praxis of Christians who engaged with Muslims in the early Islamic world, including Francis of Assisi. It identifies as a personal spiritual concern for Christians over local Christian-Muslim engagement today, the desire to be faithful in their allegiance to Jesus Christ, to his uniqueness, divinity, and status and identity as Lord. It identifies concerns for clergy as relating to the theological concerns, and to pastoral issues arising from the possibility of the conversion or marriage of their parishioners.