

ABSTRACT

Title: This dissertation will examine the extent to which intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence the engagement of a parish with the process of reconciliation in its local context, local context being specifically urban, rural and cross-border.

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This dissertation highlights why reconciliation is foundational to the Christian Church and its mission. In this dissertation the term 'local church' refers to the Church of Ireland. This research will examine how local Church of Ireland churches can secure peace and help their communities to engage in reconciliation. This examination will be done theologically, biblically and practically; and highlights the commitment to reconciliation that is essential for all disciples of Jesus Christ. It identifies why the local church is key to reconciliation in a society emerging from conflict and identifies key factors that enable reconciliation of people as both individuals and communities.

Chapter one seeks to set the context and methodology, Chapter two defines the terms *sectarianism* and *reconciliation* within a Northern Ireland context using biblical and theological insights, and gives specific attention to the ecclesiological work of Miroslav Volf as well as Liechty, Clegg, and Brewer *et al.* who write in the specific Northern Irish context.

Chapter three examines the Pauline texts specific to 'the ministry of reconciliation' and uses the work of Beverley Gaventa as a framework. The remainder of the dissertation focuses on the case studies, which were completed within Church of Ireland churches in urban, cross-border and rural contexts, and their analysis and evaluation; and the final chapter offer conclusions, observations, reflections and future directions.

This research is a biblical, theological and practical study of the local churches' engagement with reconciliation in Northern Ireland. The conclusions reached are based on academic insights and the experiences of local churches in relation to reconciliation and engagement with peace-making and peace-keeping in a society emerging from conflict.