Expressing love of God and neighbour: The use of pastoral care practices at four, church-based, intercultural initiatives

Introduction

This article describes major findings from a study of volunteers and staff at four, church-based, intercultural initiatives in Melbourne. These were two, weekly, church-based English conversation classes for migrants, a sewing club for refugee women, and a church-based training school enabling new migrants to find employment as child- care workers. Few studies have been conducted about what takes place at similar, church-based projects. While this study, based on my PhD research (Holdsworth, 2022), specifically concerns intercultural initiatives, the conclusions are broadly applicable to any church-based programs.

The study investigated how love of God and neighbour was expressed by the volunteers and staff during initiative sessions and how this love might be expressed more effectively. I studied what participants believed they were doing and what they were actually doing. I also wanted to understand their motivations for service. I expected to observe love of God expressed toward attendees through loving actions and words, strengthened through prayer and training.

Ethnographic methods were used, including participant observation, interviewing, and document searches. Findings are discussed in conversation with pastoral care literature. This study makes a clear case that expressions of love of God and neighbour are strengthened when principles and practices of pastoral care are employed.

Context of the Study and the emerging research question

Australia is one of the most multicultural countries in the world (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). For the year ending June 2019, 239,000 people migrated to Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). This was reflected in the fact that migrants and refugees from China, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, and Iran were all represented at the four initiatives studied.

Adapting to Australian society is challenging for migrants with little or no English. Many migrants discover that their qualifications are not recognised, preventing work in their trade, skill, or specialization, leaving migrants feeling stressed and isolated (McAllister,1995, p. 441-68). These trends were evident at the initiatives, and specific 'living difficulties' were the focus of each church-based project, focused on empowerment through the provision of a service.

I have worked amongst, and been a member of, diaspora communities in Europe, the United States, South Korea, and Australia and I have been a member of three international missions. My experiences led me to the research question that sought to understand the dynamics taking place during initiatives sessions and the wider contexts that informed this.

The four congregations

Swindon Baptist is a large, multi- congregational church in an affluent, multicultural Melbourne suburb. Every Tuesday morning a team of ten volunteers conducted conversation classes for new migrants. Everyone would gather in a room to hear a talk in simple English about an aspect of life in Melbourne. Attendees were then assigned to tutors who conducted small, hour long classes in different rooms in the building. Participants were observed once a week for fourteen weeks, to understand how love of God and neighbour was expressed by participants to those attending. Interviews with participants took place over several weeks, immediately following classes. I attended nine church services, one tutor's social event, one newcomer's event and three teaching training sessions for new tutors. Three of the pastoral staff were interviewed, plus the founder of the English program. Attending other church events and interviewing church staff provided thick data (a term coined by Geertz, 1973) and context for the study.

The study of the sewing club at St Nicholas Anglican Church was the smallest, with only four volunteers remaining by the end of the research period, indicating a need for further studies. The club aimed to meet practical needs of the many Muslim refugee women living locally, through the provision of sewing equipment for a few hours each week. The club had run for over twelve years at the time of the study.

Sewing machines were set up at a large table in a community room on the housing estate where the women lived and where the congregation met for worship. The women would arrive with their fabrics to be sewn, waiting until a machine became available. To understand the context of the club within church life, I attended three church services, one church community meal, a planning meeting for a camp provided annually for the local residents, and a post-camp debriefing session. Interviews were conducted with each sewing club volunteer and the pastor. The sewing club was observed over seven visits.

Govan Church of Christ is situated in a highly multicultural, largely blue-collar suburb, in Melbourne's north. English conversation classes had run on Saturday mornings for several years and had commenced in response to need. Tables were set up in the main sanctuary, one for each volunteer tutor and attendees chose where they sat. Migrants did not need to sign up for classes and attended when they could. Most tutors volunteered twice a month. Classes lasted for one and a half hours with a break for refreshments. Seventeen observations in classes meant each participant was observed on at least three or four occasions. I attended one Sunday service and additional data came from sampling past church bulletins which provided information about church events, and pastoral concerns. Nine volunteers and the pastor were interviewed, in addition to observations during classes.

Hope International is a very large, multicultural Pentecostal church in an outer northern suburb, in an area with many recent migrants. Northern Training is a government accredited training school run by members of Hope International. Many of the local migrant population needed to retrain for work in Australia and market research done by church members had indicated that childcare was in growing demand. In response, church leaders decided to start the training school to enable new migrants to obtain employment. Students were mostly young women from the Indian sub-continent, as were most staff. Most staff (participants), known as trainers, held professional qualifications which, as migrants, they could not use in Australia. They had therefore trained to teach child- care to these students as an expression of hospitality and care for local residents. Lessons took place in a part of the church dedicated to the training school and students attended for one full day a week, over one semester. Observations of classes were conducted on most weekdays, over

three months. One graduation service was attended plus three visits to worship services. All participants were interviewed, plus two pastors, a total of eight interviews.

Literature review

Love of God and neighbour cannot be quantified, but its outworkings are apparent. Pastoral care practices can be described as loving others well. The foundations and practices of pastoral care provide a framework for assessing expressions of love of God and neighbour by participants at church-based, intercultural initiatives. It also offers a framework for the development of pastoral care skills at the initiatives.

Hospitable practices align closely with pastoral care in the contexts of this study. Doehring focuses on the nature of interpersonal relationships and suggests that the 'process of stepping respectfully and compassionately into another's narrative world can be described with the metaphor of hospitality.' (Doehring, 2015, xvii). This defining metaphor sits well with the intention and practices of each initiative, where contexts and participants immediately present cross-cultural challenges.

Building on the work of Clebsch and Jaekle (1964), Lartey identified the pastoral functions of care, including healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling, nurturing, liberating, and empowering (2003, pp. 60-68). The nurturing theme emerged in Clinebell's pastoral counselling era and later, in his work on prophetic care (Clinebell, 1979). These functions are all outworkings of love.

Lartey notes that healing, in pastoral terms, can occur in contexts of care. It "involves a recognition and a facilitation of the activity of the 'transcendent in the midst' of life." (2003, p. 62). Active listening and empathic responses can create healing relationships (Clinebell and McKeever, 2011, chapter 2), and sustaining care means helping a person endure difficulties (Clebsch and Jaekle, 194, p. 89). Augsburger's 'theology of presence' speaks to these forms of care, aiming to provide sustenance through genuine companionship, always a key aspirational dimension of some workers in the initiatives (1986, p. 18). Guidance is defined by Lartey as helping people discover their latent skills, a goal accepted readily in each skill-based program studied. Lartey notes that healing can occur even when it is not a primary

aim. Embodied listening supports the creation of a nurturing environment that enables and empowers.

Practices of intercultural and pastoral care, as expressions of love, bring additional dimensions of complexity of care of others. Lartey suggests that the discipline of pastoral care is becoming tailored to the global situations of practice, recognising that Western paradigms are not necessarily applicable or effective in different cultural contexts. Doehring highlights the need for a “radical respect for alterity.” She encourages intercultural spiritual caregivers (which includes pastoral care) to draw on “their theological education, practical training, and ongoing relationships with peers, mentors, and supervisors to reflect theologically and psychologically on… [their] encounters with otherness.” (Doehring, 2015, p. 3). This statement critically anticipates a formational gap within the profile of study participants, sets a potential agenda for supervision and training, and offers a template of themes for data analysis.

Lartey describes the intercultural pastoral carer as needing to progress from sympathy, (often counterproductive) to empathy, to interpathy (2003, pp. 91-4). Augsburger’s definition captures the movement that needed to emerge across the sites, through formation and reflective practice if possible. He revisits and extends comment on interpathy by identifying the core dynamic of this shift in affect as

> an intentional cognitive envisioning of another’s thoughts and feelings, even though the thoughts rise from another frame of moral reasoning and the feelings spring from another basis of assumptions… I (the culturally different person) take a foreign perspective, base my thoughts on a foreign assumption, and allow myself to feel the resultant feelings and their cognitive and emotive consequences in personality as I inhabit, insofar as I am capable of inhabiting, a foreign context. (Augsburger, 1986, p. 29-30).

This anticipates the importance of discovering the ability of participants to engage with difference and their levels of understanding of other worldviews.

Spirituality for Pastoral Care

Nurturing spirituality is an important practice for pastoral carers. Links between love of God and care for those attending the initiatives needed discerning through their words and actions. Lartey provides a thematic structure for an understanding of Christian spirituality that offers criteria that can allow actions or behaviours to be categorized. Relationships with *transcendence* refers to a participant's relationship with God, intra-personal spirituality concerns participants' relationship to self, and interpersonal relationships refer to one-on-one relationships with attendees and other participants. The fourth dimension outlined by Lartey is relationships *among people*, which aligns with relationships amongst the teams studied (2003, pp. 140-41). The fifth dimension, relationship with space, was not considered relevant to this study. These themes align closely with interpersonal dynamics of expressions of love and contain potential guidance for data analysis.

These dimensions complement the three dimensions of spirituality outlined by Nouwen (1975, pp. 21-49), who expresses Lartey's interpersonal and corporate dimensions as a single category. Nouwen's categories offer a clear picture of the workings of inner life and motivation: towards and into self, towards others, and towards God. Both Lartey and Nouwen present nurturing spirituality as vital for effective care of others and their arguments indicate that participant activities in the study need to be evaluated as to whether they are grounded and nurtured by individual and corporate relationships in partnership with God.

Methodology

Parameters for the study were: A church that regularly and historically planned and implemented a community initiative that attracted people from migrant cultures. Regularity provided a planned timetable for engagement, while practice over time establishes patterns of behaviour amongst participants who each develop understandings of attendees and their own roles. All the initiatives studied had been running for at least a few years.

I sought to study initiatives with volunteer staff largely made up of church members. Participants were expected to represent church core narratives and express the

relationships formed through the life of the church. Volunteers were initially sought, as they are normally the members who staff church-based initiatives. Northern Training, however, employed staff. I flexed the study parameters in this instance, as the origins of the training school were like the other initiatives, in that church members wanted to meet a local need for migrants as a way of expressing care. Most staff at Northern Training attended the church at which the school was based. I required participants previously unknown to me, as I did not want to enter the field with existing biases. Permission of the pastor or church leaders was required as an ethical requirement for conducting research.

I sought to study different denominations. This created the possibility of noting differences in outlook based on doctrinal beliefs, although insufficient data was collected in this regard to draw any conclusions. I required a minimum of six study participants for each location. Six was considered the minimum number of participants for providing sufficient data to generate emerging theories, which could be tested at subsequent sites. This number was admittedly arbitrary and, as necessary, further locations would be required for data generation. Only four completed the study at St Nicholas indicating the need for further study.
A willingness for participants to participate in one-on-one interviews was an important consideration. Only two participants overall did not participate in interviews, due to personal circumstances. These were both at Govan. Interviews provided thick data for analysis as did church documents.

Research Design and Methods

An ethnographic approach, including participant observation, enabled full access to the phenomena studied and allowed for detailed observation and note-taking. Helen Cameron and Catherine Duce suggest that participant observation is clearly an appropriate method for ethnographic research (2013, p. 51). Charmaz believes that participant observation may limit focus to one aspect of daily life (a fair critique), while ethnographers seek to understand the complexities of life in the studied phenomena (Charmaz, 2014, p. 35). This limitation was overcome by using the following methods.

I collected as full a picture as possible of participants as possible until no new data was emerging. This usually took many weeks. I sought understand the situations from the participants viewpoint as well as my own, an important distinction in ethnographic research (Schensul et al 2013, chapter 1). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants after several weeks of observations. Church services and other church activities were attended and interviews with pastors and church leaders were conducted. Searches through church records were also conducted where possible (Schwandt, 2007, p. 296). This all provided thick data and context for understanding participants and significant themes within church life.

Data was analysed in an iterative process, both during and following immersion in the fieldwork settings and constant comparisons of data were also made within each situation. Study of the four locations were sequential. Findings from the first situation challenged findings from the second and subsequent locations. In this manner, hypotheses were built, tested at subsequent locations, dropped where necessary, and developed into theory where findings were consistent at all sites.

Data from observations, interviews, and research of church archives were all coded. Coding of data produced tentative categories which were refined and reinforced at subsequent locations. For example, the category ‘skills’ emerged from analysis of coding. This category included findings regarding skills for conducting the service offered to migrants in addition to interpersonal relating skills observed, both positive and negative.

Theoretical sampling was used, and I explored links between motivations for volunteering and how participants interacted with those attending (Holton, 2007, pp. 275-77; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, pp. 128-150). For instance, I sought to learn whether participants experienced joy in relating, and whether they celebrated others. This was especially important given contrasting findings from the first two locations, Swindon, and St Nicholas.

Interviews

Interviews only commenced after observations had been conducted for numerous sessions. The delay allowed participants to become accustomed to a researcher

being present and to develop rapport. This also afforded time to formulate questions around topics emerging from observations. Interview questions were grounded in observations and developing hypotheses. They were semi-structured, and participants were encouraged to talk about anything to do with the initiatives, to prevent forcing the data. Such methods give participants a voice and act as a corrective to the researcher's insight (Silverman, 2007, pp. 18-24).

Structured questions asked what participants considered to be the purpose of the initiative and what motivated them to volunteer. Questions pertaining to intercultural understanding indicated when participants might need further training to express love of God and neighbour effectively. Participants were asked whether they had learned from attendees, indicating whether relationships had any degree of mutuality.

Questions about participant's spirituality explored degrees to which faith was thought to interact with volunteering, as motivation or through words and actions. Questions included asking whether the team prayed together and explored connections between faith and service.

Participant responses to these questions were analysed together with data from observations and document searches. This provided triangulation of data. Findings from these approaches to data collection are outlined in the following section.

Findings

Coding was compared iteratively as the study progressed, and three rounds of coding at each location resulted in the creation of three categories. These accounted for the data from all locations and were expressions of love, motivations, and skills. Each category was multi-faceted and included both positive and negative aspects.

The methods of data collection and analysis outlined in the previous section revealed links between church teachings, through sermons, bulletins and some church meetings, and participant behaviour. For example, "welcoming others in the name of Jesus," was a phrase often spoken by the pastor at Swindon, during sermons, other meetings, as recorded in the minutes, and in church bulletins. Participants at the English classes there appeared pre-disposed to welcome the students and none

questioned the importance of welcoming them. I identified this welcome of strangers as a church core narrative — a belief central to the life of the congregation.

Love was often expressed practically and directly to those attending the initiatives. In a friendly learning environment, for example, participants gave time and individual attention to students, another example of the practice of presence. Empathy was often evident and numerous other codes effectively indicated “empathy in action,” for example, “reassuring students” and “giving emotional support.” These actions speak to Lartey’s exploration of sustaining care (2003, pp. 63-4). Students at Northern Training knew what the trainers were thinking, while also knowing that they cared, enabling an open, honest environment that encouraged a deeper level of relationships.

Love was expressed to Swindon initiative attendees when tutors met in a local park with them and their families and when one participant invited two students to share Christmas with her family. Participants at Northern Training regularly provided practical and emotional support. They made themselves available to students by phone and by providing meals and practical support to sick students. These actions will have reinforced expressions of love during classroom sessions.

At St Nicholas, codes created in the coding category “expressions of love,” indicated a willingness to pro-actively love others by volunteering at the classes, based in a genuine interest in others. This also resonates with Augsburger’s theology of presence noted above. This group prayed together before the service each week and prayer was mentioned often, a behaviour indicative of both love of God and others.

The commitment and faithfulness of participants at the sewing club over many years was seen as a pro-active form of intentional loving, as were cultural adaptations by participants, such as sensitivity to style of dress at the sewing club. Many instances of displays of interest in the migrant women were recorded generally and participants at times reflected that they saw the women as individual personalities. Additionally, many instances of expressions of love were recorded, such as when a volunteer gave medications to one woman. Kindness, amongst other ‘fruit of the Spirit,’ was

evidenced multiple times (Galatians 5:22-23. NIV). Such acts of love appeared to be only one way — from participants to the migrant women, participants failing to create mutual space for the migrant women to input into their lives. It also appeared situation specific, as the women were not celebrated during interviews. This may be indicative of a project mentality amongst some participants, where expressing love during sessions was aimed at conversion. Participants did not listen to the women's stories during sessions, a possible indication that relationships were based around participants as 'givers' and migrants as 'receivers.'

Empathy and compassion are themes that fit well with the category, 'expressions of love.' Displays of empathy and care through words or actions were common. For example, in describing challenges for new migrants, Jean, a Swindon participant, said of her own overseas experience, "everything is different. Everything is strange. Not as strange as it would have been for [students], but nevertheless, there's an issue of coming into a new culture." Another striking moment in which empathy was conveyed, was when I observed a Swindon participant convey empathy through a warm smile for a struggling student.

An example of hospitality, another expression of love, was shown at Govan through the friendliness of participants and a relaxed atmosphere during classes, demonstrating interest in students, and conveying love and care to them. Compassion for students was expressed often during interviews. For example, one participant indicated she appreciated the difficulties of students who arrived in Australia speaking no English. Her compassion resulted in the initiation of the church-based conversation classes.

Higher- level thinking about love was indicated during interviews and observed in practice. This was demonstrated when a Swindon participant related how her experiences of working amongst overwhelmed overseas university students helped her appreciate the living difficulties of any migrants.

Love was expressed positively through faithful attendance at initiatives and warm interactions with attendees at all locations, while for some, love was expressed

through talking about God during sessions. Love occasionally failed, as when one participant lost her temper with an attendee. It also failed when participants spoke during interviews of people women attending an initiative as “difficult” and said they worked on “tough ground.” In this situation, I did not record participants speaking of the people attending in kind or terms or attempting to understand their lives and difficulties.

The category ‘motivations’ included findings regarding motivations for service at the initiatives, and motivations regarding evangelistic engagement during sessions. These varied significantly. Sewing club participants were motivated for evangelism, while most at Swindon and Govan were opposed to this. One participant was motivated to make friends with other church members who also volunteered at the Swindon English classes, while another participant wanted to care for new migrants, as she had known many lonely overseas students when working for a university, an expression of empathy.

Skills for service also varied widely amongst participants. A few were found to possess low levels of interpersonal skills, such as the participant who constantly talked about herself during English classes. Another expressed frustration to his beginner English students at their rudimentary level of English. This was a demonstration of a low level of relating skills, at least in that instance. While participants at Northern Training were necessarily skilled to deliver an accredited qualification child-care, most tutors at Govan and Swindon English classes had received little or no training.

The three categories created through coding interact well with the principles and practices of pastoral care. For example, expressing love, empathy, and compassion, are foundational practices for pastoral carers (Doehring, 2015, pp. xvi). Motivations for service can be examined through reflective practices, an important pastoral care practice (Schieb, 2014, pp. 705-17), although opportunities for this were largely absent. Spirituality is a foundation for pastoral care (Lartey, 2003, pp. 140-41) and should also be for Christians who are providing a church-based initiative with an aim of providing care.

The functions of care listed by Lartey were all apparent at the initiatives (2003, p. 35). Healing was made possible to lonely migrants through the compassionate and

regular provision of a service, such as at the initiatives studied. Sustaining care was offered to homesick migrants and a form of guidance was offered to students at Northern Training, as staff enabled them to dig into personal resources to forge a new future through employment. As people from different countries and cultures grew to know and love one another, as was apparent at Northern Training, reconciliation between ethnicities occurred. Nurture was apparent at all four locations, as participants offered potentially life enhancing skills and the sewing equipment necessary for the African women to thrive. Liberating care includes helping others liberate themselves from unhelpful mindsets (Lartey, p. 40). This was enacted through the help and patience of tutors at Swindon who helped struggling students believe they were capable of learning English. Attendees at all four initiatives were potentially empowered, through gaining skills or making culturally appropriate clothes to wear.

Spirituality for expressing love of God and neighbour.

Where spirituality was nurtured in participants, it was reflected at the initiatives, during interviews, in church bulletins, and meeting minutes. In some cases, this was limited to an individualistic journey that hindered a sense of group identity and resulted in a lack of prayer, planning, and reflection together. This was the case at Govan, where participants did not pray or plan together and where the weekly church bulletin had a strong bias toward including articles about aspects of individual discipleship. This bias was apparent in the manner of relating between participants and missed Lartey's spiritual category of being *among people* (2003, p. 141). For instance, group spirituality at Northern Training created a sense of unity and a sense of connection between faith and service. This was evident in the use of the word 'family' used by several participants, to describe their relationships. This was reinforced by stories indicating participants knew each other well and practically supported each other.

'Overt expressions of spirituality' emerged as a sub-category of 'expressing love' at Northern Training, the first setting where this happened. Within this sub-category, prayer was discussed during interviews, occurred amongst staff, and occasionally with individual students. Christian staff spoke easily of their perceptions of God working in the training school and their responses to this. Love of God was therefore

easily discernable at this location and participants displayed loving attitudes to other staff and students.

Almost all Swindon participants attended the church. None, however, spoke of their Christian faith during interviews, unless directly asked, and then only indirectly when asked how their faith motivated them. Research journal notes mused of a spiritual element at Swindon, ‘God has gone underground!’ Spiritual nurture was present at this location, but I needed to dig deep to discover it through interviews and noting attendance amongst the volunteers at church services.

Missing elements of pastoral care at the four locations

Some elements of pastoral care were not noted at the four locations, and these might have enabled expressions of love of God and neighbour during sessions. Prayer amongst participants was absent at two locations, along with any form of group meetings. Group reflective practice and supervision, formal or informal, was absent at all locations. An exception was the ongoing professional formation of staff at Northern Training. Interpathy was not noted at any location, although it may have featured.

Levels of self-awareness, which can be nurtured through reflective practice, were varied amongst participants at each location. Self-awareness is an important skill for pastoral care practitioners (Queensland Health, 2010). For example, some teachers at both English classes possessed low levels of self- awareness, dominating conversation. Others made space for their students to speak, while giving focused attention and using non-verbal communication. One volunteer at the St Nicholas sewing club reflected on her ability to express love, correlating with my own observations of her quiet, gentle interactions with the women attending, while another volunteer failed to recognize that her frequent talk prevented the women from sharing about their own lives. Spirituality was not nurtured amongst any participants in a team setting.

Discussion

Lartey defines pastoral care as “an expression of human concern through activities.” (2003, pp. 26). The four initiatives aimed to address human concerns through activities, ranging from learning English to assisting integration into Australian life, or training childcare workers hopeful of employment. The following discussion seeks to explore vital elements of pastoral care principles and practice in relation to the initiatives studied.

Empathy and compassion

Empathy and compassion are strong themes to have emerged from the data. Lartey suggests that empathy has “three characteristics…a *feeling* (affective) level, a *thinking* (cognitive) level and a *tendency to action* (conative) level (2003, pp. 25-26). Empathy then, is a way of being with other people, which enters into how it feels like to be who they are.” (Lartey, 2003, p. 92). A cognitive level of empathy might be discerned if volunteers match caring words and actions to specific needs and difficulties of migrants. A conative level of empathy is apparent simply through faithful volunteering at initiatives and when care is extended at other times, such as when a Swindon participant helped her student make a hospital appointment.

For Doehring, the intercultural dimensions of “empathy and compassion play a central role in pastoral and spiritual care. Empathy involves imaginatively stepping into another person’s emotional experience while remaining aware of and anchored in one’s own emotional state.” (2015, pp. 39-40). Teaching these concepts to participants and volunteers at other, similar, church-based initiatives has potential to result in relationships with attendees that communicate care and understanding. Environments of care are created when initiative attendees are empowered for change. This includes learning skills taught at initiatives or life changes, either directly through interactions with volunteers or because of improved self-esteem as a consequence of secure, loving relations with them. Maintaining boundaried emotional involvement with students facing crises is a skill that can be learned through supervision, group reflection, or teaching sessions. This helps prevent volunteers from overextending themselves beyond physical, emotional, or spiritual capacities.

Interpathy was the next learning bridge to be crossed when participants described their feelings or experiences. For westerners raised into a worldview that often implies that Western culture is superior, this may be a particular pastoral formation challenge. Developing interpathy will not happen overnight and this necessitates ongoing formation through group work and training. Church leaders may need to learn this concept for effective supervision of volunteer groups in intercultural settings.

A friendly and welcoming environment

A commitment to friendship and journeying together (to varying degrees dependent on context) is a realistic expectation of Christian practice in similar intercultural, church-based initiatives that welcomes others into their lives. These are practices reflected in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37), which calls Christians to care beyond the boundaries of race, religion, or status. Hospitality creates potential for mutuality, friendship and community, and all initiatives held potential for long lasting friendships and community-building. The biblical and pastoral theme of hospitality amongst Christians served to identify aspects of hospitality noted at each project (Isaiah 58:7; Titus 1:8). Warmly welcoming students as they arrive at initiative sessions is a simple act easily overlooked if volunteers are busy or engaged talking with each other. Welcome is expressed through taking an interest in the lives of students through carefully listening to them, perhaps as they speak in broken English, or whatever the local language might be. Hospitality expressed through the provision of food and drinks enjoyed by attendees — green tea for Chinese migrants, for example — displays thoughtful care which implies a willingness of volunteers to enter into the lives of others.

These examples demonstrate hospitality and friendship-building in a community context and should be key elements of a model of pastoral care at these and similar church-based intercultural initiatives. Deep and careful theological reflection upon this theme can inform carers as they re-assess the levels of care, they are willing or able to provide, and also reframe the focus of further training. This might be done through group work during which bible passages concerning hospitality are reflected on together. The biblical story of Mary and Martha is one such example (Luke 10:38-

42). Core church narratives of care are reinforced through preaching, home group discussions, bulletins, and during other church gatherings.

Ross describes hospitality as a two-way process in which hosts (participants) have much to learn from those at the margins and indeed become guests of the migrants attending initiatives: “Perhaps we, who inhabit the centre (however we define that), need those from the margins to confront our perceptions of reality and our understandings of our place in the world in order to uncover and unmask our own need for transformation.” (2016, chapter 6). This suggests, therefore, that pastoral care is a two-way process of hospitality that becomes a meeting point where an exchange of power teaches and empowers and holds the possibility of transformation for the carer. Relationships between church-based volunteers and migrants are to be marked by a mutuality that is important for the formation of genuine friendships. This requires a willingness to listen and learn from attendees and perhaps, more fundamentally, a realisation that Christians have much to learn from people outside the church and, at times, need their care.

We are called to invite the stranger to “a free and friendly space where he can reveal his gifts and become our friend… Really honest receptivity means inviting the stranger into our world on his or her terms, not on ours.” (Nouwen, 1975, p. 98). To do this in an intercultural setting, such as at the four initiatives, we must acknowledge and contain our tendencies towards ethnocentricity and develop listening skills, requiring self-awareness, which take us beyond empathy into interpathy (Augsburger, 1986, pp. 27-32). This necessitates education and intentional formation in growing and developing pastoral and spiritual care skills.

Clinebell outlined a “model for spirituality-centered holistic pastoral caregiving”, describing its capacity for “transformational caregiving.” He recognises the “importance of community and collaboration in a transformational model of pastoral caregiving” (2011, p. 21-22), a concept reflected, the findings suggest, in Northern Training’s very high student retention rates. The sense of community there was formed by the participants, who made themselves equally available to students. This had an impact. Teaching skills at Swindon were quite varied and yet students kept attending, as did a core number of students at Govan. Perhaps the very fact that the

tutors were volunteers, with a personal interest in the students, met a felt need for community and for relationships with Australians.

Supervision and reflective practice

It is significant that virtually all pastoral care formation literature is accompanied by reflective practice skills developed through, for example, Supervised Theological Field Education (STFE) that is generally church and parish-based (Floding, 2011, p. 1), or alternatively, Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) in healthcare and other settings that may include parish (Perry-Wallace, 2017, pp. 5-6). If pastoral and spiritual care formation incorporates such agendas, I am suggesting this should become normative for church-based volunteers. Supervision, at least on some level, should be made available, required even, of all staff and volunteers. This should include elements of spiritual care. Spiritual reflection by volunteer or (at Northern Training) staff groups, plus reflection on practical skills would have raised standards of care at all initiatives.

Spirituality for pastoral care as an expression of love

Nouwen's movements of spirituality relate closely to practices of pastoral care and are relevant to this study. These are "reaching out to our innermost self…from loneliness to solitude," thus knowing and nurturing oneself, reaching out "to our fellow human beings…from hostility to hospitality," enabling the establishment of a corporate identity between Christians and a sense of mutuality with all others. The third movement, "from illusion to prayer," acknowledges our lives as they truly are, recognises God's transcendence, and includes prayer. As most participants were Christian and all implicitly represented their sponsoring church, a Christian spirituality organised around love of, and love from, God, in the person of Christ, love of self and love of others, is the context for discussion.

Christian spirituality may not be readily discernible, as observed at Swindon. Peterson comments that, "the Christian religion…is sacramental: the visible is evidence of the invisible." (1992, 56). Care for others is, however, also a societal value and where participants did not easily speak of their faith, it was not clear whether their care for migrants was rooted in the internal and transcendent

movements of spirituality. This is a loss, in that mutual encouragement in fostering a spiritual life was absent and those attending the initiatives could be less likely to appreciate that the care they received was an expression of God's love.
The findings note that participants at Swindon were not marrying their faith journey with their care for migrants, further highlighting the importance of volunteers being encouraged to engage with, and speak of, their formational journeys, even in selection and application processes.

Greenman agrees with Nouwen, suggesting that where love of God is present, spiritual formation is in evidence:

> My definition of spiritual formation seeks to reflect the biblical logic of divine grace exemplified in the truth that "we love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19)…God's gift precedes and makes possible the human task of discipleship, witness and service. (2010, p. 25).

Greenman's argument reinforces the point that spiritual formation is necessarily rooted in God's love, which precedes any outward manifestations. This makes a strong case for times of reflection and formation amongst participants, something wholly absent at the initiatives.

Jesus teaches us to love others as we love ourselves (Luke 10: 27) and this has direct relevance for volunteers seeking to provide care to others. Loving others as much as ourselves and practicing self-compassion provides psychological flexibility. When our awareness of God is rooted in a sense of God's love for us, we may gain the sensitivity to discern how he would express God's love for others, through us. In the contexts explored in this article, this will be through hospitality and acts of service.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Practice

This study indicates that church-based intercultural initiatives will become more effective in expressing love of God and neighbour when organisation and delivery follow principles, practices, and functions of intercultural pastoral care. The following

recommendations for church based, intercultural initiatives, will enable deeper levels of care, rooted in experiencing the love of God.

I have noted that the nurture of spirituality enables the knowledge of God's love to grow in Christians so that love of God and neighbour finds expression in service. A culture where the spiritual formation of a congregation develops through services, home groups, prayer meetings, outreaches and social events can encourage members to reflect on their personal journey of spiritual formation. This helps create core church narratives of care for strangers.

Embracing Lartey or Nouwen's movements of spirituality supports effective intercultural pastoral care. If such explorations of spirituality and insights into transcendence are developed as key issues for group consideration, then this can nurture the foundational beliefs on which the initiatives were supposed to be based.

Group work encourages, monitors, and maintains accountability between team members, even where time is at a premium. These brief, focused times of relating after each session could range from debriefing to simple affirmation, whatever emerges as important. Encouraging accountable relationships enhances the self-awareness so important for empathy, care and listening. Compassion, empathy, and interpathy are enhanced through reflective practice and self-awareness to become caring practices that express a theology of presence (Augsburger,1986, pp. 17-47).

Group prayer is vital for the nurture of spirituality and the nurture of love that gives substance to our spirituality as pastoral carers. Meaningful group prayer emphasises the importance of drawing on God as the source of all creativity. In a weekly half-hour team meeting, is there space for prayer, or occasional longer meetings devoted to prayer together?

Whether volunteers limit friendships with migrants to session times, or extend hospitality at other times too, is a matter for individual consideration. Volunteers able to offer more time might be paired with those who have less discretionary time.

Nouwen encourages us to create space in relationships in which others can truly be themselves (1975, pp. 65-77). This is particularly relevant for volunteers interacting with migrants. Opportunities to explore how guest-host roles become flexible and sensitive to context are critical for pastoral formation.

This article has demonstrated that principles and practices of intercultural pastoral care provide a rich foundation from which love of God and neighbour can be effectively expressed at church-based, intercultural initiatives.

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