



Diversity

“I love diversity, as long as it is on my own terms.”

But diversity rarely comes to us on our own terms, it often crashes in on us unexpectedly, moving us out of our comfort zone and forcing us to change the way we do things, even the way we think. The global forces of diversity now impacting Ireland raise questions for the church here. How are we to respond? Where are we being challenged to do things differently? To think differently?

In Acts, Peter says 'I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right' (Acts 10:34,35). Peter uttered these words in the alien environment of the house of the Gentile Cornelius. This had not been an easy journey for Peter, God had had to convince him to go. After all, Cornelius was representative of a pagan Roman occupying empire and, to make things worse, centurion of its Italian Regiment (Acts 10:1) - a long way from Peter's Jewish peasant Galilean roots.

Earlier Peter was told that the gospel would spread to all nations (Mt 28:20), to the very ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). But he had not understood the implications of those

statements - how could he? His natural expectation was that those who would follow Jesus would first come to the Jewish faith and therefore be just like him. But what God, in his Son Jesus, accomplished on the cross was more far reaching than Peter could have grasped. God was in fact building out of the melting pot of humankind 'one new humanity' (Eph 2:15) united under the headship of Christ while at the same time retaining its multifaceted diversity.

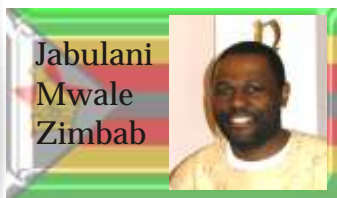
Bruce Milne reminded us, while leading our Summer Institute in June, that this new humanity embraces much more than simply ethnic diversity. As Paul says 'there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all' (Col 3:11). The gospel of Christ will not be held back by gender, colour, religious background, culture, age, IQ, theological difference on non-essential matters, national identity, economic status or whatever other markers make us distinct from each other.

In Cornelius' house Peter is clear that God shows no favouritism. But God's loving acceptance of diversity is different from universalism where everyone is included regardless of where they stand before God. There are to be people who fear Him and do what is right. Entry into this 'new humanity' is through faith in Christ (Gal 3:26).

Here at IBI we also seek to embrace diversity. Our staff team is a unique group of very different

Continued overleaf

United beyond...



My name is Jabulani Mwale. I was born in Zimbabwe. I have been in Ireland since 1994. I live in Dunleer and attend

the Solid Rock Church in Drogheda. I believe that God works best in the context of a local church; that's where relationships are formed and transformational living that affects the rest of the community for Jesus takes place.

I work as an Executive Pastor with the Solid Rock Church. Previous to my joining the church, I spent some time working in Tesco Ireland and in Jury's Doyle Hotels.

I heard about IBI through a friend. My decision to study here was based on the

content of the MA programme. I think application in any field of study is important, especially the application of theology. The programme I think provides the 'tools of the trade' to help me become a better workman and in applying theology to everyday living.

My hope for future is that the church will be an example to our communities and country of what it means to be united beyond racial and cultural differences whilst not compromising the fundamental principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God is leading me to help bridge the cultural and ethnic gaps in our community so that the Irish church (with all its strands) can recapture its missionary function of ages past to a much more diversified Europe.

I ask you to pray for wisdom, God knows I need it.

IBI digest

Motley Crew

Motley:(adj.) Consisting of a number of different kinds



Day Students

(Back row, l-r) John O'Donnell, Myung HoSeo, Rosaline Esuku, George O'Callaghan, Andrew Gill, Claudiu Lucaci, Richard Cronin, Simon Kilpatrick, Charlie Mills, Susan Hill, Sean McDonnell, Cormac Shaw, and Paddy Grant.
(Middle row, l-r) Valerie Hilliard, Eddie MacCullagh, Marie Quinlan, Sarah Kingston, Stephen McConnell, Eric Hughes, Jonny Somerville, Judi Barry, Audrey Reilly, Lynda Elmes and Adrienne Kane.
(Front row, l-r) Susannah Spurgeon, Carol Robinson, Karon Bartley, Sheggi Sevcova, Claire Tuttlebee, Aoife McGrath, Lorraine Wylie and Richard Thompson.



Evening Students

(Back row, l-r) Bill Walsh, Louise Cassidy, James Foley, Eva Rothwell, Chantelle Fletcher, David Gardner, Bertilla Keane, Ruth Doran and Jeanette Murphy.
(Middle row l-r) Gerry O'Keeffe, Heather Boate, Murna Lappin, Kenny Morrison, Karen Welch and Grace Percy.
(Front row, l-r) Hugh Carleton, Alan Spain, Martin O'Kelly and Kevin Barrett.

(Not included in photos but also studying at IBI are: Helena Campbell, Anne McDonald, Belinda Kingston, Alex Gason, Heather Stewart and Susan Fry).

Cont. from front page

individuals. Yet each one has particular gifts to use. While I am given a role to lead the team, I could not do the job without the help of many others, full-time, part-time and volunteers who contribute to helping make the vision of IBI a reality.

And we are committed to the variety of our students - in terms of culture, age, colour, personality, gender, experience, education and church background. This is not always easy. Diversity challenges us to act and think differently but how dull it would be if we were all the same! [Do read the 'Mixed

Messages' from our students in this newsletter]. We have a long way to go, but the student body is becoming increasingly diverse. In class there is often debate, for example, between urban and rural, old and young, Irish and non-Irish, denominational and non-denominational. But as we accept one another in Christ, and seek to learn and appreciate our diversity, we emerge much stronger. For, while we may never cease to be products of our background, thanks to God through Christ, we don't have to be prisoners of it.

Jacob Reynolds

Mixed Messages

Stories from our students



Charlie Mills
Monaghan

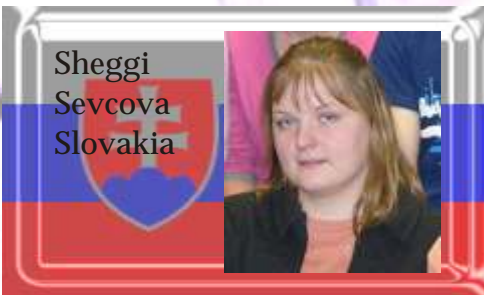
My name is Charlie Mills and I have always lived at Ballybay in Co. Monaghan where I am a member of the Presbyterian Church. I am married to Linda and we have two

grown-up 'children'. I have always worked in sales and accounts administration but I left my job in March 2005 in answer to God's call to serve Him in some other way. I'm not sure yet what that will be.

When I told our minister that I had resigned from my job he promptly produced literature that he had just received from IBI and I read through it with interest. Some weeks later I got talking to Heather Stewart who is a student at IBI. Her enthusiasm renewed my interest and later I had the opportunity to visit IBI, and I must say I felt at home there immediately.

Even so, my first day was quite daunting. Never having been to college, this was a completely new experience for me. But I needn't have worried. Many of my new classmates were mature students like myself, and we took to each other right away and have formed deep bonds of friendship. We have some great discussions both in class and during our breaks as we share our knowledge and understanding of God and Scripture.

The lecturers and staff in IBI are passionate and enthusiastic about God and their various subjects and this spills over to the students. This broadens understanding in the mind, making it burn in the heart and showing possible applications for out-working by the hands. This is what IBI is all about - equipping followers of Jesus Christ to know, love and serve Him better in today's world, and especially in our own land.



Sheggi
Sevcova
Slovakia

My official name is Eva Sevcova but all my friends call me Sheggi. I come from Slovakia and I came to Ireland in 2005.

In Slovakia I was a university student where I studied English and Education. I loved student life, but I did not like my major, especially Education, so after 2 years I decided to drop it. My brother had just finished his university studies, so we packed our BIG bags and came to Ireland in order to work and improve our English. For me it was also taking time (1 year) to think about my future, trying to find out what I'd like to do.

I am a single mum of two teenage boys, so life at the best of times is hectic! I go to Swords Baptist Church and would be lost without the support and help of the great friends I've met there. It was at Swords that I first heard about IBI. Having not long been a Christian I thought, 'theological studies - that's way over my head!' But I took the literature away with me anyway. The following summer I began really getting stuck into the Bible. I love reading, but the more I read the more questions I had and the more I wanted to know.

So one day I searched for that IBI literature, and here I am in the second year of the Diploma and hoping to go on for the BA

next year! When God moves you and starts working in your life, things happen and you start doing things that you thought you could never do. And IBI is more than theological studies. The best way I can describe it is, 'they teach you to do what you do but do it for God'. What I do is write. Using the foundation of biblical and practical studies I'm gaining at IBI, I hope to start writing children's fiction that captures God's truth.



Karon
Bartley
Dublin

"The gospel of Christ will not be held back by gender, colour, religious background, culture, age, IQ, theological difference on non-essential matters, national identity, economic status or whatever other markers make us distinct from each other."

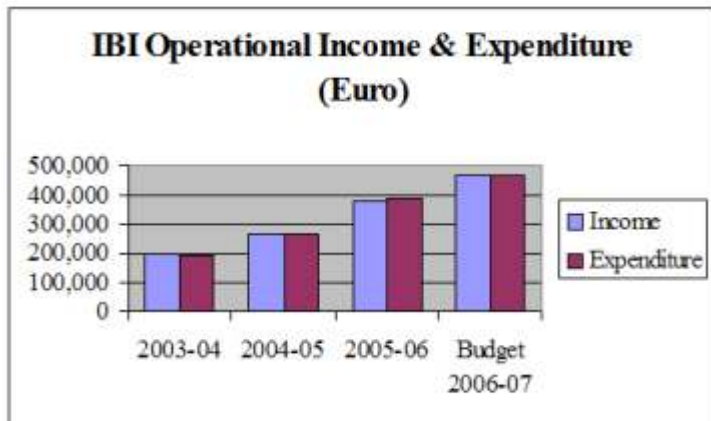
When I heard about IBI I desired to start immediately but was not sure because of studying in a foreign language, getting used to a different school system and the fact that I would have to stay in Ireland another 2 years minimum.

But I also knew that if I want to know God more and be prepared for ministry later, this chance that might not repeat itself ever again (especially if I return to Slovakia). So I made a decision and here I am, a student again and I love it! It is so much better to study something you like and want to learn about! I'm still not sure of what I'd like to do in future, but I believe God will show me when the right time comes. For now, I can say that I'm using this 'free' time in the best way I can, by studying at IBI. If you would like to pray for me in these areas, I will sure appreciate it.

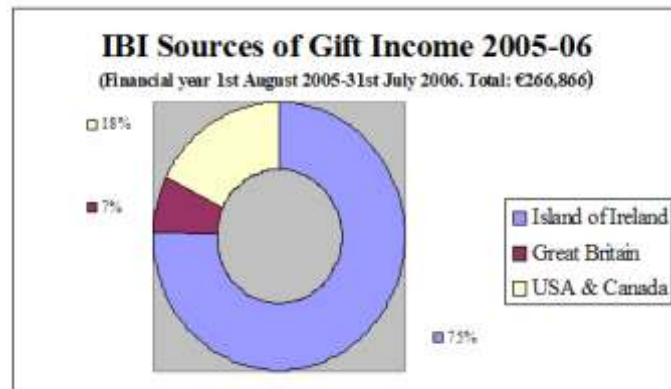
Financial Review

We continually give thanks to God for the wonderful premises He provided for IBI last year. The facilities are ideal for students and staff and the location could not be better. At this point, all the pieces of the property deal are in place, and from January 2007 the income and expenditure in the property fund should balance, with no net cost to IBI.

However, a substantial loan had to be raised to cover rent and property management fees for the vacant period, and this will be dealt with as part of the overall property acquisition in the long-term.



On the operational side, we faced a huge challenge last year, with the operational budget increasing by €115,000 due to higher running costs in the new building, having two new




staff members join the team, and also increased costs associated with growth and development, particularly the validation of the BA programme. We had a deficit of €11,936 over the year, which was covered by our opening balance of €36,050, but the operational budget will continue to be a challenge this year and into the future as well. We need to consolidate our support base, and see an increase in the number of supporters giving regularly. However, this keeps us dependent on God who is 'Jehovah Jireh' – our provider – and that is a good place to be. Thank you to all who stand with IBI in prayer and financially, you are very much appreciated.


Audited accounts are available on request.

Dawn Langrell

Prayer and Praise

We are grateful for your continuing support and humbled by the fact that many of you pray for us daily. We thank God for you and ask that you would continue to support us in prayer.


 Thank the Lord for all He has done and is doing with and through IBI. For all the lives touched directly through students and their ministry in local churches. For all those who support us in prayer and with their finances.


 Pray for the faculty that their teaching would cause students to learn and bring deeper knowledge of the heart of God for them and the world.

 Give thanks that the validation of our BA Programme has

been successful and for the new students the Lord has drawn to IBI who are now registered on it.

 Pray for all our students – for safe travel; for good health; for balance in time-management as they seek to honour all their commitments to famil, church, work and study.

 Pray for the finances to cover the operating costs on a day to day basis. Also for a good response to the Annual Appeal which is being launched with this newsletter.

 Pray for the Board and Staff that we would be effective in the daily and on-going running of IBI, never losing sight of what we are here to do and the Lord whom we serve.



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January 2007
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