

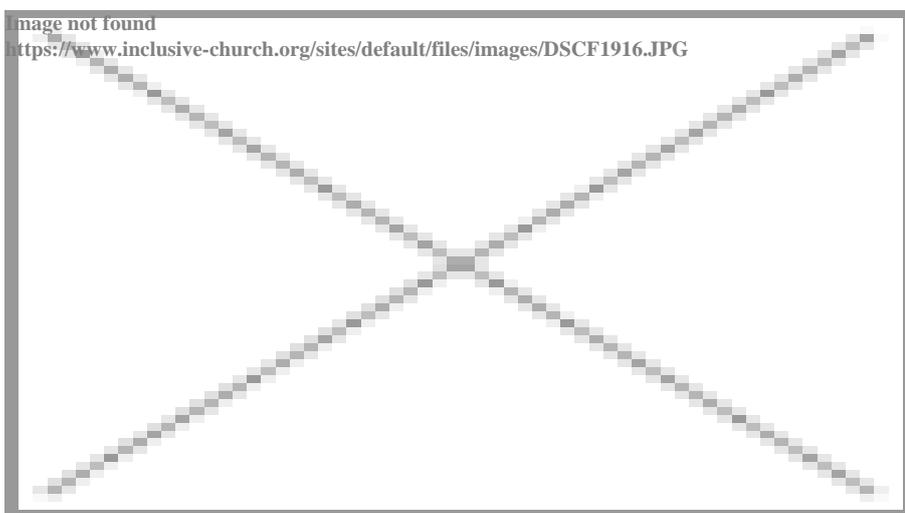


Published on *Inclusive Church* (<https://www.inclusive-church.org>)

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In May 2017 Inclusive Church hosted

a visit from the Church of Sweden, based in Liverpool and Manchester. As the plans for that visit were being drawn together there was a terrorist attack in Stockholm in which 4 people died. Inclusive Church expressed to the group that were planning to visit us our sadness at this news, and the assurance of our thoughts and prayers.

Now we are living with the news of the Manchester attack. For those of us who were privileged to be part of the visit of the representatives from the Church of Sweden there is real sadness. Their trip was to look at examples of inclusion; this included visits to the Bishop of Manchester and then to a school and a church in Manchester. The group shared with us about life in Sweden ? there was much talk of integration in multi-cultural societies both in Britain and Sweden. We spoke about what radical inclusion might look like ? and how it is expressed.

One image that struck us was from the school we visited ? where young people had created a picture based on words from the Inclusive Church statement of belief ? about Belonging, Believing and Becoming. As we reflect on the Manchester attack, it is sad to imagine that some of the young people we met in our visits in Manchester and Liverpool were the age of those who were attending the event at the Manchester Arena.

As with the attack in Sweden, our thoughts and prayers are with those who have been affected.

Whilst we were in Manchester we heard from the Bishop and Rachel Mann about the distinctiveness of the people who make up the city of Manchester. Rachel spoke about the ?Manchester bubble? ? a special place with special people. In spite of such an attack ? the bubble has not been burst. We are grateful for this prayer that Rachel has drawn together.

Compassionate God,
whose Love dares to dwell in the midst of us.
Be with the people of Manchester today.
Grieve with us in our grief,
search with us as we seek out lost loved ones,
wait with us in the anxiety of unknowing.

Help us to give thanks for the people of Manchester -
warm, open, generous and resilient;
Help us to draw on the spirit of solidarity
and the defiance in loss of this great city.
Be with our emergency services
in this time of trial.

In the midst of our fears,
and the fierce pain of loss;
when our commitment to justice
and mercy and kindness
is tested by death and terror,
be with us, O Lord.

Today let us mourn, let us weep;
meet us in our anger,
fear and disbelief.

Tomorrow help us be makers of your compassionate world. Amen

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