I want to start by thanking the professional development committee for making it possible for me to travel to Northern Ireland and conduct research; it is so important that I maintain the contacts that I’ve made for research and for teaching, but it is not always easy to get there and spend the necessary time, so this grant was especially helpful. I was able to spend almost a month immersed in research, though it did not always feel like the most productive use of my time, since I was having to spend a lot of time traveling to/from various locations, and I needed to meet with certain people in order to “pass muster” to make it to the next level of trust and interaction. Nevertheless, even if I felt at the time that I was spinning my wheels, I am already seeing the fruit from the labor.

Goals & Progress Report

Goal: To collaborate with a practitioner in grassroots peacemaking in N. Ireland, Suzi Swain. Swain has been involved in grass roots peacemaking all of her adult life, and has worked in a number of non-profit organizations. She has recently branched out on her own, and was a finalist for the post of commissioner of victim's rights in N. Ireland.

Report: Meetings with Suzi Swain went quite well. We decided on what we’d write, how we envision this project, and how we’d divide the workload. We also outlined all of the chapters and thought through how we might propose the book. The proposal should be completed in a month’s time, along with the sample chapter (drafts are in progress). Our hope is that the book is attractive to publishers because it will combine my academic perspective with Swain's "on the ground" experience.

Goal: To meet with the organizers of a community development project helping women in the border communities of Armagh as they work through their grief over losses due to the Troubles and take preliminary steps toward meeting and learning to talk with women from the “other” communities.

Report: Meetings with the organizers went well and they seem eager to pursue work together. Much of this depends on outside agencies and their funding, but things look good now. I would help them assess their program while simultaneously conducting my
own field research with the women participants in the project.

Summary
Overall, I believe the summer research was time well spent (even if I chafed sometimes over delays and waiting on others). Not only did we make significant headway on envisioning the book we’d like to write, we also planned the table of contents, assigned work, and did some preliminary writing. In addition, I was able to meet with organizers who are positioned to help me further my own field research, and I was able to offer them my services as a researcher. It is a worthwhile project that will allow me to pursue the research that has come to mean so much to me -- to be able to integrate what I teach with what I believe God is calling me to do as a Christian with what I find interesting as a scholar - this is quite a gift, and one I do not take for granted.