

NIMMA NEWS



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E-Mail

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Major mail drop for NIMMA book

More than 400 copies of NIMMA's book

'Both Sides Now' were on their way to teachers in integrated schools and shared campus schools across the Province, as NIMMA News went to press.

It is the biggest educational mail drop in the Association's history and further proof of our successful partnership with the Northern Ireland Council for Interated Education (NICIE), according to Chair Ken Dunn.

"We see education as one of the great tools in combatting prejudice and sectarianism and look forward to a time when NIMMA publications are standard reading in all our schools.

"We are indebted to NICIE and to Sharing Classrooms Manager Bernie Kells in particular for recognising the worth of these books and for continued support and encouragement in difficult times".

Bernie Kells said: "We are delighted that NICIE's association with the Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association (NIMMA) continues. NIMMA's first book 'Mixed Emotions' about the experiences of mixed marriage couples was dramatised by both the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education and The Theatre of Witness group.

That drama proved a success, particularly with young people, and it became an integral part of NICIE's "Sharing Classrooms: Deepening Learning" project, which had been funded by the IFI.

Now the sequel, 'Both Sides Now', gives 11 local people the chance to tell for the first time how they were affected as the children of parents who married 'across the divide'

These very personal stories are told by the children of eleven of those marriages, ranging in ages from 16 to 60



Governors from Crumlin Integrated College pick up their advance copies of 'Both Sides Now' from NICIE HQ in Belfast.

and the book is aimed specifically at teenagers in integrated secondary schools.

NICIE is delighted to accept NIMMA's offer to provide copies to integrated schools and to all teachers who experienced the original drama. This will be a relevant and highly valuable resource, at no cost to schools, at a time when many schools face challenging reductions to their budgets".

Stop Press

NIMMA is making another application to The Big Lottery Fund to finance a book.

The new book, the third in our planned trilogy about mixed marriage, will feature couples who left Northern Ireland after marrying 'across the divide'.

Under the working title 'Exiles for Love', we are seeking a publication grant and will be actively looking to recruit volunteers in the weeks ahead.

Shared housing site launched on Ravenhill

NIMMA has welcomed the launch of the first of ten new-build shared social housing neighbourhoods in the Province.

Chairman Ken Dunn said: "This is good news for those of us who have been lobbying for greater availability of shared living space for many years.

"NIMMA sits on the governmental committee designed to ensure the smooth set up of these areas and this first - Global Crescent in the Ravenhill district - boasts 86 units and a completion date of October 2015. The second phase will provide a further 41 units and will be completed by September 2016.

"NIMMA is committed to the wider availability of mixed social housing and conscious of the fact that social housing estates are currently highly polarised.

"We know what it means to mixed couples, who do not have the wherewithal to buy their own homes, to be able to live in areas where the residents have signed up to a mixed charter that guarantees that an area will not go above 70 per cent occupancy by one section of the community".



Finn Donnelly and Luke Turley from St Michael's Primary School join Weronika Moraz from Euston Street Primary School at the launch of the new neighbourhood

Officially launching the scheme ,Junior Minister Michelle McIlveen said: ""The Northern Ireland Executive is committed to continuing to improve community relations throughout Northern Ireland and through the 'Together: Building a United Community' Strategy is making real and tangible commitments to building a united and reconciled society".

Surprise '70th' for Edgar Turner

Liturgist, canon lawyer, ecumenist and avid football supporter Canon Edgar Turner, pictured with daughter Kate, celebrated the 70th anniversary of his deaconate with a surprise party at his home church of St John's Malone.

And dozens of friends, family and fellow worshippers turned out to spring the surprise and show their appreciation.

Edgar, who turned 95 recently, has been a supporter of NIMMA since its inception and remains its Church of Ireland chaplain after more than 40 years and a pillar of strength for the Association, according to Chairman Ken Dunn.

He said: "It is an honour and a privilege to join in this truly memorable celebration of a remarkable man and a formidable cleric.

"In 1974, at the international consultation on mixed marriage, one of the invited speakers was Fr John Coventry (lecturer in Christian Doctrine, Heythrop College, London). He was an English Jesuit and co-chair of the English Association of Interchurch Families.

"Edgar and Fr John clashed publicly over Eucharistic sharing for inter-church couples. However, both were staying with the Jesuits in Milltown and the local Jesuits showed Fr John that they favoured Edgar's arguments. This led to Fr John's conversion to the justice of Eucharistic sharing for inter-church couples and a lifelong crusade to achieve official recognition of the needs of interchurch couples.

"Edgar has used his interest and deep commitment to ecumenism to inform and guide NIMMA through the apparent



intricacies of theology, liturgy, canon law, and Irish history and in 1977, he suggested that the children of inter-church couples should have the option of a concelebrated baptism where both clergy poured the water and said the words.

"He has assisted at innumerable mixed marriages, celebrated in both Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic churches, and has had a profound effect on very many clergy, patiently explaining, at length, the basic Canon Law and the pastoral needs of the couple.

"Throughout his ministry, Edgar has calmed, educated and guided not just a large number of couples, but also many potential grandparents who have reversed their stance when exposed to his erudite charms. Long may this continue.

New book to target ex-pat couples

Mixed marriage couples who left Northern Ireland after marrying across the ‘divide’ are set to feature in NIMMA’s third book.

The project, which has been given the working title ‘Exiles for Love’, is in its infancy according to Chairman Ken Dunn, but ‘has been inspired by a contact from South Africa’.

He said: Belfastman Jimmy McClelland got in touch after reading about us on the internet and his story has led to us starting the process of application for Lottery funds to complete our mixed marriage trilogy.

“It’s early days of course, but we will be seeking volunteers from around the world to illustrate the story of expats who felt they had to leave home to make a better life and we will be targeting press and associated publications in GB, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Jimmy’s home country of South Africa to recruit contributors for the new book.

“It was always our intention to publish a third in this series and the forgotten families who travelled sometimes thousands of miles to avoid controversy and worse are the perfect subject.

“Jimmy’s story has had a happy ending after a very difficult start in the North Belfast of the late sixties and early seventies when he and his wife Anne felt they had no choice but to leave these shores.

“Jimmy has given us the green light to use their story and urged others to take part. As he says, the story is true and he and Anne have moved on with their lives, despite having to move 8,000 miles.

He writes; “ Mixed marriage was never our problem, but other people made it theirs. We’re happy to do whatever it takes to help others and hope our story does just that. We’ve had a good life, have no regrets and both know that when the going got tough, we became stronger as a couple” .



Jimmy and Anne McClelland at home in Durban, South Africa.

NIMMA has known for a long time that there is a tremendous demand for information about mixed marriage from prospective couples, the press, the churches, community groups and the education sector. Ken Dunn said: “Our partnership with the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) is making both of our books more widely available than ever before and we see the third book as a natural sequel to those two”.

Mr Dunn said that he looked forward to the day when this kind of book would be regarded as standard reading for young people in all local schools and a time when an organisation like NIMMA was no longer required.

He added: “In a society where sectarianism is institutionalised, NIMMA is the only champion for the acceptance of mixed marriage on this island, while it continues to lobby actively for increased integrated education and the wider availability of shared social housing.

**‘Both Sides Now’ is available only
by ringing Belfast 90 235 444
or e-mailing info@nimma.org.uk**





“End of Year - No end of Challenges”

Our 41st year came to an end with the good news that our funding partnership with the Esme Fairbairn Foundation has been renewed for another 12 months and that the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) will continue as our education partner through the life of our latest book. We thank them both for their support as we face the challenges ahead.

Funding or lack of it is always a problem for small charities such as NIMMA. We have a number of grant applications pending and seek funding to match that already received, but it has been a difficult year dominated

by the constant battle to gain sufficient finance to maintain our office presence in Belfast.

Our comprehensive grant application with OFMDFM – and thanks here particularly to Hugh who put so much work into it – remains ‘under consideration’ nearly two years after it was made and, despite many reminders, there appears to be little political will among those in power at Stormont to progress anything positive from the OFMDFM initiative ‘Together Building a United Community’. It is apparently gathering dust. It’s not all doom and gloom of course, despite the economic uncertainty. The high profile launch of our new book, the production of which took up most of the year one way or another, and its very positive reception gives us a shot in the arm for the year ahead.

We have renewed our highly successful partnership with NICIE and trust that money permitting – for NICIE in this case – that a play will be dramatised from the new book. Meanwhile we have just supplied almost 450 copies in total to teachers in the integrated and shared campus sector.

We are also in discussion with Youth Action about possible distribution of the book through its network of youth groups. Our PR profile remains high, helped in no small way by the success of our press campaign around the new book, and we continue to over-achieve in terms of column inches and opportunities to see and hear.

I’d like to mention that all of Anne Odling-Smee’s hard work over many years on the social housing front has also been rewarded. The Department of Social Development gave NIMMA a coveted place on its latest working committee on shared social housing and we continue to lobby for greater availability of same. Sadly, NIMMA’s work is ongoing, given the institutionalised sectarianism that is rampant in Northern Ireland, and, although our ultimate aim is to put ourselves out of business, the inertia of our political leaders looks set to make this a very long-term ambition. It would appear that political posturing continues by people who see little elective value in promoting the middle ground.

I’d like, however, to end on a positive note. Yes, there are funding challenges and yes it can be very frustrating to find ourselves penny pinching at a time when, arguably, we are enjoying our most successful spell ever. Despite all this, I take heart at the success of the new book, the potential it has to open young minds and hearts and the determination we still possess – despite more than forty years – to get across our message of tolerance and acceptance.

Ken

Activities and Achievements

- Publication of NIMMA book about the children of mixed marriages
- Features printed in all three Northern Ireland dailies for the first time
- Pilot video prepared for BBC television documentary
- Partnership with the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) for book distribution to 200 teachers in integrated and shared campus schools, as well as school libraries
- Office library catalogued
- Acted as a consultant and provided summary for the Association of InterChurch Families’ submission to the Vatican’s Synod on the family for Autumn 2015
- Office running costs maintained at minimum for the past two years with efficient use of e-mail reducing postage; stationery and miscellaneous items bought discounted on an ad hoc basis