

NIMMA News

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NIMMA News
are available
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NIMMA opts for on-line funding



The Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association is hoping to increase its funding from donations made on-line. NIMMA has become the latest member of Localgiving NI, which helps small charities to attract potential donors and raise funds.

NIMMA Chairman Ken Dunn said, "NIMMA is a small charity that, despite punching well above its weight in terms of impact in the community and even international recognition, is constantly battling against possible closure.

"We receive no government support and rely entirely on grants from charitable foundations. Competition for these is increasingly fierce, given the current economic climate, and we hope that Localgiving will allow to tap into an as yet untouched funding stream".

Localgiving's mission is to safeguard the sustainability of the local voluntary sector by em-

powering charitable organisations to connect with supporters, fundraise online and take control of their future. Since the organisation's inception it has assisted more than 4,000 charities to raise more than £10m across the UK.

Localgiving, alongside Community Foundation Northern Ireland, offers local organisations in Northern Ireland fully funded annual memberships and, thanks to support from the Big Lottery Fund, this is completely free.

Membership allows organisations access to:

- Match funding campaigns- regular campaigns during which donations to the member group are doubled
- Free, comprehensive training and support on how to make the most from online fundraising and digital technology
- Gift Aid on eligible donations – members will receive 25% on top of donations, even if they're not a registered charity



First steps taken in NI charity registration

NIMMA will have to wait for up to four months to learn if it has been successfully registered as a charity by the Northern Ireland Charity Commission.

The Association's application is being 'quality tested before it passes on to the next stage of the assessment process', according to a Commission spokeswoman.

She added; "We may need more information as part of our quality testing and may write to you again.

Our aim is to give you a decision within four months from receipt of your completed application. However, in some circumstances this may take longer, and applications which do not pass quality testing will be rejected.

Charities are part of all our lives. They range from small groups meeting local needs with few resources to household name charities operating with budgets of millions.

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Charity sit-out cheque for NIMMA

The ‘Blank Santa’ had a post-Christmas gift of £400 for NIMMA.

Comedian William Caulfield is pictured with NIMMA development officer Paul McLaughlin at a presentation held at Belfast’s St Anne’s Cathedral. NIMMA chair Ken Dunn wrote to the Dean of St Anne’s, Canon John Mann.

“On behalf of the management committee of the Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association (NIMMA) I wish to express our profound thanks for the funding from The Cathedral Sit-out 2015. It is much appreciated.

We in NIMMA admire the sterling efforts of you and your staff over the Christmas period of ‘outdoor’ fundraising and acknowledge the great generosity of the general public.

Our work for reconciliation and tolerance has gone from strength to strength in the past twelve months and, with your support, we look forward to helping to maintain that commitment in the months ahead.



We do have a peace of sorts in Northern Ireland at this time, but, sadly, we are as far away as ever from reconciliation. There is still so much work to be done before we can fulfil our mission statement of winding up the Association when NIMMA is no longer required. Meanwhile, we will continue to work with the Churches and the wider society to change long-cherished attitudes to Inter-Church Marriage, to advocate mixed marriage as a blueprint for a truly shared future in Northern Ireland, to tackle sectarianism and prejudice and to do all that we can to stem the tide of secularisation in marriage. Once again, many, many thanks”.

Refusing to be separated

A mixed marriage couple that refused to be separated in life left a fitting memorial to their love that outflanked even the ‘segregation’ of the cemetery.

In the past, the people of the Netherlands were very aware of differences in religion and class.

In the town of Roermond is a cemetery that is divided into sections. The biggest section is for Catholics, but two smaller sections are for Protestants and Jews and those sections are walled off from the Catholic section.

But a very special monument exists that connects the Catholic and the Protestant sections. One part of the monument stands in the Catholic part of the cemetery and the other part stands in the Protestant part.

A wall is between the two parts of the monument. Spanning the top of the wall is a statue of two arms — one arm of a husband and one arm of a wife — the hands of which are clasped.



The memorial tells the story of the 19th Century” couple, twenty-two year old Catholic noblewoman, J.W.C. van Gorkum, who married a colonel in the Dutch Cavalry, who was not of the nobility and was a Protestant. That caused a major scandal at the time, but the marriage lasted almost forty years until the colonel died. Eight years later the woman passed away. She had refused to be laid to rest in the family’s large Catholic tomb, but rather ordered the monument that you can still see today. She lies on one side of the wall, he on the other, still holding hands.

World-wide trawl for Volunteers

NIMMA has written to its sister organisations across the world to recruit support for the third book in its trilogy about mixed marriage.

Letters have gone to the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa urging local groups to spread the word that volunteers are wanted to feature in a new book about couples who left Northern Ireland as a result of making a mixed marriage. Chairman Ken Dunn said: “We are still a long way from actually starting the book and funding will always prove a challenge, but we are preparing the way for when we get the green light to go ahead.

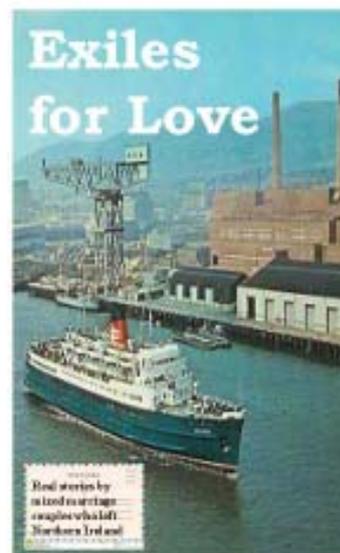
“Our sister organisations have been very supportive in the past and, already, they are publicising our request across three continents.

“We aim to write to local newspaper editors here at home and also to those in the major cities to which many of our people emigrated over the years to reinforce that message, to get as much publicity for the project as possible and to help identify potential contributors”.

The paperback, with the working title “Exiles for Love”, will give at least ten couples the chance to tell – in their own words – why they chose to leave home after marrying ‘across the divide’.

Ken Dunn said: “We urgently want volunteers to get in touch to complete a project that will, hopefully, reinforce the message of reconciliation that our first two books, ‘Mixed Emotions’ and ‘Both Sides Now’ are already bringing to secondary school pupils in the Province.

“We are responding to the constant demand for information about both the logistics of mixed marriage and the actual experience itself from prospective couples, the press, the churches and community groups, but a collection of the stories of those, who either chose or were forced to leave Northern Ireland as a result of their marriages, is the final part in an emotional jigsaw.



Artist's impression of the front cover of the third NIMMA book.

“We have shown over the past five years that our young people, in particular, are keen to know more about mixed marriage, how things have changed over the years and how compromise and accommodation within such relationships are like a blueprint for a shared future, but the untold stories of exile must also be heard”.

“There is still much to be done to create a situation where an organisation like NIMMA is no longer needed and the new book, like its predecessors, can be a catalyst for debate and discussion about what for so long has been a taboo subject.

Anyone interested in being considered for the paperback should contact NIMMA on Belfast 02890 235444 or e-mail info@nimma.org.uk



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The public have the right to expect charities to be open and accountable. Public trust and confidence in Northern Ireland's charities is high - we want to make sure it stays that way.

Whatever their size or purpose, an essential requirement of all charities is that they operate for the public benefit and independently of government or commercial interests”.

NIMMA Chairman Ken Dunn said, “NIMMA has been a registered charity for more than 20 years and realises the importance of the management of charities' registration

“We trust that we have done enough to meet the strict criteria of the registration process and that we can continue with our current status for years to come”.

The Commission regulates charities operating in Northern Ireland, making sure that charities are meeting their legal requirements and working with charity trustees to put things right if they go wrong. In doing so, the Commission plays a crucial role in the development of charities, enabling them to meet modern expectations and obligations.



From the Chair.....



Disappointed, but not Dismayed

Fight for funding goes on.....

Recent disappointments on the funding front came from both the Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic's governments, which turned down our grant applications.

I'm amazed that an organisation such as ours which, by its very nature, is totally cross-community can be ignored to this degree. Frankly, it beggars belief.

I can understand the Dublin decision – they did fund us for six years, there has been a tightening of the budgetary belt down there and we do have recourse to a further round of grant applications, but the OFMDFM rebuff is pure pantomime.

They simply told us they do not have a 'funding stream' for a group like NIMMA and advised us to approach the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council (CRC).

Ironically, weeks after the closing deadlines for grant applications from the CRC had passed!

More than two years ago, OFMDFM launched its Together, Building a United Community (TBUC) initiative and NIMMA was quick to identify an important niche in a strategy designed to help take us down the road to the shared future.

That is the application, our application, surely now dog-eared and yellowing, that has been declined.

NIMMA remains the only provider of support, advice, information and pastoral care to people in mixed relationships and their extended families on the island of Ireland.

We've been filling that remit for more than 40 years, as well as a lobbying for more shared social housing and the increased availability of integrated education and working for shared present long before 'sharing' became a buzzword.

We have been at the sharp end battling for reconciliation, tolerance and acceptance of diversity during five decades and had hopes that TBUC would have provided a natural home for an organisation with experience and expertise in these fields.

Sadly, it was not to be, but, despite threat of closure, we continue to plough that furrow and, with the kind of optimism that saw us through even darker days, will continue to petition private charitable trusts and foundations to keep us afloat.

I'll keep you posted about developments

' Finding love in diversity, accommodation in compromise and the courage to follow their convictions - the mixed marriage scenario '

The many successes of NIMMA over more than 40 years have seen positive changes in Church practice, Education and Housing, but there is much to be done about acceptance of diversity in a society in which we have peace, but are a long way from reconciliation. Sadly, NIMMA is as relevant to-day as it was back in 1974.

So much of this work in reconciliation is aimed at young people under the age of 18 years. That is to be admired, of course, but there is and has been a shortfall when it comes to encouragement and support given to those beyond that age limit who challenge sectarianism by example.

All this talk today is about a united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation. That community already exists in the homes and hearts of those who have built bridges between the traditions by finding love in diversity, accommodation in compromise and the courage to follow their convictions - the mixed marriage scenario.

NIMMA continues to support that model and to advocate mixed marriage as a blueprint for a truly shared future and is currently in the early stages of producing a third book in a trilogy about mixed marriage, which will, funding permitted, feature ten couples who left Northern Ireland as a result of making mixed marriages. A shared future, by definition, will encourage mixed marriages. Surely now is the time to help overcome obstacles to such couples.

We trust that, given the right kind of support, we can insure that, like its predecessors, 'Mixed Emotions' and 'Both Sides Now', this publication can be made available to local schools, shared campus and youth/community groups for discussion and debate.