



From the Chair...

Spreading a message that is worth the work

NIMMA's mission statement, without being too grand about it, tells you what we are all about. It's simple, as it should be, and, we hope, to the point.

"Supporting couples who are united in love across traditional Christian divisions and promoting acceptance of these relationships within Northern Ireland society"

That just about says it all.

The supporting bit is self explanatory. We're here to provide information and support and we do just that with a phone-in help line, a comprehensive website and a one-to-one service that is as individual as you can get.

The promotion of acceptance of mixed marriage is a much broader and greyer area, but one, nonetheless, that we are constantly tackling and reviewing.

Attitudes to mixed marriage on this island are changing and changing for the better and we like to think that we have played our part in helping to channel those changes, but there is no place for complacency. We are reaching out right across the island.

Our research tells us that sectarianism remains institutionalised here and that couples still face problems, but we doing all that we can to spread our message of a love for diversity as widely as possible. These past few weeks, we have written to many of the immigrant communities and to the chaplains of our universities outlining our position and offering our support.

Two major interviews on Radio Foyle have helped



Mixed Marriage: Couples still face problems.

establish our presence in the West of the Province – raising our profile - and we will be reinforcing that with regular press material to a database of press and broadcast contacts in counties Derry, Fermanagh and Tyrone.

Already, this newsletter is going to hundreds of clergy, north and south of the border, and we will be increasing that circulation as the months go on. The bigger the audience, the better. There is still a lot to be done and there are many challenges ahead, but the message is worth the work.

Ken



Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association

Bryson House
28 Bedford Street
BELFAST BT2 7FE

Office Hours Mon-Friday 9.30 - 12.30
(Evening appointments available, 24 hour answer machine service)

Tel- 028 9023 5444



If you would prefer to receive an e-mailed version of NIMMA News, please let us know at nimma@nireland.com

Phone line "here to help" five mornings a week

A telephone help-line for couples either in or contemplating mixed-marriages has been extended to five mornings a week by the Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association (NIMMA).

The Belfast-based number, which was staffed normally from Monday to Thursday, has been receiving up to twenty serious enquiries each month.

Benefit

NIMMA Chairman Ken Dunn said that the extension to include Fridays would benefit callers and NIMMA volunteers who provide information and support.

He said: "Our website has boosted both telephone and e-mail enquiries to the office and, as demand continues to grow, the extra day will help spread what is a welcome workload.

"Calls to Belfast – 02890 235444 – can be as simple or as complicated as mixed marriage itself, but, on average, several hours' preparation will go into one telephone enquiry.



Help-line 02890 235444

"Every call is unique and merits the kind of in-depth consideration that NIMMA members have gleaned from years of experience."

NIMMA's website at www.nimma.org.uk has been inundated with more than 12,000 serious hits since it went live three years ago and many of the 800 or so local couples who married "across the divide" last year made use of the site and the Association's help-line.

Ken Dunn said: "Unfortunately, even today, couples who put love before traditional allegiances, and that is around one in ten of all marriages, can face problems and difficulties.

"We are here to help in any way we can."

Gold coast barbecue beckons

St John's Point, pictured, near Killough in Co Down, more noted for its shipwrecks and smugglers in the past, lies to the south of Anne and William's home at Rossglass where the annual NIMMA barbecue will take place on Sunday 14th June.



Guests, and there is a warm welcome to all, will gather at the "Boathouse" on a sandy bay to the north of the point at 3pm, the eating starts at 5pm and diners are asked to provide their own BBQ food and soft drinks. The area has a long and colourful maritime history, but despite BBQs

being made available on site and the best of craic on offer, guests will need to be exceptionally lucky to find a nine-inch long bar of gold on the beach as a Captain Smyth did back in 1796.

It was worth £300 and he kept it.

"BIG 40" conference welcome from Association of Interchurch families

The Association of Interchurch Families (AIF) offers a warm welcome to all to its Annual Conference over August bank holiday.

The AIF is celebrating its 40th birthday this year and the Derbyshire-based conference – it is being staged at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanick near Alfreton – has a range of activities to suit all age groups. AIF organiser Keith Lander is keen to meet couples from Northern Ireland.

NIMMA

He said: "We look forward to NIMMA members making the trip across the water to join us for a packed programme of events from lunch to lunch from Saturday 29th August until Monday 31st.

"We are 40 this year and continue to take our inspiration from St Paul's passage, "And now, faith, hope and love abide, these three".

"We will explore how these help us to live our interchurch lives; ■ Looking at Faith as a response to a call from God who always takes the initiative

■ Considering Hope as something much deeper than we had in the early years when interchurch families

first came together ■ And grounding that Hope in Love that starts with God's love for us and responding with our Love for God, for one another, for



our churches and for the world. We welcome all couples in an interchurch marriage or thinking about such a marriage and interchurch children of any age. Do join us."

ACCORD

Interchurch Marriage Preparation Programme

28th & 30th June 2009
Comfort Hotel, Antrim

Contact Accord on 02890 233002

Greetings to ethnic groups

NIMMA has been in touch with a number of ethnic groupings across the Province with offers of information, support and solidarity.

In a letter to a wide-ranging group suggested by the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Communities, NIMMA chair Ken Dunn said, "We are keen to get across our message of support and information to those in the immigrant community who are, perhaps, either in or contemplating mixed marriages. "The phrase "Mixed Marriage" is widely accepted in Northern Ireland as that used most commonly to refer to interchurch or interfaith marriages.



"We hope to build strong relationships with those in ethnic minorities in order to best make ourselves available to those who can benefit from our expertise, experience and support. I trust that we can rely on you to facilitate that aim." Ken provided some background material about the association and said that he looked forward to keeping in regular contact with updated literature about NIMMA and the offer of NIMMA volunteers speaking at pre-arranged events.