

Introducing Dialogue Ireland Trust

Ireland, like most European countries, has in recent decades been experiencing the presence of New Religious Movements (NRMs), sometimes referred to as "cults" or (in some continental countries) "sects". The term NRM can be understood to include spiritual as well as religious movements properly so called. "New" may refer to movements that have been founded mainly over the past fifty years, though older movements are sometimes included. However, the term also includes centuries-old movements that are new to Ireland or indeed to the entire western world.

Over time, many young people and their families who had become involved with some of these groups turned to the churches for guidance and support.

In the 1980's, a number of people from different Christian churches became pastorally involved in this area. These included Fr Martin Tierney of the Archdiocese of Dublin, Mike Garde, a Mennonite and a Dominican, Fr. Louis Hughes. Subsequently, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin appointed Fr Tierney as Chairperson of a committee established to provide information and necessary pastoral care in relation to new religious movements. Later it was felt that this ministry should best be approached from an ecumenical perspective, and the leaders of the other mainline Christian Churches in Dublin responded positively to an invitation to participate in the work of the committee. Members of this committee established contact with the ecumenical Lutheran group, Dialogue Centre International in Denmark, which was already engaged in a similar ministry in Scandinavia. This link (and others) has enabled Dialogue Ireland to draw on information and research available at an international level and to organise seminars annually with top-class speakers. The committee engaged Mike Garde as field worker, his role being to counsel and support people seeking assistance. A further development took place in 2001, when Dialogue Ireland, though continuing to be supported by the churches, became an independent Trust, thus giving it greater freedom in carrying out its mission.

Dialogue Ireland is not an "anti-cult" organization, nor do we attach a "cult" label to any movement or group. We acknowledge that those "cultist" tendencies, i.e., psychological and spiritual abuses, can creep into any organisation, including movements associated with our own churches. We do receive calls from people who perceive themselves or a family member as being victims of "cultist" activity on the part of a wide variety of sources. These people turn to Dialogue Ireland for guidance and support. Such situations can be unbelievably painful for the people involved. Some have compared it to the death of a loved one without the funeral. Fortunately, the experiences of most people joining new movements are much less dramatic than this.

As its name implies, the starting point of Dialogue Ireland's mission is to seek relationships of dialogue with New Religious Movements. This will necessitate the study both of the movements themselves and where relevant the world religions that may have given rise to them. We recognize that the vast majority of these movements were set up with good intentions and acknowledge that in many instances the Church has much to learn from them. Also it is clear that the "seekers" who join these groups are genuine in their spiritual search. However, in the case of a small number of movements dialogue has proven difficult to achieve. On occasion we have had to engage in dialogue-in-confrontation, or debate publicly with representatives of a group. Our reason for taking such a step arises from the conviction that the public has a right to know how people can be affected by the activities of a particular organization. When we do reluctantly find it necessary to go public on a group, it is always the aim of Dialogue Ireland to speak the truth in a spirit of genuine Christian love for the members and leaders of the movement in question, as well as for the families of everyone involved. However difficult things may be, every group has the potential to change the direction of its policies and activities for the better.

The role of Dialogue Ireland is:

- To work for contact and dialogue among people with different beliefs and philosophies; recognizing the vast differences that exist among New Religious Movements active in Ireland.
- To promote the study and understanding of World Religions as the context for understanding New Religious Movements. We hold an annual conference on some aspect of religion to further this aim
- To compile and assess current documentation, news reports on NRM's and by way of our web site to provide access to up to date information as well as links to significant sites in the field.
- To provide pastoral support to members and former members of NRM's and their families according to their needs.
- To provide information on NRM's for clergy, teachers, the medical profession and the media.
- To provide information and educational service to schools, vocational groups and other establishments. This involves explaining the rise of NRMs and the increasing interest in Ouija Boards, seances and the paranormal as part of the dabbling or exploration carried out by young people. Rather than warn or raise fears, our strategy is to inform and empower young people.

Scope: From our base in Dublin, we offer our services nationally and internationally.

Supporting Dialogue Ireland: If you would like to make a donation to support the work of Dialogue Ireland, our bank details are:

Charity Reg: CHY 14004
Bank code: 93-10-55
Account: 20918 199
Address: AIB
37/38 O'Connell Street
Dublin 1

TO MAKE AN
ELECTRONIC
PAYMENT

IBAN:

IE64AIBK9310552091
8199

Swift Code: AIBKIE2D

Contributions of €250 or more attract tax relief, as we are a charity.

Please find below our standing order form if you would like to help fund the work of Dialogue Ireland:

For Further information please contact: DIALOGUE IRELAND
7/8 Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1
Tel (01) 830 9384 - Fax (01) 874 4913 - Mobile (087) 2396229
Email address: dialogueireland@esatclear.ie
www.esatclear.ie/~dialogueireland

Promoting Awareness and Understanding of New Religious Movements

DIALOGUE IRELAND TRUST

BANK STANDING ORDER FORM FOR DIRECT GIVING

Please charge to my account as follows:

A/C No: _____

A/C Name: _____

Bank name&address:_____

Bank Sorting Code: _____ - _____ - _____

Amount of € _____ in words _____

Starting from (date) _____

Payable: (monthly / quarterly/ annually) _____

Finishing date (if required): _____ OPEN _____

Credited to the account of:

Dialogue Ireland

Account No: 20918 199

AIB Bank

37/38 O'Connell St. Dublin 1.

Sort code: 93 - 10 - 55

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please complete this form and return to your own bank.

For Dialogue Ireland's own records we would be grateful if you could send us a copy also. Thank you for your valued support.

69 Whitworth Rd; Drumcondra, Dublin 9, Ireland