

Chair of government-funded charity says Islam is “demonic”

Posted: Wed, 22nd Feb 2023

The government recently gave thousands of pounds to a Christian group whose chair said Islam is "demonic" and "spiritual wickedness", the National Secular Society has found.

Zion Projects, a Christian charity based in Eastleigh, Hampshire, is one of [16 religious organisations](#) given a total of £1.3 million in public money as part of the government's 'Faith New Deal' fund. Zion Projects was awarded £43,220 last year for a project entitled "As One Hampshire".

A 2020 [video](#) (*pictured*) on Vimeo shows Danny Stupple, [the chair and a trustee](#) of Zion Projects, making anti-Islam comments during a Covid-19 lockdown meeting of the "Eastleigh Prophetic Hub".

In the video, which opens with the Zion Projects logo, Stupple responds to a question about Islamic 'calls to prayer' being broadcast during lockdown by saying "a very strong force of spiritual wickedness known as Islam is engaging in warfare against the Lord with its open air prayers".

He said that Islamic prayers are "one example" of "the enemy" trying to use the Covid-19 pandemic, adding that the Islamic system of belief "is truly demonic".

He advised that anyone who hears the calls to prayers should "deny it power in Jesus' name", which is "more than able to deal with the spiritual forces of wickedness in those prayers". He called such a scenario a "warfare context".

The findings follow a recent [report](#) by Muslim advocacy group Mercy Mission UK which questioned the absence of Muslim organisations among recipients of 'faith new deal' grants. All but three of the recipients are Christian; two are interfaith organisations, and one is Jewish.

A freedom of information request to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLHC) found 351 organisations applied for Faith New Deal funding, including at least 21 Muslim groups.

The NSS has written to Baroness Scott of Bybrook, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at DHLC, to express its concerns and ask what checks were made on the recipients of Faith New Deal funding.

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In the same video, Stupple also suggests God is using the pandemic to "make the point of the value of life" because he anticipates "the same amount of babies being saved as the number of people who die" as a result of women being unable to get abortions during lockdown.

He also claims that Brexit is "important to the Lord" and that Dominic Cummings has an "anointing" to accomplish it.

He says biblical creationists don't "make the mistake of thinking like the world thinks with its evolutionary offer", which "leads us into a wrong conclusion about the origin of things such as virus."

Stupple ran as an independent candidate in the Eastleigh 2013 by-election. He opposed same-sex marriage as part of his campaign, saying "real marriage is between a man and a woman" in a [campaign video](#).

Zion Projects was also [awarded](#) £19,750 by Hampshire County Council last year to "help to provide a range of projects including a community café".

The 'faith new deal' fund

The government's "Faith New Deal pilot scheme" was launched in 2021 for faith-based organisations that provide community services to "tackle issues affecting the most vulnerable". Groups with no religious ethos were ineligible for funding.

The NSS has [criticised](#) the scheme as "discriminatory" and has raised concerns about the ethics of giving public money to faith groups which may have an agenda to proselytise. Several of the groups funded by the faith new deal require workers and volunteers to be Christians.

In addition, four groups with Christian connections received a total of nearly £1 million from the [DLHC's UK Community Ownership Fund](#), according to updates from the DLHC published this month. They included Barking's Lifeline Church and Sawyers Church, both of which are affiliated with the Evangelical Alliance which opposes same-sex relationships.

The "As One" campaign

Zion Projects' "As One Hampshire" project appears to be a [local branch](#) of the national "As One" campaign by Uturn UK, a Community Interest Company which [promotes](#) "street associations" to engender "civic responsibility and volunteering". Church leaders are used to promote the street associations locally.

Stupple appears on a [video](#) about As One published on Vimeo in February.

Although the As One website does not have many references to religion, Uturn says in its [articles of association](#) that its objects are "to promote Christian faith and Christian values". Additionally, every resource on its [Schools](#) section was created by created by the Diocese of Worcester and the Diocese of Birmingham and includes Christian prayers.

In 2011 the Charity Commission for England and Wales refused to register Uturn as a charity because of doubts over "street associations" being exclusively charitable. The commission was concerned that they could provide services to individuals which confer a private benefit, because Uturn exercises little or no control over what a street association does or how it is run. Uturn appealed the decision at the First-tier Tribunal (General Regulatory Chamber) in 2012 but was [dismissed](#).

NSS: Faith new deal 'pits religions against each other'

NSS head of campaigns Megan Manson said: "It is completely inappropriate for the government to fund an organisation whose chair makes such divisive and hostile comments.

"This case reveals why the government should never have launched a fund exclusively for faith groups to deliver public services in the first place. Not only does such a fund raise serious concerns about equality and proselytising – it also ends up pitting religious groups against each other, which is toxic to social cohesion and pluralism.

"The government should cease its 'faith new deal' project and instead award funds to community groups based on the quality of their provision and their commitment to the values of equality and human rights – not which gods, if any, they believe in."

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