



An anti-abortion rally in Belfast

Catholic church in Northern Ireland pushes against easing of abortion law

The Catholic church in [Northern Ireland](#) is pressing the attorney general to appeal against a landmark ruling by Belfast's high court that will

ease the near-total ban on abortions in the region.

Harriet Sherwood writes in The Guardian - In [a judgment issued in November](#), the court said pregnancies could be terminated in cases of rape, incest and fatal foetal abnormality. The attorney general is considering whether to appeal against the judgment.

There were a number of grounds for “a fundamental challenge” to the ruling, said Tim Bartlett, secretary of the Catholic Council for Social Affairs. The Catholic church was recognised by the court as an ‘interested party’ in the case, giving it the right to be heard in court.

“The most obvious one is the claim by the judge that there is no life to be protected in cases of so-called fatal foetal abnormality,” Bartlett said. The church preferred to use the term “life-limiting condition”, he added.

“In the church, we work with women whose babies have life-limiting conditions, and these children can live for minutes, hours, days, weeks and in some cases years. The child is still technically, clinically and in every sense alive as a human person, and is entitled to have their life

protected,” he said.

The Catholic church believed that “the right to life of an innocent person is always inviolable, and that is a fundamental moral principle on which society and human rights should stand. That right begins from the moment of conception, and science affirms that,” Bartlett said.

The church also rejected the right of raped woman to seek an abortion. Although rape was “the most heinous of crimes, the answer is not to take the life of an innocent third party. The challenge is to give that person every possible support and care.”

The Presbyterian church – the largest Protestant denomination in Northern Ireland – said it also opposed an easing of the current law, saying it was “content” with current provisions which permit abortion only when the mother’s life or mental stability is at risk.

The church opposes abortion on demand for social reasons or “as a form of birth control”, and says stringent safeguards are needed to prevent abuse in exceptional cases where a

medical abortion might be necessary.

But, said Norman Hamilton, a former moderator of the Presbyterian church, “we have always taken the view, contrary to the Catholic church, that where the mother’s life is in serious danger, or if there is substantial risk to mental health, then the law allows for abortion, and we are content with that.” But it too disputed the notion of fatal foetal abnormality. “The assumption that a child will not survive after a birth is not sufficiently watertight,” said Hamilton.

More at -

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/07/abortion-law-catholic-church-northern-ireland-opposing-high-court-ruling>

US hotelier’s trust invests in Irish vocations

A US charitable foundation has awarded a substantial grant to a group in Ireland to help promote religious life

The Conrad N Hilton Foundation, founded by the hotel entrepreneur, has give more than £200,000 to Vocations Ireland, an umbrella organisation



which helps religious orders encourage new members.

The grant, which is spread over three years, is specifically to help build organisational capacity for Vocations Ireland to enable the group to support and nurture vocations to the consecrated religious life in Ireland today.

Margaret Cartwright, the Vocations Ireland director, said she was ‘delighted’ with the grant and said it would allow the organisation to support religious orders, congregations and missionary societies in telling the stories of their ministry.

“While the challenges ahead may be daunting, we are indeed excited to be working with the Hilton Foundation and look forward to

developing together new and exciting possibilities and opportunities for religious life in Ireland today.” she said. “This will help Vocations Ireland as a charitable organisation to develop the capacity of our organisation, improve the services we can offer to our members and assist us in our outreach to the wider Church community in the re-telling of our vocation story.”

Ms Cartwright said Vocations Ireland would like to express appreciation and gratitude to the Hilton Foundation board of directors for their vision, commitment and generous investment in the future of religious life and for their confidence in Vocations Ireland and its leadership.

The Conrad N Hilton Foundation is a US-based non-profit charitable foundation, established in 1944 by Conrad N Hilton, with a long history of supporting the work of Catholic religious Sisters.

Rugby players at Belfast cathedral

Three well-known Ulster Rugby players – Ruan Pienaar, Wiehahn Herbst and Paul Marshall – will be talking about their faith at a service in St Anne’s Cathedral, Belfast, on Monday, 25th January, at 8pm.

Ruan Pienaar is possibly the best known of the three. He has 88 caps for South Africa and played for the South African team that won the World Cup in 2007. Pienaar joined Ulster in 2010 and is very happy with life here as well as the rugby at Kingspan Stadium. A devout Christian, he says: 'I have always believed, with my Christianity, that there's so much more to life than rugby. Being here gives me an enormous sense of purpose. I am not just here for rugby. I'm here to touch lives.'

The three players will be interviewed by the BBC's Mark Simpson. Shane Logan, Chief Executive of Ulster Rugby, will also talk about his faith. In addition, there will be a quiz, a short time of worship, and personal prayer for those who would like to receive it. The event is being sponsored by Christian Vision for Men and Divine Healing Ministries. It promises to be a great evening and all will be very welcome.

Baptism criterion could easily be removed, Bishop Eamon Martin

There should be a more plural offering of schools in Ireland to represent where people are at, according to Archbishop Eamon Martin, Primate of All Ireland.

He added that the Catholic Church is open to this, and to removing criterion that children have to be baptised to get into a catholic school.

Speaking to Damian O'Reilly of RTE Radio 1's Countrywide programme from St Patrick's Cathedral in Armagh, Archbishop Eamon Martin said, "The Catholic Church has no interest in having a monopoly of all of the schools of Ireland. It is far more important to have a strong Catholic ethos in a school which wishes to be a Catholic School."

He said that surveys and work done around the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism showed that parish communities were often reluctant to have the Catholic ethos of their local schools changed.

He expects that the divesting of Catholic patronage will 'evolve' as some schools close or amalgamate and others are offered for non-Catholic patronage.

The Archbishop said that as long as people work together and no one is forced into anything or challenged in a confrontational way, change will come.

When asked by Damian O'Reilly about how many parents feel under pressure to baptise

children to gain entry into a Catholic school Archbishop Martin said, “I think that is overstatement.”

He said he resented a little bit this impression that people are having their children baptised to get them into a school.

“There may be examples of that but I think that is hugely overstated, and it is also an insult to people who choose to have their children baptised because they want them to be brought up in their faith.”

He added that in his 28 years of priesthood he has never had the sense that anyone coming to him about baptising a child was doing it to get that child into a Catholic school.

He said that it is very, very, rare for a school to use the criterion of baptism. It is just one of many criterion used in the Republic of Ireland and it is not used in Northern Ireland and is not even on the books.

“I think that (baptism) criterion could easily be removed. I would hate to think that baptism is some sort of stamp that you had to get in order to get into a school. I think it is far, far, more important than that for most people,” he said.

See RTE Radio 1 player service for full interview.
<http://www.rte.ie/radio1/countrywide/>

Choral evening a new experience for Carrick parish

The St Anne's Cathedral Choir will sing Evensong in Holy Trinity Parish Church, Woodburn, Carrickfergus, on Sunday January 10 at 6pm.

The choir, which will also sing Evensong in the Cathedral at 3.30pm that day, has been invited by the rector of Woodburn, the Rev Dr Alan McCann who said there had never been a service of choral evensong in Holy Trinity before.

“We have many people from all sorts of musical backgrounds and people who have never experienced worship in this form before,” said Alan. “We wanted to support and encourage the work of the Dean and St Anne's in reaching out to the community in Belfast though the choir school programme.”

Alan said this was an opportunity to come together and worship God through music. “Further, we see it as a means to reach out to some people in our own community of Woodburn Parish who appreciate this form of

music and worship and whom we are seeking to reach with the good news of Christ.”

Alan concluded that this was ‘an opportunity to broaden the musical horizons of the people of Holy Trinity to the richness and depth of worship that exists across our diocese.’

Church Music Dublin’s popular short course in music, liturgy and worship

Church Music Dublin is running its popular short course in music, liturgy and worship again this year. *Living Worship 2016* takes place on three consecutive Saturdays beginning on January 16. The venues for the course are The Mageough Hall, Cowper Road, Rathmines, and Sandford Parish Church, Ranelagh, and sessions run from 10.00 am to 1.00 pm.

Living Worship aims to help church musicians see their role in a wider context than just playing an instrument or directing a choir. The course has something for everyone – musicians, worship leaders, clergy and others with pastoral responsibility – all who have an interest in the

music of worship. Practical music skills are not required to take part.

On Saturday, January 16, in the Mageough, **Bishop Harold Miller** will discuss ways of using music appropriately in the parish church during Holy Week and on Easter Day. He will use material from his worship guide 'Week of All Weeks', published early in 2015.

On Saturday, January 23, in the Mageough, **Archdeacon Ricky Rountree** will look at options for the use of music at the Eucharist when it includes the liturgy of Holy Baptism.

On Saturday, January 30, in Sandford Church, international concert organist **Gerard Brooks** will direct a practical workshop (partly at the organ console) on service accompaniment, particularly showing how to accompany worship songs. He will use examples from the hymnal supplement 'Thanks & Praise'.

The course costs €10 per session (payable on the day). To book, send an email to info@churchmusicdublin.org

'From Earth to Heaven – How to lift your music off the page'
An organ class given by Gerard Brooks

Separate from Living Worship, on the afternoon of Saturday, January 30, Gerard Brooks will give a class on simple improvisation – for example, demonstrating how to fill unexpected gaps in a service or to extend hymns while a collection is taken up. No prior knowledge of organ improvisation is required.

Numbers at this class will be limited, so advance booking is essential. The fee is €25. To reserve a place, contact Jacqueline Mullen by email at honsec@churchmusicdublin.org not later than January 16.

One in six Irish children face food poverty says Barnardos

New figures show that the children's charity helped 340 more children in 2015 than in 2014. Food poverty, poor access to health services and homelessness are just some of the realities for many Irish children today.

“Barnardos research found that in Ireland today one in six children face food poverty; children from low-income families are waiting far longer for essential health treatments; and the number of children becoming homeless just keeps

rising,” said June Tinsley, head of advocacy at Barnardos.

The charity’s preliminary figures show that the charity helped 340 more children in 2015 than in 2014.

That was almost 12,000 children who are not just denied physical needs but suffer knock-on effects such as difficulties in school.

For example, children’s maths and reading scores increase by 4% for every 1% more their parents earn.

“We know that in times of severe difficulty children are too often disproportionately affected,” said June Tinsley. She explained they often feel they are not worthy enough to have the same hopes and dreams as other children.

A survey of more than 500 young people aged 11-17 found that they know school is important for their future lives, and want to attend third-level education. They also want to be active and involved in their sports and community lives.

Barnardos states that many young people do not get the opportunity to properly participate in such activities.

The Charity's statistics show that children from poorer households are 25% less likely to feel teachers understand them than those from wealthier households.

One young person told Barnardos, "All of us should be treated equally no matter who we are. All children should get a good education."

Another said they would like to build an athletics track and football pitches in poorer areas to help keep children off the streets.

Barnardos has called on politicians to help "these important and inspiring young people", especially as now in post-recession they have more resources to invest.

Barnardos said that instead of giving tax cuts across the board for the term of the next Government, they should use the money to improve child welfare and protection services, early years care, education, health and housing supports.

Barnardos supported more than 11,718 children in 2015 compared to 11,378 in 2014.

Family disputes, addiction, bereavement and loss are among the reasons why families seek help from the children's charity, which works

with parents struggling to meet the needs of their children.

Barnardos, with two other children's organisations, has also commented on the Government's announcement that it is to increase the Direct Provision Allowance (DPA) for children by €6.

This is the first increase in almost 16 years. However, one spokesperson commented that it would barely cover the cost of a bottle of Calpol.

Donations to Christian Aid fall: Charities face 'perfect storm'

In what may be a sign of troubled times ahead for charities, Christian Aid's income fell by four per cent last year.

Analysed by **Third Sector** magazine, its latest accounts show that the annual Christian Aid Week fundraising appeal, supported by thousands of churches around the country, raised less than previous years, falling by £600,000 to £11.1 million. Overall, donations income was down by four per cent.

The greatest fall, however, was in the amount received from institutional contracts in which Christian Aid receives funding to carry out

particular pieces of aid work; this fell by 13 per cent. The charity's total income was £99.9m in the year to 31 March 2015, compared with £103.6m in the previous year.

At £15 million, the charity's reserves also showed a shortfall of £5 million against its target of £20.3 million. There is also a relatively small deficit of £5.9m on its final-salary pension scheme.

However, despite the below-par returns from Christian Aid Week, the charity's Christmas appeal exceeded expectations. It raised £3.6m in 2014, £2.1m more than the previous year.

In the charity's annual report, chief executive Loretta Minghella says: "Despite the record-breaking success of the Christmas appeal, the enormous generosity of our supporters and our continuing track record in securing and successfully completing large-scale government-funded contracts, our income was less than we had planned for, particularly from Christian Aid Week.

"We are beginning to implement new approaches now, as we learn from the success of our Christmas appeal, and with a focus on better use of digital communications."

The chief executive of another Christian charity, Embrace the Middle East, has warned that UK charities face "an almost perfect storm" in 2016.

Jeremy Moodey wrote in a blog post of the increasing calls on charities' help because of the scaling back of welfare support in the UK and war and refugee crises abroad. "Charities are needed more than ever. Yet on the other hand the environment in which they have to work is becoming increasingly difficult," he said.

Referring to a recent survey showing a decreasing level of public trust in charities, he said: "Their credibility with donors has sunk to unprecedented levels, their executives have become the new 'fat cats', and their ability to raise funds is likely to be severely constrained by government regulation."

Moodey says that the latter issue is likely to prove the most serious. He is particularly critical of the government's proposal to introduce a Fundraising Preference Service (FPS) which could enable people to opt out of all charity fundraising communications, whether by telephone or mail. "This could devastate the UK non-profit sector," he said, and would particularly impact smaller charities. "The risk is

that the bigger charities with more aggressive fundraising strategies will continue to over-mail potential supporters who will then in desperation sign up for the FPS and thus inadvertently prevent smaller and less aggressive charities, including those they currently support, from ever contacting them."

Moodey concludes: "Yes, some charities (particularly the bigger ones) need to raise their game. But the longer-term consequences of the government's actions for civil society organisations in this country, including faith-based charities such as Embrace, could be catastrophic."

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

McGrory under fire for 'ridiculous cases'

The father of an Afghanistan veteran who was fined after giving a pitch side performance of the Birdie Song at Windsor Park, has called for "the money spent on ridiculous court cases to be pumped into mental health in Northern Ireland".

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/barra-mcgrory-under-fire-for-ridiculous-court-cases-1-7148026>

Westminster should change the law

There was an outpouring of support for Pastor McConnell on Tuesday after he was cleared of making “grossly offensive” remarks about Muslims.

Download News Letter iPad application and try it for free for 30 days!

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/westminster-should-change-law-under-which-pastor-was-tried-1-7146151>

Remove prosecutor over Pastor McConnell, Sammy Wilson

It was worth missing David Cameron’s climbdown on allowing ministers to campaign for the UK to leave the EU, in the House of Commons yesterday, in order to be in court in Belfast and celebrate with Pastor McConnell and hundreds of his congregation and supporters, when the judge announced he was not guilty of breaking the law.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/sammy-wilson-top-prosecutor-must-be-removed-over-pastor-mcconnell-1-7146155>

Border Protestants easy target

Innocent Victim United’s thoughts and prayers are with the Kingsmills families as they mark yet another milestone anniversary this week since the brutal and sectarian murder of their loved ones 40 years ago on a rural country road in the heart of south Armagh.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/the-protestant-minority-on-the-border-suffered-decades-of-sectarian-republican-murder-1-7148280>

Exams timetabled to accommodate Ramadan

BBC News

Exams boards timetable key A-levels and GCSEs this summer to take into account the Muslim holy month of Ramadan

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-35244444>

Teachers should not expect to get jobs. NI minister

News Letter

The Education Minister has sent a message to would-be teachers across Northern Ireland that they should not expect to have full-time jobs.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/o-dowd-teachers-should-not-expect-to-get-jobs-1-7148029>

Soldier manipulated children at C of I evangelical home

Irish News

A soldier "manipulated" children at a Church of Ireland-run home, two former residents told an abuse inquiry on Wednesday. The men, now ...

<http://www.irishnews.com/news/2016/01/07/news/soldier-manipulated-children-at-anglican-home-374446/>

Times/Mail/Express/Mirror

Stories on Britain's friendliest village after St Andrew's Church in Congresbury, Somerset, recorded 800 kindly acts on cards in a good deeds box to celebrate its 800th anniversary. They state good deeds ranged from delivering aid to refugees in Calais to paying a

neighbour's vet bill. The target of 800 deeds was reached on Christmas Day.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article4658562.ece>

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/632277/>

[Congresbury-Britain kindest village good deeds](#)

[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3387264/The-kindest-village-Britain-Residents-wash-strangers-cars-clothes-rough-sleepers-away-Star-Wars-tickets-carry-800-random-acts-kindness-year.html?](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3387264/The-kindest-village-Britain-Residents-wash-strangers-cars-clothes-rough-sleepers-away-Star-Wars-tickets-carry-800-random-acts-kindness-year.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

[ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490](http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/village-everyone-random-acts-kindness-7128518)

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/village-everyone-random-acts-kindness-7128518>

Guard

Report that Year 5 and 6 pupils at [Easington Church of England academy](#) in Yorkshire are making daily return journeys by bus to a sister school because the academy cannot find qualified staff to teach key stage two maths and literacy. Sal Smith, the executive headteacher, is quoted.

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/jan/06/>

[teacher-shortage-village-primary-sister-school-easington](#)

Tel

Report on Pew Research Centre findings on attitudes to religion, showing that people in the UK feel less strongly about religion than in other countries of the world. It mentions the CofE Lord's Prayer advert.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/12084731/>

[This-graph-shows-how-strongly-people-around-the-world-feel-about-religion.html](#)

Ind

Review of David Mitchell BBC programme *Behaving Ourselves* on manners and politeness which mentions contribution from Notts CofE priest the Revd Kate Bottley who appears on Channel 4's Gogglebox. It states she talks about having to be nice all the time, eating cake and suffering people eating crisps on the train.
<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/reviews/behaving-ourselves-mitchell-on-manners-review-politeness-costs-nothing-not-from-where-im-standing-a6800011.html>

Tel

Article on happiness and children advocates among other suggestions more family time. The article cites the Children's Society Good Childhood Report.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/family/what-are-the-secrets-of-the-worlds-happiest-children/>

Tel

Article on beach holidays says it was a vicar, the Reverend Clarke, in 1736 who invented the beach holiday and wrote to friends about his first trip to the seaside.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/sunandsea/12080567/How-an-English-vicar-invented-the-beach-holiday.html>

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