



A review of current news with web links

Churches to consult on abortion

News Letter - The main churches in Northern Ireland have reiterated their pro-life stance on abortion but will be consulting on the Justice Department's document proposing changes to the law.

The views come following the Department of Justice's recommendation that abortions should be allowed in Northern Ireland where the foetus has a lethal abnormality. The department is to begin a public consultation on amending the criminal law on abortion.

The Rev Dr Norman Hamilton, speaking on behalf of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, said the church holds a "strong pro-life position".

He said: "The church will be examining very carefully the proposals in the public consultation document issued by the Minister of Justice and will make a considered response in due course.

"It is very important that in such a complex matter careful consideration is given, not only to the direct effect of any changes to the current law on abortion, but also to the wider consequences of any such changes.

"It is essential that the exact meaning and full implications of what is proposed are understood by everyone and that any debate is both informed and conducted with sensitivity and grace."

Methodist Church spokesman the Rev Roy Cooper said the document would be brought before the church's Council on Social Responsibility.

"We are not in favour of abortion on demand, but we would ask for consideration to be given in the cases of foetal abnormality, incest and rape," he said.

"That is our current position and has been for the last ten or more years."

The Rev Adrian Dorrian of the Church of Ireland said a working group would meet to discuss the latest development.

“We are not in a position as yet to give a formal response. We will be looking at the proposed legislation, we will be commenting in detail, but our approach as a church has generally been from the perspective that all life is a gift, including the life of an unborn child, but we do recognise that there are occasionally circumstances where it is not just as straightforward as that.”

Fr Eddie McGee said the position of the Catholic Church remained “very clear” on abortion – that there should be “the protection of life from the moment of conception onwards”.

“That has been its consistent position. We will be engaging with the process of consultation but that would be our position,” he said.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/churches-to-consult-on-abortion-1-6350070>

Presbyterian Church launches New Nightlight Programme

Since 1995, Nightlight has been active in bringing a Christian presence to the popular party areas of Belfast city such as Botanic Avenue, the Cathedral Quarter and the Odyssey arena, with an offer of hot drinks and conversation about Jesus on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

Reach offers Presbyterian congregations stand alone sessions to both introduce the work of Nightlight in the streets of Belfast and to share what they have learned in ways which apply to any church seeking to reach out to their local community. Sessions can be tailored to suit a variety of settings including PW meetings, Sunday services in alternative format, midweek groups and youth fellowships.

Nightlight is under the care of the Board of Mission in Ireland and is currently staffed by Linzi Cobain and Brian Simons along with a team of dedicated volunteers.

Rev. David Thompson, the Board of Mission in Ireland’s Mission Development Officer, said, “Nightlight has been witnessing to people well beyond the usual reach of the Church for 20 years and as such has a wealth of experience and stories to share. With church connection declining as it has done, we have to find ways of going to people where they are.

“This new deputation programme offers a way for our congregations not only

to learn about the work of Nightlight, but to be further challenged and equipped to rise to the contemporary challenge of showing and sharing the good news of Jesus to people beyond the reach of church life in their own areas.

“The principles of Nightlight are based around the acronym PURE - Presence, Unconditional care, Relationship and Evangelism – going to where the people are, serving others in Jesus’ name, patiently befriending people and sharing the life giving message of the gospel of Jesus.”

For more information on *Reach* and to book a session, contact the Nightlight team on +44 (0)28 9033 2777 or email info@nightlight.org

Church Must Act as Moral Compass for Law - New Law Term Service Hears



The annual New Law Term Service took place in St Michan’s Church, Dublin, yesterday, Monday October 6th. Archbishop Michael Jackson presided and with him were the Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, the Very Revd Dermot Dunne, and the Archdeacon of Dublin, the Ven David Pierpoint, who gave the address.

The large congregation included the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Christy Burke, and Chief Justice Susan Denham as well as members of the Irish Judiciary, An Garda Síochána, the Defence Forces, the Diplomatic Corps and many from

the legal profession. There were also visiting judges from Northern Ireland, Scotland and England and Wales. The choir was from The King's Hospital School.

In his address, Archdeacon Pierpoint suggested that law and religion went hand in hand. However, he said that the Church should not interfere in matters of State or the law but instead should act as a moral compass.

'Law is there to protect the weak and at times we all need that protection. Law is there to protect us from ourselves, but it cannot make us virtuous and when Law enters the arena of morality, it nearly always runs into difficulties. How far can sexual behaviour or same sex marriage or blasphemy or the right of women for personal autonomy be dealt with by Law, except in the limited sense of protecting the vulnerable?' he asked.

'By the same token, the talk about the imposition of harsher penalties for certain crimes and lesser penalties for others and still further proposed legislation on issues of integrity and self-determination in the name of law and order can only make a very limited impact on the well-being of society and may even prove to be counterproductive,' he added.

The Archdeacon urged legislators to be cautious when preparing changes to our Constitution, particularly in the area of morality. More at -

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/caution-urged-in-addressing-changes-to-blasphemy-laws-1.1953598>

Retired priest may be extradited from Ireland

Rochdale News - Retired priest, Canon Mortimer Stanley, who retired from St Vincent de Paul church, Norden in 2002, may be extradited from Ireland to face a string of sex charges involving Rochdale schoolgirls.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has authorised Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to charge Canon Stanley after a number of complaints by former pupils at St Vincent's Primary School were made.

Canon Stanley, who is now living in Ireland, was first questioned by police last year and is now due to face 17 charges of indecent assault on girls under the age of 14.

It is understood that the allegations involved 10 victims and are said to have taken place between 1977 and 2002 when the victims were pupils at St Vincent's Primary School – which has been historically linked to the parish.

Canon Stanley has previously travelled back to Greater Manchester to answer police questions but it is now understood that the police are considering extradition proceedings in order to press charges.

He was originally interviewed in November 2013 when three women claimed they were indecently assaulted and sexually abused when they were pupils at St Vincent de Paul.

<http://www.rochdaleonline.co.uk/news-features/2/news-headlines/91804/canon-mortimer-stanley-could-be-extradited-from-ireland-to-face-sex-charges-involving-rochdale-schoolgirls>

Irish Girl Guides celebrate International Day of the Girl by thinking positive

Thousands of Irish Girl Guides members have been thinking positive in the run up to International Day of the Girl (11th October) by celebrating their many attributes.

At their weekly meetings with volunteer leaders, girls from age five have been considering their good qualities, which play a major part in their day-to-day lives. Smart, happy, kind, confident, fun and adventurous were some of the positive characteristics that girls identified in themselves.

“International Day of the Girl is a day to celebrate girls - our power, our voices and our unique place in the world,” says **IGG Chief Commissioner Helen Concannon**. “This ties in with IGG’s mission – to enable girls and young women to develop to their fullest potential as responsible citizens of the world. Through all our activities, we help girls embrace their strengths and to develop confidence and leadership skills while having a lot of fun.

“The 11th of October is a day when girls are encouraged to recognise that they are much more than they might believe. We would encourage all girls and young women to take a moment to pause and reflect on the positive attributes they possess that bring out the best in them and to focus on the many ways they can help themselves – and others – to lead happy, fulfilled lives.

To mark the first ever International Day of the Girl two years ago, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) asked the 10 million Girl Guides and Girl Scouts in 145 countries what kind of world they wanted to create for girls. The response was that the ideal world would be one in which girls were equal to boys, that everyone's human rights were respected, that a sustainable future for all was guaranteed and that girls were educated, safe, healthy and had decent jobs and opportunities to lead.

Irish Girl Guides welcomes new members from age 5, young leaders from age 15 and adult leaders from age 18. To find out more, see www.irishgirlguides.ie.

Number of humanist weddings in Ireland trebles as 750 to tie the knot this year

Independent - Irish couples are losing their religion when it comes to marriage with the number of humanist ceremonies trebling to around 750 this year.

That compares with 209 official humanist weddings conducted in 2013, when they finally became a viable legal option in Ireland.

And even though the number of registered humanist celebrants has mushroomed from one to 15 in the last year, they cannot keep up with demand for their services, said Brian Whitehead, director of ceremonies with the Humanist Association of Ireland (HAI).

Many humanist celebrants get 20 requests a day from couples eager to have a formal ceremony, and sought-after weekend dates are often booked out far in advance, he said.

"The bottom line is people like choice and increasingly some feel that going back to the church just for the wedding just doesn't feel right," he said.

While humanist ceremonies have been around for years, these were purely ceremonial in nature until the end of 2012, when after a lengthy HAI campaign legislation was changed to permit registration of humanist celebrants as legal marriage solemnisers.

The first legal humanist wedding was performed in April 2013, and around 410 were performed last year, though a significant number of these were purely ceremonial, said Mr Whiteside.

New Central Statistics Office figures show there were 209 official humanist marriages last year, while civil ceremonies, which includes humanist ones, have shot up to over 6,000 a year, nearly a third of all weddings.

More at -

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/number-of-humanist-weddings-here-trebles-as-750-to-tie-the-knot-this-year-30640674.html>

Survey finds C of E clergy wedded to the parish system

Church Times - Church of England clergy are overwhelmingly committed to the parish system, despite the challenges it poses, a new survey by YouGov suggests.

This is one of the clearest findings to come out of new research devised by the team behind last year's Westminster Faith Debates.

The survey asked 1500 Anglican clergy, chosen at random ([News, 15 August](#)), how important the parish system was to them: 83 per cent said important, 12 per cent said not important, and five per cent held no strong view.

The only other of the 29 questions asked that generated such unanimity, regardless of church tradition, concerned the nature of God: 83 per cent believed in a personal God; nine per cent answered: "No one can know what God is like."

The commitment to parish ministry was informed by the missionary focus of those who responded to the questionnaire. Asked which constituency the Church of England should prioritise, they replied:

- England as a whole - **66%**
- Anglicans who are not regular churchgoers - **18%**
- Regular churchgoers - **5%**
- Other - **7%**
- No opinion - **2%**
- Don't know - **2%**



"There's a feeling of vibrancy": clergy from the dioceses of Blackburn, Liverpool and Manchester are supporting a campaign to highlight the benefits of working and ministry in the North West of England, launched at the Christian Resources Exhibition, in Manchester, this week. Examples of clergy working in the region include the Revd Anne Taylor, Vicar of St Peter's, Formby

More at -

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2014/10-october/news/uk/survey-finds-c-of-e-clergy-wedded-to-the-parish-system>

Vicar of Baghdad leaves Iraq

The Anglican priest known as the ‘Vicar of Baghdad’ has left Iraq and won’t be returning in the immediate future because of the dangers there. Canon Andrew White, who is currently in Jerusalem, told Premier Christian Radio that his departure was on the advice of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, but his work there would continue.

“I’m really stupid...I have no concept of fear,” he told Premier’s Marcus Jones in an exclusive radio interview. “I’m not frightened of anything so I have to listen to people who are wiser and more sensible than me, like the Archbishop of Canterbury.



“He happens to be a very good and close friend of mine and he’s taking the right decision. There is no guarantee that I will be safe. There is no guarantee that Baghdad won’t fall. At the moment it is in the hands of the Iraqi government but, if it did fall and I was there, I would fall as well – or my head would.

“God often talks to us through other people and God is saying to me ‘get out you idiot’.”

Canon White admitted that he’ll miss the young people of Baghdad most of all. “I’m really going to miss my youth, my young people, my children. That’s what I’ll really be in tears about,” he said.

He confirmed that he plans to work in other parts of Iraq in due course.

<http://anglicanmainstream.org/vicar-of-baghdad-leaves-iraq/>

Obituary - The Right Reverend Stephen Sykes

Telegraph - The Right Reverend Stephen Sykes, who has died aged 75, was

Bishop of Ely from 1990 to 1999 and one of the most distinguished prelates of his time. It states he moved to Ely from the Regius chair of Divinity at Cambridge, and before that held the Van Mildert chair of Divinity at Durham. Sykes belonged firmly to the Church of England's liberal wing and was a powerful defender of the historic Anglican tradition of equal regard for Scripture, Tradition and Reason in the defining of faith. A prolific writer, he published *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (1978), *Unashamed Anglicanism* (1985) and *The Study of Anglicanism* (1988), which remain standard texts. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/11149292/The-Right-Reverend-Stephen-Sykes-obituary.html>