



Anti-abortion campaigner Bernadette Smyth was among many in the the courtroom for the hearing

Northern Ireland abortion law can be challenged, court rules

The [Northern Ireland](#) Human Rights Commission has won High Court permission to challenge abortion law in Northern Ireland.

Irish Times - A judge in Belfast has granted leave to seek a judicial review amid claims the current near-blanket ban on terminations is a violation of human rights.

“This case raises issues of considerable public importance which require to be examined at a substantive hearing,” Mr Justice Treacy said.

The commission issued proceedings against the Department of Justice as part of an attempt to secure a change in the law to allow abortion in cases of rape, incest or serious foetal malformation.

Terminations are currently only legal in Northern Ireland to protect the woman’s life or where there is a risk of permanent and serious damage to her mental or physical health.

The court battle comes as Minister for Justice [David Ford](#) continues a public consultation on amending the criminal law on abortion in Northern Ireland.

It includes a recommendation for proposed legislation allowing an abortion in circumstances where there is no prospect of the foetus being delivered and having a viable life. But according to counsel for the commission the consultation does not commit to making the changes it believes are necessary.

In court, Nathalie Lieven QC argued the current situation breaches rights to freedom from torture and inhuman and degrading treatment, discrimination and entitlements to privacy under the European Convention on Human Rights.

She contended that the consultation's main focus is on serious foetal abnormality.

In submissions the lawyer claimed there is a high-level of support in Northern Ireland for decriminalising terminations in both those circumstances and cases of rape and incest.

More at -

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/northern-ireland-abortion-law-can-be-challenged-court-rules-1.2088265>

Church of Ireland won't take stance on gay marriage vote

A Church of Ireland rector in Dublin has said the church will be encouraging its members to vote in the Republic's forthcoming referendum on same-sex marriage – but will not tell them to vote against the proposed change.

News Letter - The Reverend Gillian Whartan said within the Church of Ireland “there is a huge variety of opinion with regards to this issue”.

Speaking on BBC Radio Ulster’s Sunday Sequence programme yesterday, she said: “There are children I know being brought up by people of the same gender in a very stable and loving environment.”

She added: “I don’t think I can say looking at a variety of relationships that I am aware of, that one is better than the other, but I think the quality of the relationship is important.”

Rev Whartan said that in 2012 the Col began a listening process involving the General Synod, the decision-making body of the church.

She said a motion was passed in 2012 where there was a recognition that the church affirmed the traditional view of marriage, but in the motion there was the recognition of the need “to love thy neighbour as thyself (as being) is absolutely paramount and that everyone in the church is welcome and there should be no distinction of welcome”.

A select committee on human sexuality in the context of Christian belief was set up 2013 and a report will be released in May 2015.

Also speaking on Sunday Sequence, Belfast Unitarian minister the Rev Chris Hudson said he “very much welcomed the referendum” in the Republic.

He said it “is interesting that if it is carried in the Republic of Ireland that Northern Ireland will be the only jurisdiction within Britain and Ireland that won’t provide marriage equality to those of same-sex relationships”.

He added: “I hope wisdom will prevail eventually in Northern Ireland and that will change.”

The wording of the proposed reform was agreed by government ministers at a special cabinet meeting with Justice Minister Frances Fitzgerald saying that voters were being given an option of removing impediments to marriage for gay people.

“The issue is one of equality, marriage equality. It is about removing the barriers which deny some couples the chance of marrying and of having

relationships that are constitutionally protected,” she said.

If the proposal is passed it will be the 34th amendment to the Constitution.

It says: “Marriage may be contracted in accordance with law by two persons without distinction as to their sex.”

Gay people in the Republic can now enter into civil partnership, not a full marriage commitment.

See also -

Irish Times - Church of Ireland not to take stance on same-sex referendum

www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/church-of-ireland-not-to-take-stance-on-same-sex-referendum-1.2087481?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

New commercial religious radio show aims to span denominations

A new Sunday radio show focussing on the topic of religion will span the spectrum of faith in Northern Ireland, its presenter has said.

News Letter - 'Faith Matters' aired for the first time on Sunday at 8.30am on Q Radio, with Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin as its guest.



William Scholes

Q Radio, which last week announced it had acquired CityBeat, is owned by the proprietors of the Irish News and the show is presented by the nationalist paper's religious affairs correspondent William Scholes.

However, the 38-year-old Moira-based journalist said their aim is to reflect all backgrounds and denominations.

He hopes others guests will include the likes of Dr Michael Barry, the moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

“I want to be ecumenical; to reflect the breadth of religious practice.” he said.

He also said that they are keen to get lay people on as well, adding: “My thing will be to try and talk about faith and how it impacts on every day life.

“It isn’t just the Eamon Martins of this world, or the Presbyterian moderators.

“Those type of figures, yes, they have a role – and an important role – in talking in the public square, in public debates.

“But I think it’d be good to shine a light and let people who are quietly getting on with their lives, their nine-to-fives, but that it’s also flavoured by faith...

“It’s important to show that faith connects with the nine-to-five, and the bread-and-butter issues of

life.”The half-hour show goes out at the same time as the long-established religious affairs show Sunday Sequence airs on Radio Ulster.

However, Mr Scholes was reluctant to draw comparisons, saying: “Sunday Sequence do what they do – and good luck to them.”

As for the timing, he said it was “inevitable” a Sunday morning show would “rub up” against other religious broadcasts – including BBC Radio 4’s show Sunday Worship, which yesterday was broadcast live from Lisburn Cathedral.

Asked about the fact a commercial station had opted to select religion as the basis for a show, he said: “Commercial radio can be more than just music-based.

There’s a space in there for some speech.” The show can be listened to on the following frequencies: Q102.9FM in Londonderry, Q97.2FM in Coleraine, Q107FM in Ballymena, Q100.5FM in Newry and Mourne, and Q101.2FM in Omagh and Enniskillen.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/new-commercial-religious-radio-show-aims-to-span-denominations-1-6555351>

Bishop of Waterford & Lismore appointed by Pope Francis

Pope Francis has appointed Father Alphonsus Cullinan as the new Bishop of Waterford & Lismore.

Father Cullinan was born in Lahinch, County Clare in 1959 to Christy and Rita and has four sisters and five brothers. Father Cullinan is a priest of the diocese of Limerick. His family moved to Limerick city where he attended the Salesians for early education, John F Kennedy National School and the Crescent College Comprehensive (SJ) for his secondary education. From 1978-1981 he attended Mary Immaculate College of Education Limerick and qualified as a primary teacher (B.Ed) in 1981, and taught for six years in Castleconnell, County Limerick. He worked part-time during that time for four years with the Bunratty Castle Entertainers before going to Spain where he taught English for two years in a school in Valladolid. Father Cullinan studied at Saint Patrick's College Maynooth from 1989-95

where he completed an STL (Licentiate in Theology). He was ordained by Bishop Jeremiah Newman in 1994 in Saint John's Cathedral, Limerick, and appointed Curate in Saint Munchin's Parish Limerick city 1995-1996. Father Cullinan's next appointment was as chaplain to the Regional Hospital in Limerick from 1996 until 2001. He studied for his doctorate in moral theology in the Alfonsianum in Rome 2001-2004. Appointed chaplain to the Limerick Institute of Technology 2004-2011. He was appointed Parish Priest of Rathkeale , County Limerick in 2011.

Bishop William Lee, Bishop Emeritus of Waterford & Lismore, retired on the grounds of ill-health on 1 October 2013. Monsignor Nicholas O'Mahony has been the Diocesan Administrator of the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore since 11 October 2013. The Diocese of Waterford & Lismore includes County Waterford, and part of Counties Tipperary and Cork. There are 45 parishes, 85 Churches and a Catholic population of 152,107.

Catholic Church gives up €42m in land deal for victims

The Catholic Church has surrendered ownership of 44 properties worth €42m to the State as part of the Residential Institutions Redress Act. But amount surrendered so far is 'way short' of what Government wanted for redress system

Irish Independent - The Government wanted the religious orders to pay half of the total bill of €1.4bn needed for redress payments and legal costs. But so far the value of the asset handover is still a long way short of the €700m the State is demanding.

School buildings, convents, vestries, playing fields and associated lands across Ireland are included in the list. The highest value property handed over was grounds in Merrion, south Dublin, valued at €8.9m.

Documents sent to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) by Sean O Foghlu, Secretary General of the Department of Education, show that the properties were handed over "under the terms of the 2002 Indemnity Agreement".

According to his letter, which has been seen by this newspaper, the department agreed in principle with the Conference of Religious in Ireland to take control of 64 properties. These properties have been accepted "subject to good and marketable title and agreed valuations".

"This number has been reduced to 61 as the department has accepted and received a sum of cash in lieu of three properties where good and marketable title could not be established," Mr O Foghlu wrote.

According to the documents, apart from the significant site at Merrion, eight other properties worth more than €1m were surrendered.

They include a Terenure secondary school valued at €4.5m; St Teresa's convent at Temple Hill in Blackrock, valued at €3.1m, and a Traveller site also in Blackrock, which was valued at €3.1m. Other significant properties handed over included two separate properties in Tuam, Galway, valued at €3,020,000; St Anne's Secondary School, which was valued at €2,600,000; Holy Cross Gardens, Killarney, Co Kerry (€1,270,000); 23 Parnell Square, Dublin (€1,270,000); and Goldenbridge Group Homes, which were valued at €1,269,700...

...The total cost of offering redress to the victims of abuse has soared to almost €1.4bn.

Under a controversial 2002 indemnity agreement, 18 religious orders which ran care institutions pledged to contribute €128m in cash, property and counselling services towards redress costs for abuse survivors. However, they later agreed to contribute €352.6 million for victims of institutional abuse. So far they have paid less than a quarter of that.

More at -

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/church-gives-up-42m-in-land-deal-for-victims-30953892.html>

Priests create network to attract US industry to Ireland

Irish Times - Two priests and a parish administrator have spent the last year on a mission to spread the word. The trio have sent out over 100 letters, setting up links with 12 parishes in the US

The devout Tullamore trio - parish administrator [Tom Whelan](#), curate Fr [Shane Crombie](#) and

retired parish priest Fr [Sean Heaney](#) - have set about establishing a trans-Atlantic church-based network focusing on attracting American industry to [Ireland](#).



Fr Shane Crombie has teamed up with parish administrator Tom Whelan and retired parish priest Fr Sean Heaney to establish a trans-Atlantic church-based network focusing on attracting American industry to Ireland.

From their base in Co Offaly, they have been busy writing to parishes and priests in an attempt to lure US companies here, with a particular focus on dioceses in Chicago, [Boston](#), [Arizona](#) and [California](#).

Their campaign was sparked last year following a visit to the town from a Connect Ireland

representative in the wake of the hugely successful local “Gathering” events.

Connect Ireland - which was launched with the mandate to offer cash incentives to anyone successfully introducing companies to Ireland - is also stepping up its efforts this year. It is now rolling out its “community action plan” in which local authorities throughout the country have agreed to appoint dedicated liaison officials to manage local campaigns.

Currently over 100 companies are introduced here from abroad every month, and to date have come from 37 different countries.

As far as Fr Crombie is concerned, one of the best ready-built networks out there is the [Catholic Church](#). Their motivation though is not money; it’s just the latest manifestation of the church helping out local communities, he says.

“It’s kind of a networking event in a parish setting. We have been making contact with parishes and asking them if they are aware of business people over there who are interested in setting up in Ireland. It’s a personal thing, parish to parish, but there is more than clergy involved.

“If you look back in Ireland, there are lots of priests and clergy who have always looked out for the good of their community. It’s spiritual but it’s also about people, and people’s lives are so important.”

So far, the trio have sent out over 100 letters, setting up links with 12 parishes in Boston and 16 across California, as well as others in Arizona and Chicago.

They insist they are just beginning and “feeling their way” through the process. They hope the network will eventually find companies to cross the Atlantic.

“There are 195 Catholic dioceses in the US, with over 17,000 parishes. We are just one; to make individual contact with them all would be an impossibility,” said Fr Crombie.

“We are not going to fix the economy or anything like that but we all have our part to play.”

The Connect Ireland initiative has so far led to the creation of more than 1,000 jobs.

Eight counties have benefitted and the organisation is now in advanced talks with 88

companies with an eye on a further 2,500 potential jobs.

Call for unionists to defend Stranmillis college

TUV leader Jim Allister has called for unionists to be more vocal in the demand to keep Stranmillis teacher training college running, following deep budget cuts.

In a [letter to the News Letter](#), he said that while nationalists have been visibly aggrieved over the threat posed to Catholic teaching college St Mary's, there has been no similar display of support for Stranmillis University College by unionist counterparts.

He also called on members of the college's board to press the case for its survival more strongly.

He said: "I know from meetings I have had with staff and past and present students of Stranmillis that the college not only has an excellent academic reputation but a unique culture and identity which sets it apart from other places of higher education in Northern Ireland.

“That is valued greatly and student satisfaction is incredibly high. The loss of the college would be a huge blow to Northern Ireland.

“It seems that the Executive is pursuing a destructive agenda when it comes to education and particularly in relation to the controlled sector.”

Earlier in the month, Stranmillis’ governing body said it was “concerned about the serious implications” of budget cuts upon the college.

The Stormont budget has “serious implications” for the future of Northern Ireland’s teacher training colleges, Stranmillis University College has said.

Funding cuts to both Stranmillis and St Mary’s were revealed in the Executive’s budget on January 19.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/call-for-unionists-to-defend-stranmillis-college-1-6555346>

C of E apps for Lent

Church House Publishing “Reflections for Lent 2015” are available across both

Apple and Android devices for the first time. Last year, the Reflections for Lent 2014 iOS version became the UK's top selling book app on Ash Wednesday.

The new apps join a collection of mobile apps available across both iOS and Android platforms which have collectively seen over 130,000 first-time downloads, including the popular Daily Prayer, which was downloaded more than 25,000 times in its first year.

Reflections for Lent, provides daily readings and reflections from respected Christians authors including the Revd Lucy Winkett, Rector of St James's Piccadilly and regular contributor to Radio 4's Thought for the Day.

Thomas Allain-Chapman, head of Church House Publishing said:

"By making Reflections for Lent available across a range of digital formats we hope that more people will find it easier to make time for daily

prayer and reflection, however busy they may be. New technology can provide a great way into the Christian tradition of taking up good habits - as well as letting go of bad ones - for Lent."

All the apps are available now on iTunes and Google Play and details can be found at: <http://www.chpublishing.co.uk/features/our-apps>

Influential Church of England evangelical comes out as gay

One of the Church of England's most influential evangelicals has come out as gay.

Jayne Ozanne, 46, was a founder member of the Archbishops' Council, the Cabinet-style body at the heart of the established church's governance.

She has through a distinguished career and record of service worked closely and prayed alongside senior evangelicals including the former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey of Clifton and the present Archbishop, Justin Welby.



Jayne Ozanne

Christianity Today - On Monday, she was announced as the new director of Accepting Evangelicals, whose patrons include Baptist minister Steve Chalke and worship leader and commentator Vicky Beeching, who herself stunned the evangelical community worldwide when she came out last year.

Formerly from the Orthodox wing of the Church, holding strictly conservative views on sexuality, Ms Ozanne disclosed her sexuality in confidence a few years ago in a moving letter to a select group of church leaders. Not one of the few who knew has leaked details of her journey.

She decided to go public through Christian Today as part of what she believes will help the Church, currently deeply divided on the issue, to a better understanding of sexuality. She, along with many others, wants to see the Church end its infighting and move on to more pressing issues such as mission and social justice.

"It's not about right and wrong, it's about the Gospel of Christ. For me this whole issue frankly is about understanding Scripture," she said, adding: "God is a God of surprises. We can never be sure of what the future may bring, but what I do know is that He will always look to transform our darkest hours into something beautiful. I'm personally thrilled to be able to serve Accepting Evangelicals during such an exciting and important time for us as a Church". Accepting Evangelicals is an open network of evangelical Christians who believe the time has come to move towards the acceptance of faithful, loving same-sex partnerships at every level of church life.

The emergence of Ms Ozanne, a formidable force, as a campaigner for gay equality within evangelicalism comes as the Church engages in

conversations on sexuality. As a former conservative now on the side of the gay Christian lobby, her coming out will surprise many churchgoers and add to the growing pressure on mainstream evangelicalism on an issue that still arouses deep passions on either side.

Conservative evangelicals remain deeply resistant to any accommodation to secular norms, and it has become a litmus test in many churches for an individual's Christian orthodoxy. The conservative group Reform has called for a boycott of the "conversations" in protest at what many fear is an agenda weighted towards change.

After joining the Archbishops' Council in 1999, Ms Ozanne went on to hold a range of senior positions in the UK and abroad. She was deeply involved in General Synod, particularly in areas around mission and evangelism. At that time her views on sexuality, she said, were "extremely black and white" and gay Christians had to choose between God or a homosexual relationship. In common with conservative evangelical thinking then and now, she believed the two were mutually exclusive. "I did not believe it was compatible to be gay and a Christian."

Before serving on the council she had a high profile career in international marketing where she managed many household brands – from Fairy Liquid to the BBC. She has been an active lay-leader in various well known evangelical churches, and has been a trustee of Trinity Theological College, the Church of England Newspaper and the International Centre for Reconciliation in Coventry, where she worked alongside the future Archbishop Welby and Vicar of Baghdad, Canon Andrew White.

At the same time, however, she struggled with her sexuality, and was ministered to many times in the hope of "healing" or change. In an interview with Christian Today, she described how experienced the full range of what is known as "deliverance ministry", as well-meaning clergy and ministers attempted repeatedly but without success to expel a sexual orientation that was regarded as demonic.

More at - <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/influential.church.of.england.evangelical.comes.out.as.gay/47193.htm>

Media digest

BBC Radio 4 Sunday

(17 mins 30) Rev Dr Brendan McCarthy, Church of England adviser on medical ethics is interviewed on the Church's position on "three parent babies"

(39 mins 03) Bishop of Blackburn, Julian Henderson is interviewed about the consecration of Philip North as Bishop of Burnley

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b050xwh3#auto>

BBC

Report that Philip North was being consecrated as Bishop of Burnley. Article notes different consecration arrangements from last week's consecration of Libby Lane as Bishop of Stockport and quotes the Archbishop of York.

<http://m.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-31085569>

Tel/Mail/Times

Further articles on Tuesday's vote in the Commons to amend the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 and legalise mitochondrial DNA transfer. Professor Robert Winston, writing in *Telegraph* claims the technique which allows babies to be born using the DNA of 'three parents' is no more sinister than a simple blood

transfusion and he supports the new law. Articles note the Church of England said it could not support a change to legislation, arguing that scientists had not proved that the child would not inherit characteristics from the donor mother.

Also personal story and viewpoint in *Mail*.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/11383128/Dont-let-science-fall-victim-to-ignorance-on-DNA-transfer-IVF.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/11383004/Three-parent-baby-technique-no-more-sinister-than-blood-transfusion-says-Robert-Winston.html>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-2935897/Winston-backs-3-DNA-IVF-technique.html>

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2935670/Why-want-3-parent-baby-mother-girl-rare-deadly-disease-Woman-calls-MPs-allow-technique-help-others.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/columnists/article4341288.ece>

Tel

Article on the new school curriculum ordered by the Education Secretary Nicky Morgan after the Trojan Horse scandal which a head teacher says could lead to less pupils taking Religious Studies. Canon Robert Cotton, a member of the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England, is quoted saying the current curriculum is not only popular but effective at increasing religious

literacy precisely because the ethics and philosophy elements allows students to discuss issues as diverse as medical ethics and marriage law. Under [draft plans announced before Christmas](#), teenagers who take RS for GCSE will have to study two world religions for the first time in an overhaul intended to increase "religious literacy".

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/11381019/Nicky-Morgans-Trojan-Horse-curriculum-could-lead-to-collapse-of-Religious-studies.html>

BBC

Report that memories of Ian Ramsey, Bishop of Durham in 1966, but who died in 1972 from a heart attack are being sought on the 100th anniversary of his birth. Known as "the people's bishop", Ian Ramsey's ashes are interred at Auckland Castle and curators are now appealing for films, photographs and recollections to build up a "more complete picture of an extraordinary man".

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-tees-31082507>

Mail

Report that more than a third of children now live with unmarried parents in non-traditional families, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Only 63 per cent of dependent youngsters lived

churchnewsireland@gmail.com

in a home headed by a married couple last year - a drop of three percentage points on 2004. By contrast, the proportion of dependent children living with cohabiting parents rose. It states the fall in the share of children in married homes comes at a time of growing evidence that marriage is linked with health and wealth among both parents and children, while cohabiting couples are more likely to have lower incomes.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2935681/Now-one-three-children-parents-not-married-63-cent-youngsters-live-couple-husband-wife.html#ixzz3QZ6Ug7Lv>