



News Summary

3 - 9 October

9 OCTOBER

Call for change in NI abortion law

BBC - Abortions should be allowed in Northern Ireland where the foetus has a lethal abnormality, the Stormont Department of Justice has recommended.

Read more:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-29538100>

News Letter - Reactions to new rape and medical defect abortion plan

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/reactions-to-new-rape-and-medical-defect-abortion-plan-1-6346912>

Archbishop tells Church to listen to 'failed' couples

Irish Independent - Archbishop Diarmuid Martin has told the Church that it must listen to Christian married couples "who struggle and fail and begin again".

The Archbishop of Dublin is representing the Irish Church at the Extraordinary Synod on the Family in Rome.

He told 250 participants that it needs to hear from those couples who "begin again in the concrete situations of the harshness of life today".

Archbishop Martin also appeared to criticise some of the impossibly high standards expected of couples by the Church.

He said: "There is still difficulty in accepting the significance of human endeavour which fails to reach the high ideals but is part of the struggle for perfection."

In an apparent reference to the Church's treatment of those who divorce and civilly remarry, the Archbishop said: "The experience of failure and struggle cannot surely be irrelevant in arriving at the way we proclaim the Church's teaching on marriage and the family."

Dr Martin noted that Jesus' preaching involved a process of healing the wounded while "welcoming those on the margins".

During the debate at the Synod, Archbishop Martin also stressed that the Church must consult married couples, warning that it was "not simply an option which we take up on special occasions".

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/archbishop-tells-church-to-listen-to-failed-couples-30647449.html>

Church must listen to married couples, Martin tells synod

Irish Times - The Catholic church must listen on a more regular basis to what married couples have to say, the Archbishop of Dublin [Diarmuid Martin](#) told the extraordinary synod of bishops in Rome this morning.

"Consulting married couples is not simply an option which we take up on special occasions," he said. "The authentic living out of the married vocation, sanctified by a sacrament, can become in a unique way a true theological source."

The synod in Rome has heard from two married couples, one Australian and one Filipino.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/church-must-listen-to-married-couples-martin-tells-synod-1.1954826>

Church of England's gay marriage split is as entrenched as ever

Guardian -As the evangelical Reform group pulls out of talks after it was accused of homophobia, reconciliation seems far away

Andrew Brown writes - Hopes that the Church of England might be able to discuss its deep differences over gay people looked sillier yesterday after the conservative evangelical group Reform [pulled out of conversations](#). It was

upset over the failure to “admonish” a prominent liberal, while gay protestors led by Peter Tatchell heckled the archbishop of York over his backing for sanctions against a gay priest who has married his partner.

[Reform's press release](#) dropped in first. The group is upset by three things. The headline is that it wants the bishop of Buckingham, [Alan Wilson](#), to stop calling conservative evangelicals (that would be Reform) “homophobic”, and to renounce his public support for gay marriage. Then it wants a crackdown on those priests who have married their partners. This is extremely difficult legally, as Wilson points out in public and the house of bishops has been told in private.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2014/oct/08/church-of-england-gay-marriage>

Christian 'Love Letter' Urges Homosexual Bishops to 'Come Out' About Same-Sex Attraction

Charisma News - More than 300 signatories, including 160 priests and members of the General Synod, have signed an open letter to bishops in the Church of England asking them to "come out" and "openly acknowledge" their feelings of same-sex attraction.

The letter—which as of last week had been signed by 282 Anglicans, 29 Methodists and 25 members of other Christian denominations, as well as representatives of Jewish groups—will be formally submitted to the House of Bishops.

The letter—signatures for which have been collected by the Rev. Keith Hebden, an Anglican vicar from Mansfield—follows on from the recent publication of a book by the retired Rev. Alan Wilson, the serving bishop of Buckingham.

In his book, *More Perfect Union?: Understanding Same Sex Marriage*, Wilson speculates that there are "said to be a dozen or so gay bishops" currently prevented from openly acknowledging their sexuality by "an episcopal closet door."

<http://www.charismanews.com/world/45684-christian-love-letter-urges-homosexual-bishops-to-come-out-about-same-sex-attraction>

PSNI apology over employment checks

BBC - The PSNI apologises for a delay in employment police checks as the BBC discovers that nearly 230 people have been waiting more than six months.

Read more:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-29548236>

8 OCTOBER

JD Wetherspoon buys landmark Belfast Methodist church site for £800k

Belfast Telegraph - Pub chain Wetherspoon has bought a former Methodist Church in the university area of Belfast for almost double its £400,000 asking price.

The sale of the landmark listed building between University Road and Fountainville Avenue was completed yesterday for JD Wetherspoon by commercial property agents DTZ McCombe Pierce

The red sandstone premises, with interconnecting church halls, had been on the market for £400,000 and though the value of the deal has not been officially confirmed, the agent said there had been "strong interest" in the premises.

It's understood Wetherspoon paid around £800,000 – the latest Northern Ireland deal for the pub chain as negotiations continue over its purchase of the site of the former JJB Sports store at Royal Avenue in the city centre.

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/news/jd-wetherspoon-buys-landmark-belfast-methodist-church-site-for-800k-30646691.html>

Churches to receive suicide prevention guidance

Newry Times - Over a thousand churches across Northern Ireland are set to receive new guidance on suicide prevention, supporting people bereaved by suicide and promoting emotional wellbeing.

Copies of 'Suicide Prevention and Emotional Wellbeing – Pastoral Guidelines and Training Directory for Churches' are being sent to churches across Northern Ireland by the partnership group Flourish!

Flourish! is a partnership between Lighthouse Ireland, clergy from across the Christian churches in Northern Ireland, the Churches Community Work Alliance NI and the Public Health Agency (PHA).

<http://newrytimes.com/2014/10/07/churches-to-receive-suicide-prevention-guidance/>

7 OCTOBER**Clerics call for detail on welfare reform**

Independent Catholic News - The leaders of the main Churches in Northern Ireland have written to the Minister for Social Development, Mervyn Storey MLA, and the Chair of the Social Development Committee, Alex Maskey MLA, to seek meetings to discuss the challenges presented by the Welfare Reform Bill and to express their concern about the impact of the continued uncertainty regarding the Bill on the most vulnerable members of society. The Church leaders feel there is a clear need to bring the current debate back to a point where further progress can be made in a calmer atmosphere with a view to finding a solution.

In February 2012, at a public meeting with the Northern Ireland Secretary of State, Church Leaders called on the British Government and the Northern Ireland Executive to clarify the implications of the Social Welfare Reform Bill for Northern Ireland. To date, details of the specific measures proposed for Northern Ireland have not been made available for public consultation. In their letter, the Church leaders say that this situation 'presents a serious obstacle to informed debate in civil society' and "creates fear and anxiety for those who are dependent on welfare payments and now face an uncertain economic future". They continue, by saying that "due to the lack of clear and specific information, it is not possible to make reliable assessments of the impact of the implementation of the proposed measures'.

With concern for the protection of the most vulnerable and the need to ensure that any reforms will bring greater equality and social justice, the Church leaders are appealing to the Minister for Social Development to address this situation as a matter of urgency.

Most Rev Richard Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh (Church of Ireland)

Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh (Roman Catholic)

Rt Rev Dr Michael Barry, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Rev Peter Murray, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland

Rev Dr Donald Watts, President of the Irish Council of Churches

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/clerics-call-for-detail-on-welfare-reform-1-6341513>

Minister 'will not abandon religion'

Northern Ireland's recently appointed health minister says he will not abandon his religious principles when forming policies on contentious issues like abortion and alcohol.

Read more:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-29515305>

Holy Cross Church: Pipe bomb 'intended to kill police officers'

BBC - Police have said a pipe bomb found outside the front gates of a Catholic church in north Belfast was intended to kill PSNI officers.

It was thrown at a police patrol on the Crumlin Road at 00:45 BST on Tuesday but did not explode.

When the device did not detonate, a call was made five minutes later to the parish priest at Holy Cross Church.

Eight nearby homes were evacuated while Army bomb experts made the device safe.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-29517275>

6 OCTOBER

Catholic primate warns Irish government: No abortion stance change

Belfast Telegraph - The Catholic primate has warned the Irish government that his church will continue to campaign for "a society without abortion".

Speaking in St Patrick's Cathedral in Armagh on the Catholic Church's Day for Life, Archbishop Eamon Martin described last year's abortion legislation as "unnecessary" and "medically flawed".

Referring to last month's publication of guidelines on the legislation, he said these confirmed that abortion was now prescribed as an answer to a mother's suicidal feelings, "despite all the medical evidence to the contrary".

The new head of the Catholic church said a mother in crisis needed every possible support and the very best of care, as did her unborn child, and not abortion.

"The Church will continue to call for a society without abortion which loves and cares for all life equally and does everything possible to protect the life of both the mother and her unborn child – even in the most delicate and traumatic of circumstances," he said.

5 OCTOBER

More young at church in Clogher diocese

Impartial Reporter - The Clogher Diocese of the Church of Ireland has a higher church attendance figure than the average across Ireland and more of these worshippers are younger people, a major church census has revealed.

The Bishop of Clogher, the Right Rev. John McDowell told the Diocesan Synod how a church census took place across Ireland last November for the first time to get the size and pattern of church attendance.

While the average Sunday church attendance across Ireland is around 58,000 people or 15 per cent of those claiming to be Church of Ireland, the figure in Clogher is higher at 23 per cent.

Bishop McDowell commented: "However we don't know whether they are the same 58,000 people or whether many more people come to Church but only once a fortnight or once a month. About 13 per cent of the Church of Ireland is at worship in the Diocese of Clogher on any given Sunday."

The figures also showed that 57 per cent of Church of Ireland members were women and 43 per cent men.

The census also showed the attendance at some key times of the church calendar; Christmas and Easter.

Across the whole Church of Ireland there were 108,000 people were in Church on Christmas Eve or 29 per cent of the membership and on Easter Day 76,000 or 20 per cent of the Church population.

Bishop McDowell commented: "Does it mean that we are less a people of the Cross and Resurrection and more a people of the cosy comforts of the Service of Nine lessons and Carols - which would be a very significant factor in our spiritual make-up and not necessarily a good one; or is it just that more of us go off on Easter Holidays outside Ireland over the Easter weekend?"

The full statistics showed that across the Church of Ireland there were 3,700 baptisms, 2,300 confirmations, 1,300 weddings and 3,500 funerals leading the Bishop to comment that at least in theory their replacement rate wasn't too bad!

More at -

<http://www.impartialreporter.com/news/roundup/articles/2014/10/05/406673-more-young-at-church-in-clogher-diocese/>

Anglicans and others sign 'love letter' to gay bishops

Ekklesia - Over 300 Anglican clergy and laity and members of other churches have signed an open 'love letter' to bishops in the Church of England who are secretly gay. encouraging them to 'come out' about their sexuality.

The signatories pledge to “welcome and embrace” those bishops who decide to go public but emphasise their strong opposition to any threat to 'out' a bishop against their will.

The letter, which was organised by Ekklesia associate the Rev Dr Keith Hebden, will be formally submitted to the House of Bishops and is given below:

We are lay and ordained Anglicans in the Church of England and other Provinces, who publicly affirm the episcopal ministry in its purpose and diversity.

We recognise that there is a cost to those who respond to the call to be a bishop. This is especially true for those who are not heterosexual and have kept their sexual orientation private. There is growing pressure on gay bishops to come out publicly. The signatories to this letter do not advocate the involuntary outing of bishops.

More at -

<http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/20906>

4 OCTOBER

Priest named as first Catholic chair of Council of Churches

Irish Times - Fr Mc Neice first Roman Catholic priest to hold position in 50 yr history of council

Ecumenical history has been made with the appointment for the first time of a Catholic priest as chair of the Dublin Council of Churches (DCC).

Fr [Damian Mc Neice](#) (47) is the first [Roman Catholic](#) priest to hold the position in the 50 year history of the DCC. He takes over from Rev [Mary Hunter](#) of the Presbyterian Church.

The [Catholic Church](#) only became a full member of the council six years ago, when it was invited to be such during the Week of Prayer for [Christian Unity](#) in January 2008. Prior to that Protestant Churches had objected.

The DCC encourages co-operation between Christian traditions in the city. Members include patrons and representatives from the [Church of Ireland](#), Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches, the [Religious Society of Friends](#), the Greek, Romanian, Antiochene and Indian Orthodox Churches, as well as the [Salvation Army](#) and [Christian Aid](#).

Fr McNeice is from Navan Road parish in Dublin. He was ordained in 1992 after which he taught in Coláiste Dhúlaigh, Coolock, and worked in the Diocesan Communications Office.

More at - <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/priest-named-as-first-catholic-chair-of-council-of-churches-1.1951147>

3 OCTOBER

Funeral tribute to death crash nuns

Belfast Telegraph - Two nuns killed in a crash involving a police car in Northern Ireland dedicated their lives to education, a priest told funeral mourners.

Sisters Frances Forde and Marie Duddy died when their vehicle collided with the unmarked car close to the border city of Newry, Co Down, earlier this week.

The Belfast-based nuns, part of the Sisters of Mercy Catholic order, had been making their way to a religious retreat when the accident occurred. Fr Gary Donegan said the humble women were blushing in heaven after their silent witness became headline news.

He told the congregation at the Belfast Requiem Mass: "Those of us who have sat wearily through meetings in relation to education, often hear the term, 'education from the cradle to the grave'.

"For Frances and Marie, this was not just a throw away comment, but a way of life.

elfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/funeral-tribute-to-death-crash-nuns-30635460.html

Bishops blast RTE long-wave plans

Irish News - Catholic bishops have blasted RTE chiefs over plans to stop its long wave radio service.

The cash-strapped broadcaster announced last week that it would scrap the 252 signal from October 27, focusing resources on its FM, on-line, mobile and digital services.

The move has raised fears that some people in Northern Ireland will be left with no access to RTE radio at all, with FM signals unavailable in some areas - including parts of Belfast - and medium wave transmissions controversially stopped in 2008.

Northern bishops voiced their concern when they met their southern counterparts at their autumnal meeting in Maynooth, Co Kildare this week.

Bishops' Conference spokesman Martin Long told *The Irish News* they were exercised over the short notice given by RTE and lack of consultation with listeners.

"The bishops' real concern is that people on the margins, who should be the concern of the national broadcaster, are going to be the worst affected," he said.

"Whether it's the elderly in Northern Ireland or in Britain, who have always relied on RTE for its Sunday worship programmes, these are the people that the bishops are now very concerned about."

More at -

<http://www.irishnews.com/news/bishops-blast-rte-long-wave-plans-1384142>

Martin McGuinness says Orange hall attack in Convoy, County Donegal, disgusting

BBC News - Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness has said he was "horrified and disgusted" by an arson attack on an Orange hall in County Donegal.

The hall in Convoy was destroyed and an attempt was also made to burn down a Presbyterian church in the village.

The fire at the hall was started at about 04:00 BST on Friday.

Orange Order grand secretary Drew Nelson said it was similar to an [attack on a hall nearby at Newtowncunningham](#).

Mr McGuinness said he was "absolutely infuriated" by the Convoy attack.

More at -

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29472135>

Construction of Uganda Martyrs museum begins

New Vision - After about a year of planning, the construction of the 36 billion shilling Uganda Martyrs Museum in Namugongo, intended to preserve the history of the 47 saints of Uganda, has finally started.



Located at the Anglican Shrine, the museum will include a three-storey building, with 47 pillars, each representing one of the Uganda martyrs and their details.

Yesterday, the Archbishop of the Church of Uganda, Stanley Ntagali, toured the construction site, where construction is underway.

The Archbishop said: "Uganda martyrs inspire us. They inspire Christianity in Uganda and Africa. That is why we want to preserve their history. And make this place a tourist attraction."

Mpalanyi-Nkoyoyo, the retired Archbishop of the Church of Uganda and leader of the fundraising committee for the museum's construction, said the Church was establishing the museum to record the history of the martyrs and the country's in general.

To read the full story visit <http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/660345-construction-of-uganda-martyrs-museum-begins.html>



Tanzania Mothers' Union prioritises women's empowerment

ACNS - The Mother's Union (MU) in Tanzania is prioritising the empowerment of women and girls in the country to "make them more independent and less subject to gender-based violence."

In an interview with ACNS, Mothers' Union Provincial Co-ordinator for Tanzania, Margareth Massawa revealed that MU there is empowering women and girls with skills in entrepreneurship, leadership and advocacy.

"For instance, at one of the local training centres, Mtumba Rural Women Training Centre, we are empowering women and girls with early childhood and primary teachers education, as well as teaching them entrepreneurship skills," said Mrs Massawa. "This will ensure that they're more independent and less subjected to gender-based violence."

She added: "We are also training women and girls in advocacy and also helping them become more aware of their rights. For example, providing information about marriage laws, will-writing and inheritance laws."

Despite women's property rights being stipulated in the country's constitution, a recent report revealed that about 40 percent of the cases presented by women were about inheritance and property grabbing.

“We also have plans to empower MU leaders from all the 27 dioceses in the Anglican Church of Tanzania, including bishops' wives, Mothers' Union diocesan presidents and vice presidents so that they're able to adequately handle various issues of women and girls empowerment,” she said.

More at -

<http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2014/10/tanzania-mothers-union-prioritises-women%E2%80%99s-empowerment.aspx>