

Institute Update

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THE
CHRISTIAN
INSTITUTE

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE IN A SECULAR WORLD

FREE

The UK-wide newsletter of The Christian Institute



Plus:
Embryos Bill

**Free speech win
over 'gay hate' law**

Justice

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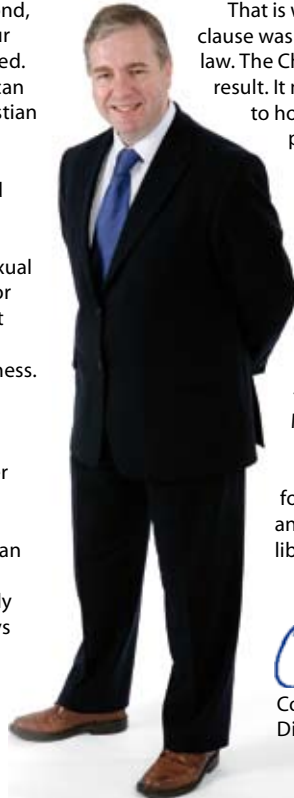
Pray for those in authority

“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

Christians are commanded to pray for those in authority. It is the practice of many churches to do this as part of their regular Sunday services. The Apostle Paul gives two reasons why we should pray for those in authority. First, so that Christian believers may be able to live quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. Second, because this is pleasing to God our Saviour who wants men to be saved.

The fact is, those in authority can make it easier or harder for a Christian to live a godly life. Take the case of the Christian registrar, Miss Lillian Ladele. She was bullied and harassed by bosses at Islington Council because she asked to be exempt from registering homosexual civil partnerships. It wasn't easy for Lillian to make this stand. It wasn't easy for her to live a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and holiness. Islington Council made it difficult for her.

We backed her case at an employment tribunal and paid her legal bills. I am delighted that she won. The tribunal said Islington Council discriminated against Lillian by requiring her to perform civil partnerships. The Council is deeply unhappy about the ruling and says it will appeal some aspects of the judgment. We will wait and see. I believe it will have an uphill struggle.



Not only can those in authority make life difficult for Christians seeking to live a godly life, but public policy can either allow or restrict freedom to share the gospel. A homosexual 'hate speech' law has great capacity to interfere with our evangelism. People today have little concept of sin. Consequently they feel no need for a saviour. Gospel preaching involves declaring prevalent sins to be sins and calling people to repent and turn to Christ for forgiveness. This is what the Apostle Paul does in 1 Corinthians 6, Galatians 5 and Ephesians 5. If it becomes unlawful to say that homosexual practice is sinful, then it affects our freedom to talk about the one who can forgive that sin.

That is why I am delighted that a free speech clause was added to the 'homophobic hatred' law. The Christian Institute worked hard for this result. It makes it clear that expressing opposition to homosexual practice and encouraging people to refrain from it should not be, in itself, a crime.

Abortion and destructive experiments on human embryos are other sins which we must speak out against. Although saddened by the votes on the embryos Bill, I am pleased that the pro-life arguments received a good amount of publicity. A majority of the public support reducing the time limit on abortion, even if the MPs voted to keep the law unchanged.

So we must continue to pray for those in authority. And what it is right to pray for, it is surely right to act upon. Let us pray and act for liberty to live godly lives and liberty to share the whole gospel of Christ.



Colin Hart
Director

Police tell Birmingham Christians, “you can’t preach here, this is a Muslim area”

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

Two church workers from Birmingham have been told “you can’t preach here, this is a Muslim area” by a police community support officer.

The incident happened to Mr Arthur Cunningham and Mr Joseph Abraham as they were handing out Christian tracts on the corner of Ellesmere and Alum Rock Road in the city on 19 February this year.

PCSO Naguthney (30825) told the Christians they were committing a hate crime and that he was going to take them to the police station.

Two other officers, PCSO Ali and PC Loi, also attended the incident. PC Loi advised Mr Cunningham and Mr Abraham that it might be wiser if they did not come back to Alum Rock Road.

PCSO Naguthney said, “You have been warned. If you come back here and get beat up, well you have been warned.”

The two Christians subsequently made a formal complaint to West Midlands Police about the conduct of the officers.

A meeting took place with Inspector Karen Hansen on 10 March at Queen’s Road Station. At the meeting Inspector Hansen refused to issue a letter of apology.

It is understood that PCSO Naguthney has been given verbal advice for his pocket notebook and will receive training in understanding hate



Evangelists, Joseph Abraham (left) and Arthur Cunningham

crime and communicating with the public.

Mr Cunningham and Mr Abraham do not feel this response properly reflects the seriousness of the officers’ actions.

Backed by The Christian Institute, lawyers for the two

Christians have sent a strongly worded letter to the Chief Wounded Constable of West Midlands Police.

The letter gives notice that the two men are entitled to bring a claim against West Midlands Police for breach of their convention rights under articles 9 and 10 of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Mr Cunningham and Mr Abraham are seeking a full and unreserved written apology, recognition that their convention rights were infringed by the conduct of the police officers, damages and reasonable legal costs.



PCSO Naguthney

The Christian Institute has set up a Legal Defence Fund. The aim is to fund the costs of legal action and the associated campaign work in cases of national importance for religious liberty.

There are a growing number of cases where Christian freedom is being restricted by official bodies, often acting completely outside the law. Parliament and the courts have laid down many

Legal
Defence
Fund

precious rights and freedoms in the UK. These freedoms need to be used. We want to use the Legal Defence Fund to protect Christian religious freedom and restrain those who are unlawfully harassing and discriminating against Christian believers.

We also want to use the fund to intervene in strategic court cases where precedents could be set which may affect Christian religious liberty.

Google faces court for blocking pro-life ad

■ By Jennifer Davis

The Christian Institute's legal action against Google continues. Legal papers have been lodged in the County Court and the case is awaiting a trial date.

The action is being brought because the internet giant will not allow adverts for websites which contain "abortion and religion-related content".

In March the company, well-known for its search engine, blocked a pro-life ad for The Christian Institute's website, christian.org.uk, because it is a "religious" website. Lawyers for the Institute say this is unlawful discrimination.

Google is happy to allow adverts for non-religious sites with views on abortion, but banned the Institute's ad for "inappropriate content", saying "Google policy does not permit the advertisement of websites that contain 'abortion and religion-related content'."

Colin Hart, Director of The



Google refused to place The Christian Institute's ad (below).

Christian Institute, said: "Google promotes itself as a company committed to the ideals of free speech and the free exchange of ideas. It is against this standard that Google's anti-religious policy is so unjust.

"For many people, Google is the doorway to the internet. It is an influential gatekeeper to the marketplace of debate. If there

[UK Abortion law](http://www.christian.org.uk)

Key views and news on abortion law from The Christian Institute
www.christian.org.uk

is to be a free exchange of ideas then Google cannot give special free speech rights to secular groups whilst censoring religious views."

Christian registrar threatened over

What others have said

...it has taken the quiet courage of one woman to fight for what beleaguered Christians care about most these days – the right to lead their lives according to their faith...If only our bishops could put half as much effort as Miss Ladele into fighting for what matters most to ordinary Christians.¹

Amanda Platell

...Miss Ladele's bosses at Islington council, always ready to leap to the defence of the gay community, concluded that she was prejudiced, and insisted that she change her mind. So she took them to an employment tribunal and - to the amazement of all those who have given up on the ability of our legal system to stand up for ordinary Britons - she won.²

Daily Mail

Surely, the point at issue in the case of the Islington registrar is that of respect for conscience. Such respect has for long been the hallmark of civilised nations and has especially characterised British society...There must be more, not less, recognition of conscience in public law...³

Bishop of Rochester

She suffered harassment and discrimination, a tribunal ruled

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

A Christian registrar from London who was bullied and threatened with the sack because of her religious beliefs on same sex unions has won her discrimination case against Islington Council.

In its unanimous judgment, the employment tribunal found that Miss Lillian Ladele was directly discriminated against by Islington Council after she asked to be allowed not to perform civil partnership registrations.

Miss Ladele was supported by her legal team, James Dingemans QC and Mark Jones of Ormerods solicitors. The case was financed by The Christian Institute's Legal Defence Fund.

The highly significant ruling confirmed that the various acts of direct discrimination committed against Miss Ladele by Islington Council on the grounds of her

religious belief included: failing to consider her for promotion; deciding to discipline her and threatening her with dismissal; concluding she had committed gross misconduct; failing to redress allegations that she was "homophobic" and labelling and treating her as homophobic; disregarding her concerns

about her treatment; and failing to apply its anti-discrimination policies to gay colleagues who were mistreating her.

The tribunal also accepted that Islington Council had been able to deliver a "first-class" service to homosexual couples seeking civil partnerships, without Miss Ladele's involvement. Therefore, the Council's decision to require Miss Ladele to perform civil partnership registrations, contrary to her conscience, was unlawful.

The Council's actions also amounted to unlawful harassment. The judgment found that the Council "disregarded and displayed no respect for Ms Ladele's



civil partnerships wins her case

genuinely held religious belief," and it created an "intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for her on grounds of her religion or belief" (para.104 of the judgment).

In coming to their conclusion, the tribunal said: "It is an important case which may have a wider impact than the dispute between the parties" (para.53 of the judgment).

Reacting to the decision, Miss Ladele said: "I am delighted at this decision. It is a victory for religious liberty, not just for myself but for others in a similar position to mine. Gay rights should not be used as an excuse to bully and harass people over their religious beliefs."

The Christian Institute's Head of Communications, Mike Judge,

said: "This important ruling confirms that gay rights should not be treated as trumping religious rights. The law clearly recognises this.

"If we really believe in equality before the law, that means respecting people who have sincerely held religious beliefs on sexual ethics. The witch hunt against those who disagree with homosexual practice has to stop."

Mark Jones, solicitor for Miss Ladele, said: "Hopefully this decision will encourage other employers to balance competing rights where they conflict. In standing up for her faith, Lillian Ladele

found herself vilified by various people, including some holding themselves out as protectors of the rights and freedoms of others. She faced this with a quiet dignity.

"I hope that those who were quick to criticise Lillian - including those holding political and clerical office - will now swiftly express their support for her (and others like her) now she has been revealed as the victim, and not the perpetrator, of the discrimination they purport to oppose."

Islington Council has announced it is appealing against the decision.



Key points from the employment tribunal ruling:

DIRECT DISCRIMINATION

Islington Council directly discriminated against Miss Ladele on grounds of her religious beliefs in several ways, including:

- failing to consider her for promotion
- deciding to discipline her and threatening her with dismissal
- concluding she had committed gross misconduct
- labelling and treating her as homophobic
- disregarding her concerns about her treatment
- failing to tackle homosexual colleagues who were mistreating her.

INDIRECT DISCRIMINATION

Islington Council indirectly discriminated against Miss Ladele on grounds of her religious beliefs by requiring all registrars to perform civil partnership duties.

HARASSMENT

Islington Council "disregarded and displayed no respect for Ms Ladele's genuinely held religious belief," and it created an "intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for her on grounds of her religion or belief".

One in ten gambling ads break the rules

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

More than one in ten TV adverts for gambling have broken advertising rules, according to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).⁴

Of the 56 advertisements checked, the ASA found that five promoting gambling websites could appeal to children and young people. A sixth TV advertisement was found to

suggest that gambling could improve self-esteem, self-image and help achieve financial security.

The Government relaxed rules for gambling advertising in 2005. Under the Gambling Act 2005 casinos, bookmakers and gambling websites are allowed to advertise on television, subject to certain restrictions.

Go-ahead given for 16 new 'gambling palaces'

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

The Government has given official confirmation that 16 huge new casinos are expected to open in locations across the country.

The new casinos - dubbed 'gambling palaces' - are likely to exceed the size of any casino currently operating in the UK, though they will fall into new size categories labelled 'small' and 'large'.

Campaigners welcomed the rejection of plans for an even bigger Las Vegas style 'super-casino', but remain concerned that the introduction

of huge new gambling venues in deprived areas will have damaging consequences.

Mike Judge of The Christian Institute said: "Gambling clearly exploits those on the lowest income and pushes them nearer the brink of poverty, crime and addiction.

"The Government says these casinos will regenerate

communities. I'm sure there are better ways of regenerating communities than encouraging people to waste their money in slot machines."

New casinos covering an area of up to 53,820 sq ft (5,000 sq m) are expected to open in: Great Yarmouth, Hull, Leeds, Middlesbrough, Milton Keynes, Newham, Solihull and Southampton.



Gambling causes 'human pollution', warns Archbishop

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

With communities across the country preparing for the arrival of huge new casinos, Church of England bishops have warned of the destructive effects of gambling.

A motion was passed by the Church of England's General Synod indicating "grave concern" at the Government's "apparent enthusiasm for the promotion of gambling".

The Synod was presented with evidence from the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Psychiatrists showing that gambling often leads to addiction and destructive social problems.

Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, told the Synod: "The gambling industry is profoundly costly, its human pollution in terms of promoting addiction, destroying family life and so forth, is manifest. The gambling industry needs to take responsibility."⁵

Dr Emanuel Moran, specialist adviser on pathological gambling for the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said: "I am seriously afraid we are going to see an increase in problems with families, children, poverty, crime and suicide, which are all linked to gambling."⁶

Tougher cannabis laws to be restored

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

Cannabis will be reclassified to the class B category of illegal drugs, Home Secretary Jacqui Smith announced in May.

The drug was controversially moved down to class C in 2004 by former Home Secretary, David Blunkett.

Since then, police, parents and mental health experts have called for the move to be reversed because of the risks associated with using the drug.

The Christian Institute argued against weakening the law in 2004, warning of the potential consequences to crime and mental health.

May's Home Office decision goes against the recommendations of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs.

Following a review of the law on cannabis, the Council concluded that reclassification was not necessary. But it did acknowledge a probable causal link between cannabis



Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, announced the reverse.

and psychotic illnesses, like schizophrenia.⁷

Miss Smith said: "I have given the council's report careful consideration. Of its 21 recommendations I accept all but those relating to classification."⁸

"I have decided to reclassify cannabis, subject to Parliamentary approval, as a class B drug."

She added: "There is a

compelling case for us to act now rather than risk the future health of young people.

"Where there is a clear and serious problem, but doubt about the potential harm that will be caused, we must err on the side of caution and protect the public. I make no apology for that. I am not prepared to wait and see."

Rise in mental illness blamed on weakened cannabis laws

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

Significantly more people have been diagnosed with psychosis and schizophrenia since the law on cannabis was relaxed in 2004, figures released by the Government show.

In 2006-07, there were 213,624 cases of psychosis diagnosed, compared with 176,776 the year before

the law changed. Similarly, diagnoses of schizophrenia were up from 40,763 in 2003-04 to 45,955 in 2006-07.⁹

The statistics were published by the Department of Health in answer to a written parliamentary question from Conservative MP Graham Brady, who said they were "shocking".¹⁰

A separate question by James Brokenshire

MP revealed that the NHS spent £2.72million on anti-psychotic drugs for under 16s last year. That is a two-thirds increase on the 2004 figure of £1.7million.¹¹

The cost of the anti-psychotic drug has not changed much over that period, meaning most of the extra money was spent treating substantially more young patients.

Mr Brokenshire, said: "These are shocking figures and they suggest an increase in the prevalence of psychosis in the young.

He added: "The Government's mixed messages on cannabis have caused real harm and we won't know the full extent of the damage for years to come."

Appeal Court ruling does not treat cohabitation like marriage

■ By David Greatorex

A Court of Appeal decision in April was widely misreported in the media as establishing a 'divorce law' for cohabiting couples.

In fact, the reasoning behind the judgment was not about cohabitation specifically but to do with joint property ownership.¹²

A cohabiting couple who separated after 17 years of living together were ordered by the court to split the proceeds from their shared home equally even though the deposit, mortgage and utility bills had all been paid by one party.



The Court of Appeal ruling applies to joint ownership, not cohabitation.

However, this verdict was reached because the property was in joint names, not because they were in a cohabiting relationship.

Whenever two individuals own a home

in joint names, whatever their relationship, there is a presumption that their ownership is 50:50. If two friends hold a house in joint names, the same principle will apply.

The presumption can only be rebutted if it can be established from the conduct of the parties that their "shared intention" was to divide ownership differently.

Plans for cohabiting couples' rights delayed

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

Plans to give cohabiting couples legal rights like married couples appear to have been put on a back burner while the Government waits to see the effects of similar laws in Scotland.

Justice Minister Bridget Prentice has told the House of Commons that the Government will seek research on the impact of provisions in the Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006 which came into effect last year.¹³

The Law Commission recently drew up proposals for England and Wales to allow cohabitants to be compensated for financial losses incurred if their relationship breaks down.

The Commission's report was completed at the Government's request, and it was expected that changes to the law would be sought.

Patricia Morgan, an independent academic who has written studies on cohabitation,

said that the Government was mainly concerned with cost.

"Lawyers would love a cohabitation law," she said, "but ministers are worried about the compensation boom it might unleash. There would be turmoil."¹⁴

A spokesperson for the think-tank Civitas said: "There is no need and no public demand for a cohabitation law. We have a perfectly good one already, called marriage."

Family life is falling apart, says judge

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

Family life is in meltdown and tackling the crisis should top the Government's agenda, a senior judge has warned.

Mr Justice Coleridge, a Family Division judge, told a conference of family lawyers in Brighton: "What is certain is that almost all of society's social ills can be traced directly to the collapse of the family life."¹⁵

Family breakdown, he told delegates, is as serious as economic decline, terrorism and street crime in terms of its threat to British society, and is "...on a scale, depth and breadth which few of us could have imagined even a decade ago".

Speaking of children caught up in drink, drugs and school truancy he said: "Scratch the surface of these cases and you invariably find a miserable family, overseen by a dysfunctional and fractured parental relationship - or none at all."

"I am not saying every broken family produces dysfunctional children," he added, "but I am saying that almost every dysfunctional child is the product of a broken family."

Family breakdown harms children's mental health

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

Children are increasingly suffering from mental ill health, a new report has found, with family breakdown a major cause.

In the report, from the Good Childhood Inquiry, family relationships were identified as being central to children's well-being, with one author commenting

that it's not just the event of family breakdown itself but the life that has to be lived afterwards that causes harm.¹⁶

The report was based on the responses of thousands of children to the Inquiry which was commissioned by The Children's Society in 2006. It found that one in four under-16s

regularly feel depressed, with peer pressure and worries about physical appearance also listed as causes.

A poll of adults, conducted alongside the Inquiry, found that almost a third - 29 per cent - believed that family breakdown was to blame for harming children's well-being.

Men are being erased from families, warns MP

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

Fathers are being "airbrushed" out of society, warns a former leader of the Conservative Party.

Iain Duncan Smith says many boys are turning to gang leaders and drug dealers for role models to replace absent fathers.¹⁷

Girls who have never known the empathetic, unconditional love of a father are also left vulnerable to early, unprotected and often regretted sex, he says.

His comments follow a recent Government move to let doctors provide women with fertility treatment without considering the child's need for a father.

Mr Duncan Smith, MP for Chingford and Woodford Green, tabled an amendment to block the measure. But he was defeated by 292 votes to 217.

Responding to the result in an article for The Sunday Times newspaper Mr Duncan Smith described it as "just another



Dads are being sidelined.

case of how, bit by bit, we are airbrushing men and their responsibilities from society."

He continued: "Too many children are failed because their fathers play no part in their lives; I wonder how long it will be before we finally admit that we need to put men back and rebuild our fractured society."

Abortion at all-time high and rates soar for teens

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

The number of abortions taking place in England and Wales has reached a record high, new figures show.

Numbers increased by more than 4,000 according to official statistics published today. There were 205,598 abortions in 2007 compared to 201,173 in 2006. For girls aged

14 or below, the number of abortions has shot up 12 per cent to 1,171.¹⁸

The highest abortion rate is among 19 year-olds, with 36 per 1,000 having terminations.

Abortions among women aged below 18 increased by 8.5 per cent to 20,289. The abortion rate among that age group is 20 per 1,000 women.

David Cameron wants easier early abortions

■ By Jennifer Davis

David Cameron, leader of the Conservative Party, thinks the law on early abortions should be more liberal.

Although Mr Cameron supports reducing the abortion limit to 20 weeks, he also wants to make early abortions easier to access.

This would mean scrapping the requirement for two doctors to approve the procedure, and allowing nurses to provide 'medical' abortions – where pills are taken to kill and expel a foetus.

When MPs debated abortion in May the Conservative Shadow Health Secretary, Andrew Lansley MP, indicated his backing for such measures.

Mr Cameron's office later sent a letter to the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) which defended Mr Lansley's views. The letter said Mr Cameron



Tory leader, David Cameron.

thinks the ideas are "practical and sensible".¹⁹

The letter stated: "Andrew was advocating that early, medical abortions are preferable to late, surgical ones. Therefore, Andrew was in favour of amending the requirement for two doctors to consent to an abortion being performed and for reviewing the restrictions on nurses providing medical abortions.

"As David is in favour of allowing women to have abortions, but supports a reduction to the abortion limit, he thinks that this is a practical and sensible proposal. However, it must be emphasized that this is currently a free vote issue."

Teen girl dies after taking abortion pills

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

A Bristol teenager died after a drug-induced abortion left part of her six week-old foetus inside her, an inquest has heard.²⁰

The case raises safety concerns about early 'medical' abortions, known as EMAs, which the Department of Health wants to make available away from hospitals.

A-level student Manon Jones, 18, had her pregnancy terminated in June 2005 using two drugs taken a couple of days apart.

Two weeks after her abortion Manon went on holiday, against medical advice, but returned home early feeling unwell and admitted herself to hospital in Bristol.

Doctors decided that she would need a blood transfusion. However, a delay caused by another emergency in the hospital meant Manon's condition deteriorated.

Dr Hugh White said that she died of an abnormal decrease in blood volume and shock caused by "retained products of conception", meaning that the foetus had not been fully expelled after the abortion.

Critics of EMAs say the procedure can, in a small number of cases, cause life-threatening complications. There are concerns that allowing women to use such drugs without proper medical supervision would put them in danger.

Stem cell advance avoids embryo problem

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

Scientists have taken another significant step away from using embryos in stem cell research as a new alternative is developed.

A team of scientists from America and Germany has found a way of treating adult brain cells with drugs to make them behave like embryonic stem cells.

They believe this will help them develop treatments for various medical conditions without destroying human embryos or using animal-human embryos.

Previously, scientists had been able to make skin cells behave like embryonic stem cells, but there were concerns because they could only do it by using genes which were linked to cancer.

This new breakthrough shows how that particular problem can be overcome and undermines claims that embryonic stem cell research is necessary. One



Scientists are moving away from using embryos in stem cell research.

of the scientists involved in the breakthrough, Dr Sheng Ding, said: "This shows that we can make cell reprogramming technology much more practical than it has been.

"These advances will bring us closer to the day when we can use these powerful cells to make

any kind of human tissue that we need to help patients."

Critics of the Government's recent embryology Bill say this development shows there is no need for the controversial moves to allow the creation of animal-human embryos for research.

Couple want right to deliberately choose deaf embryo

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

A deaf couple want new embryology legislation to allow them to deliberately select a deaf child from embryos created by IVF.

The Government's Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill could allow parents to screen embryos and choose to discard any with a serious disability.

But Paula Garfield and Tomato Lichy argue

that the rules should also apply the other way, permitting them to choose to have a deaf child. They say that the proposals as they stand discriminate against deaf people.

The couple said: "If hearing people were to have the right to throw away a deaf embryo, then we as deaf people should also have the right to throw away a hearing embryo".²¹

The Royal National Institute for Deaf People does not support the choice of deaf embryos over those who would not be born with hearing problems.

Its chief executive Jackie Ballard said: "Deafness is a disability and we have spent a long time campaigning to improve the lives of people who live with it. But it is certainly not a slight to the deaf to

say it is better to bring a child who will face the least difficulty into the world".²²

Opponents of embryo selection say destroying an embryo, whether it is deaf or not, is wrong. The Christian Institute's Mike Judge said, "the dignity of human life does not depend on the ability to hear."

Analysis: The Human Fertilisation

■ By Humphrey Dobson

One of the biggest Parliamentary issues so far this year has been the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill.

The Bill, which has yet to complete all its stages in Parliament, liberalises the law on the scientific use of human embryos. It also offers the first opportunity in nearly 20 years to significantly amend the law on abortion.

Pro-life groups sought a reduction in the upper gestational time limit for abortion from the current limit of 24 weeks. Sadly, in May several votes to reduce the time limit were all lost. The closest vote, on reducing it to 22 weeks, was lost by 304 to 233.

An opinion poll commissioned by The Christian Institute shows that the views of MPs are out of step with the public. The poll showed that 73% of women backed a reduction to 20 weeks or lower.²³

A very limited amendment requiring doctors to offer information and counselling if a foetus is diagnosed with a disability was also rejected. That such a mild amendment failed shows how determined pro-abortion MPs were to oppose any new restrictions on abortion.

Amendments which would radically liberalise the law on abortion have been tabled but have not yet been voted on.

If selected by the Speaker for debate, votes could take place in October.

The Bill allows scientists to create embryos which are part-human, part-animal. The claim is that research using these animal-human embryos will one day provide miracle cures. But after more than a decade of research on fully human embryos, not one successful treatment has been developed. Animal-human embryos are not likely to help since they will probably develop differently from fully human embryos. MPs raised many of our concerns, but a vote to prohibit animal-human embryos was lost 336 to 176.

The Bill also allows so-called 'saviour siblings' - children selected through IVF and brought to birth to provide cells or tissue for an older sibling who is ill. MPs voted 342 to 163 in favour of saviour siblings.

The Bill also legislates against the importance of fathers. At present, doctors must consider "the need of a child for a father" when giving a woman fertility treatment.

The Bill removes this requirement. The House of Commons supported the move by 292 to 217.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill is a cause for deep sadness. Nevertheless, the debates allowed pro-life MPs to testify to the truth. Millions of people saw the television coverage. As a result, there is

much more widespread concern about abortion. Public opinion now backs tightening up the abortion law.

It was also encouraging that so many Christians wrote to MPs, acting as salt and light, stirring the consciences of politicians. Indeed, the huge pro-life campaign on abortion may work to prevent pro-abortion MPs from making the laws any worse.

So what must we do now? Pick ourselves up and carry on the struggle to defend human life and to stand for the honour of God's name.



The role of fathers for IVF children

The Bill legislates against the importance of fathers. At present, the law says that doctors must consider "the need of a child for a father" when giving a woman fertility treatment. The Bill removes this requirement. Supporters say this will make it easier for single women and lesbian couples to have a child by IVF. Critics say it sidelines the role of a father.

MPs voted in favour by 292 to 217

and Embryology Bill



The key areas of debate

Animal-human embryos

The Bill allows scientists to create embryos which are part-human, part-animal. The claim is that research using these animal-human embryos will one day provide miracle cures. But after more than a decade of research on fully human embryos, not one successful treatment has been developed. MPs raised many of our concerns, but a vote to prohibit animal-human embryos was lost.

MPs voted in favour by 336 to 176

Saviour siblings

The Bill allows so-called 'saviour siblings'. These are children selected through IVF and brought to birth to provide cells or tissue for an older sibling who is ill. Critics are concerned at the psychological damage this could have on a child who is created for this purpose. A poll shows that most people think the creation of a saviour sibling gives a child no say in how its own body is used.²⁴

MPs voted in favour by 342 to 163

Lowering the abortion limit

Pro-life MPs sought a reduction in the upper gestational time limit for abortion from the current limit of 24 weeks. A growing body of evidence shows survival rates are improving for children born under 24 weeks. An opinion poll shows that most people favour reducing the time limit.

Sadly, several votes to reduce the time limit were all lost. The closest vote, on reducing it to 22 weeks, was lost by 304 to 233.

NI adoption laws breach human rights, say Law Lords

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

Unmarried couples in Northern Ireland will be allowed to jointly adopt children following a ruling announced by Law Lords.

The Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 does not allow a couple to jointly adopt a child if they are not married.

But judges in the House of Lords – the highest court in the land – have said the law breaches the Human Rights Act.²⁵

An appeal was brought to the Lords by an unmarried couple from Northern Ireland.

The woman, who cannot be named for legal reasons, has a daughter from a previous relationship. The man she lives with wants to become the girl's adoptive father.

If the couple got married they could lawfully adopt the girl together, but they have refused to do so.

Age of consent reduced to 16 against the people's wishes

■ **By Matthew Jess**

The Government has lowered the age of consent in Northern Ireland from 17 to 16, in spite of widespread opposition.

The move was proposed by the Northern Ireland Office because Westminster retains responsibility for criminal justice matters in the Province.

Northern Ireland politicians, the public, and youth organisations were firmly against the plan.

After hearing evidence from The Christian Institute and others, a committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly strongly recommended retaining the age of consent at 17. The Assembly unanimously adopted the committee's report.²⁶

Over half of all Assembly

members signed a motion calling on the Secretary of State to drop the age of consent proposal.

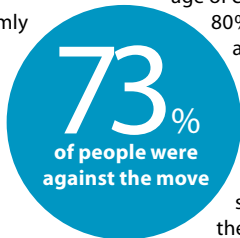
Leading sex education groups and youth organisations in Northern Ireland publicly voiced their opposition to the proposal.

A public opinion poll commissioned by The Christian Institute found that 73% of people in Northern Ireland oppose any move to lower the age of consent. This includes

80% of Protestants and 72% of Roman Catholics.²⁷

Over 90% of respondents to a public consultation on the proposal specifically opposed the move.²⁸

Despite all this a motion rejecting the plan, tabled by Northern Ireland Peer Lord Morrow, was defeated in the Lords by 146 votes to 66.



MP reported to police over 'gay' comments

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

An MP from Northern Ireland has been reported to the police for expressing her religious beliefs on homosexual practice.

Iris Robinson, DUP MP for Strangford, was speaking on BBC Radio Ulster's Nolan Show on 6 June.

She said the Bible describes homosexuality as an "abomination". She also said that homosexuals should seek counselling.

John O'Doherty, Co-Chair of the Northern Ireland Policing Board LGBT Reference Group, has made a formal complaint to the police about the remarks.

"People like Mrs Robinson need to learn that their comments have consequences," he said.²⁹

The Police Service of Northern Ireland confirmed that they were investigating a complaint.

Jeffrey Donaldson, DUP MP for Lagan Valley, said: "This is a country where people have freedom of speech."

Mrs Robinson said: "I think at the moment there is a witch hunt to curb or actually stop or prevent Christians speaking out and I make no apology for what I said because it's the word of God."³⁰

Scots drop 'harm reduction' drugs policy

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

In May the Scottish Government announced a new five-point plan to tackle Scotland's growing drugs problem.

The plan includes a move away from the 'harm reduction' policy which includes keeping abusers on methadone as a substitute for heroin.

Instead the Scottish Government says it will seek to "support people to move on towards a drug-free life".³¹

Minister for Community Safety, Fergus Ewing MSP, made a formal statement to Parliament on 29 May. MSPs debated and voted on the strategy on 4 June. They welcomed the new focus on addiction recovery.³²

The Scottish Government estimates that the drug problem costs taxpayers £2.6 billion each year. There are an estimated 22,000 drug abusers on the methadone programme in Scotland.³³

Prof. Neil McKeganey of Glasgow University's Centre for Drug Misuse Research has attacked the current methadone programme.

He said: "I think we need to refocus where that money is spent. We need to massively increase the availability of residential rehabilitation... at the moment our treatment centres are log-jammed."³⁴

Morning-after pill free at Scottish chemists

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

The morning-after pill is to be given out free of charge at Scotland's chemists. Ministers have announced the scheme as teen pregnancy rates reach their highest level since 1998.

Scottish Government statistics reveal that the rate among under-16s in 2006 had gone up to 8.1 per 1,000.³⁵

The figures suggest that Scotland is on course to fall woefully short of its target to reduce rates to 6.8 per 1,000 by 2010.

Three fifths of the 772 conceptions among under-16s in 2006 ended in abortion. In total, over 3,500 women aged below 20 terminated a pregnancy that year.

Although the Scottish Government has rejected calls to give



The drug will be free in chemists but not schools.

out the morning-after pill in schools, ministers say that it should be more easily accessible.

It has not yet been decided if there will be an age limit on who can receive the pill.

Critics have warned that the move will not help reduce rates of teenage pregnancy, abortion or sexually transmitted diseases. They say the scheme will encourage risk-taking sexual behaviour.

The morning-after

pill usually costs around £26 over the counter in Scotland, though it is available for free on prescription from a GP. Under the new scheme, it will be supplied free of charge by over 1,000 local chemists.³⁶

Scottish Minister for Public Health, Shona Robison, said: "We are not persuaded of the need to provide emergency contraception on school premises but do want to ensure that such services

are available and are accessible in other local facilities."

However, Dr Trevor Stammers, from the charity Family and Youth Concern, was critical of the plans.

"I am staggered government will be wasting taxpayers' money on something not backed by a scrap of evidence," he said.

"This will make money for the manufacturers but in terms of improving public health it will have no effect."

His concerns were echoed by the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland. A spokesman said: "This gives the false impression that careless sexual activity is OK because there is always a fix."

Late-night vote secures free speech

■ **By Simon Calvert**

This last year the biggest religious liberty issue in Parliament has been the 'homophobic hatred' law. It doesn't take a lawyer to know that, in the current climate, this new offence could seriously damage free speech.

The homosexual group that lobbied for the law, Stonewall, wanted it to mirror the racial hatred law. That would have meant no protections at all for free speech. By contrast, the religious hatred law – which was passed in 2006 – has important protections for free speech. It also has a higher threshold than the racial hatred offence.

The Government Minister, Maria Eagle, was well aware of the religious liberty concerns about the new homophobic hatred law. She met with The Christian Institute and explained the Government's proposed wording.

To our great relief, the Government adopted the high threshold of the religious hatred law. However, it left out the free speech clause. Its omission would have sent the signal to police and prosecutors that free speech is more important under the religious hatred law than under the homophobic hatred law.

All attempts to get a free speech clause inserted during

the Commons stages of the Bill failed, despite cross-party support from MPs like Jim Dobbin, Ann Widdecombe and Alan Beith. So it all came down to the House of Lords.

Lord Waddington, a former Home Secretary, wanted to introduce a free speech amendment. The Government resolutely opposed it, saying it was unnecessary. Ministers used every trick in the book, including unexpectedly extending a House of Lords sitting late one evening to try to catch our side out. But that only stirred up Lord Waddington's supporters and, on Monday 21 April, 81 of them stayed until nearly midnight to defeat the Government



clause in 'homophobic hatred' law

by 24 votes. The free speech amendment went into the Bill.

But on 6 May the Commons removed the clause and the next day the Bill went back to the Lords. Lord Waddington re-tabled his amendment. We knew the Government and the Liberal Democrats would do everything to get their people to vote against it. Securing the free speech clause looked unlikely.

But Christians around the country had been praying. They had also been writing lots of letters to Peers. Amazingly the House supported Lord Waddington's amendment a second time. On the evening of 7 May I watched amazed from the gallery as they voted 178 to

164. It was an astonishing defeat for the Government. Seasoned people in the Lords could not believe so many people turned out on our side when none of the major parties was whipping in our favour. Thirteen Labour peers defied their own party by voting with us and many more stayed away.

However, we expected the Commons to remove the clause again and send the Bill back to the Lords that very night. Just as preparations were being made for another late-night vote in the Lords the news came through that the Government was conceding defeat.

The Minister announced to the Commons that they would

accept the clause. But then the Liberal Democrat front bench objected. The Lib Dems forced a vote in the Commons and because the Government had already accepted the amendment they had to whip their own MPs through the lobby in support of it. Lord Waddington's amendment was passed in the Commons by 324 votes to 46.

All in all this was one of the best results we have ever known. A great deal of work was done to protect free speech by Lord Waddington supported by Lady O'Cathain and others. Many Christians made the vote a matter for earnest prayer and God answered.

Why the free speech protection was needed:

Julian Hurst

Last year church worker Julian Hurst was handing out leaflets to the public in Manchester, inviting people to a church's Easter services. The leaflet made no mention of homosexuality whatsoever. Yet, a homosexual man complained to the police who took copies away and examined them. The next day Mr Hurst was visited in his home by a PC from the Race and Hate Crimes Unit.

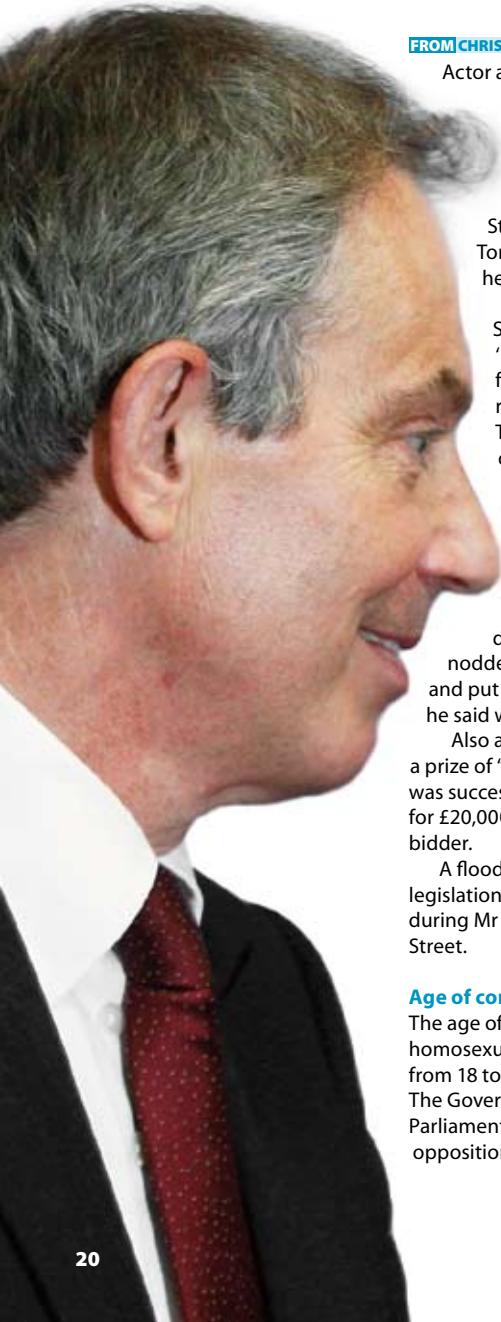
Joe & Helen Roberts

This retired Christian couple were interrogated by police for over an hour because they expressed opposition to their local council's 'gay rights' policy. The police said they were responding to a reported 'homophobic incident'. The police later admitted that no crime had been committed and the police and council issued a public apology.

Miguel Hayworth

A Christian street preacher in Manchester was silenced, taken into the back of a police van, questioned and detained for over an hour following a complaint of 'homophobia'. Miguel Hayworth had been publicly reading from the Bible, from Romans 1:17-32, when a member of the public complained. The officers later released Mr Hayworth and he was permitted to continue preaching.

Tony Blair did Stonewall's



FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

Actor and homosexual campaigner Sir Ian McKellen has revealed the level of influence 'gay rights' group

Stonewall exerted on Tony Blair's policies while he was Prime Minister.

Speaking at Stonewall's annual 'Equality Dinner' fundraiser, Sir Ian recalled meeting Tony Blair on behalf of Stonewall three months before his election as Prime Minister.

McKellen told the guests, "I reeled off Stonewall's demands, and he nodded, wrote them down and put a tick by them all. Then he said we will do all that."³⁷

Also at the 'Equality Dinner', a prize of "tea with Tony Blair" was successfully auctioned for £20,000 to an undisclosed bidder.

A flood of 'gay rights' legislation was introduced during Mr Blair's time in Downing Street.

Age of consent

The age of consent for homosexual acts was reduced from 18 to 16 in January 2001. The Government invoked the Parliament Acts to bypass opposition in the House of Lords.

Supporters claimed this would improve sexual health provision for young gay men. But in every year since the age of homosexual consent was lowered, the number of new HIV diagnoses among 16-24 year olds has been significantly higher than before the law was changed.³⁸

Section 28

In 2003, the Government succeeded in abolishing Section 28 in England and Wales. This part of the 1988 Local Government Act prevented local authorities spending public money on the promotion of homosexuality in schools or elsewhere.

Controversy over the promotion of homosexuality in schools has been increasing since the removal of Section 28. Earlier this year storybooks about homosexual relationships were withdrawn from primary schools in Bristol after protests from parents.³⁹

Gay adoption

Joint adoption by homosexual couples was legalised in 2002 and came into force in 2005. Critics said the move used children as political trophies and was more concerned with an adult's rights rather than a child's best interests.

The press have reported that Christians are being turned down as unsuitable adopters because of their religious beliefs.⁴⁰

bidding says Ian McKellen

Employment laws

In 2003 the Government introduced new regulations banning sexual orientation discrimination in employment.

Recently a Church of England Diocese was sued under these regulations and ordered to pay £47,000 in compensation to an openly gay man who was turned down for a job as a church youth worker.⁴¹

Civil partnerships

Homosexual relationships gained legal recognition with the Civil Partnership Act 2004. 'Gay marriage' in all but name, the Act extended all the legal rights and privileges of marriage to homosexual couples.

Now some public authorities are erasing the word marriage from all official documents and replacing it with the 'neutral' word "partner". Christian registrars are being put under pressure to perform civil partnership ceremonies by politically correct councils.

Goods and services

The Government's Sexual Orientation Regulations (SORs) of 2007 outlawed discrimination in the provision of goods and services.

At the time Tony Blair was warned that the SORs enshrined discrimination against Christians

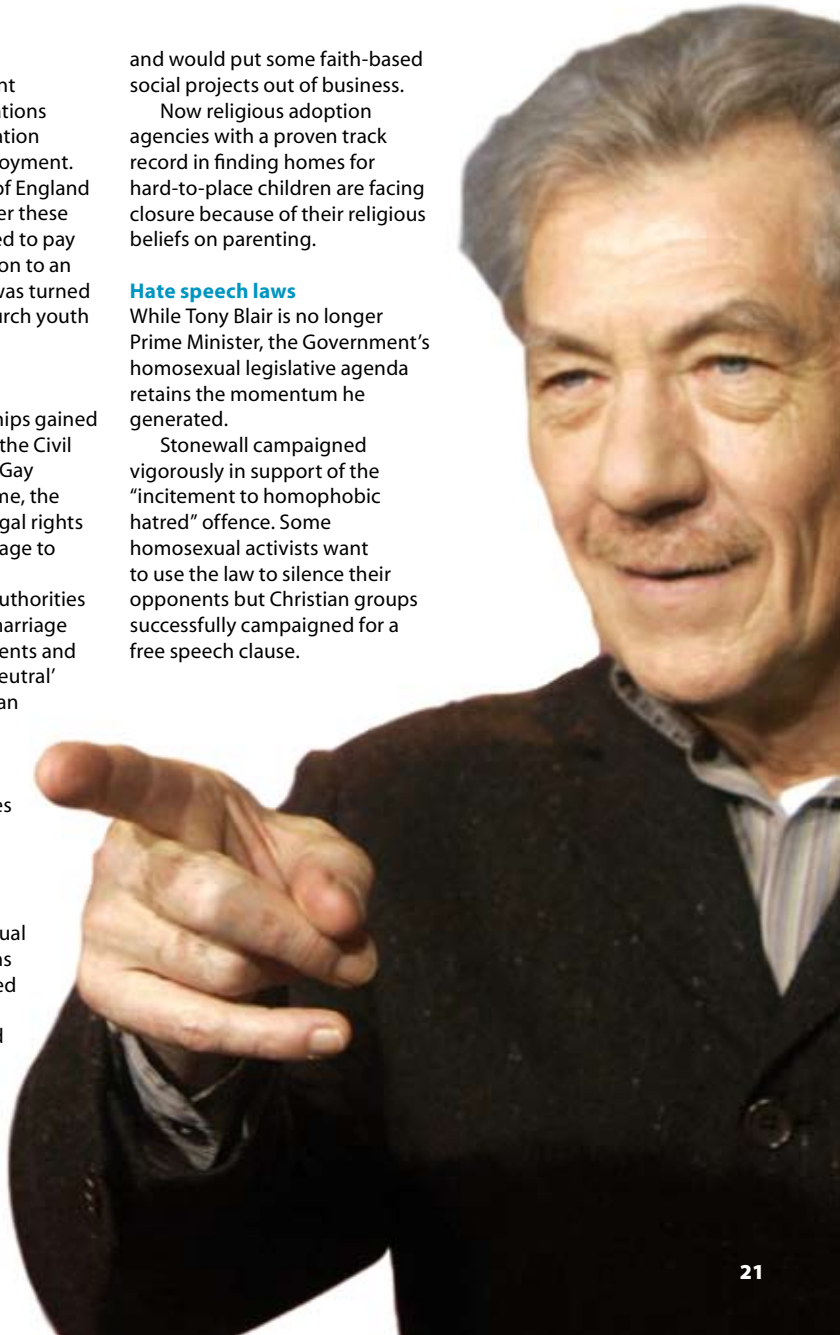
and would put some faith-based social projects out of business.

Now religious adoption agencies with a proven track record in finding homes for hard-to-place children are facing closure because of their religious beliefs on parenting.

Hate speech laws

While Tony Blair is no longer Prime Minister, the Government's homosexual legislative agenda retains the momentum he generated.

Stonewall campaigned vigorously in support of the "incitement to homophobic hatred" offence. Some homosexual activists want to use the law to silence their opponents but Christian groups successfully campaigned for a free speech clause.



Charity Commission draft guidance

■ **By Jennifer Davis**

The Christian Institute is concerned that new rules for charities could affect the religious liberty of Christian groups.

The Charity Commission claims that a new situation has been created because the Charities Act 2006 removed a presumption that faith-based groups are for the 'public benefit'.

The Commission's approach means that such groups, including existing charities, will need to prove that they are of public benefit to obtain or maintain their charitable status.

The question is, how will the new public benefit test apply to religious groups? The Charity Commission is preparing guidelines on how the new law will apply, and has just finished

a consultation on this issue. Its conclusions will be crucial.

The Commission has already proposed that it will analyse viewpoints based on the Bible, evangelism which targets another faith, the interpretation of doctrine, and membership criteria – including that of churches – in deciding whether a group benefits the public.

The Institute is concerned that the Commission is overstepping its remit.

We are also concerned about the way in which the 'public benefit' test will apply to Christian organisations that are concerned with promoting moral beliefs that some people disagree with, or exist to promote cross-cultural evangelism.

The Institute's response to the consultation is available from our website, christian.org.uk



C of E raises concerns over new charity rules

FROM CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK

Christian charities are in danger from new 'public benefit' rules, the Church of England has warned.

The Church is worried that a charity existing exclusively to promote traditional Christian views in a particular area – such as marriage and sexual ethics – could have its charitable status threatened.

The warnings come in an official response

to a public consultation on the Charity Commission's draft guidance.⁴²

The draft guidance explains how the Commission intends to apply the new 'public benefit' test to religious organisations.

Earlier this year The Christian Institute raised concerns about the Commission's intention to assess membership criteria, evangelism, doctrinal interpretation, and public opinion.

The Church of England has argued against the Commission's proposals relating to the advancement of religion through pastoral work, such as running a soup kitchen.

The Charity Commission wants to know how religious activity of this kind can be distinguished from similar work by non-faith groups.

However, the Church says this is "confused

and confusing" and questions the legal basis for the proposition.

"What matters is the motivation of activity of this kind rather than what badges are attached to it in practice," the Church's response states.

It also points out that religious groups who provide pastoral care are already under pressure in other areas to suppress their religious character.

could impact gospel freedom

Areas of concern include:

Evangelism

The Commission recognises that some religious charities, not least churches, seek to convert people to their religion. The Commission says that's fine. However, it says that such activity has to be done 'properly'.⁴³ There may be cases where evangelism will not provide public benefit, the Commission says. We are concerned that in this area, the Commission is setting itself up to judge what is and what is not proper evangelism.

Membership

The Charity Commission's draft guidance seems to say that religious groups like churches can decide who can become a member only under certain conditions. For example it says that no-one should be "inappropriately or unreasonably"⁴⁴ denied membership; this suggests that the Commission will decide what constitutes unsuitable membership criteria. We would argue that it is the job of a church, not the Charity Commission, to decide who is allowed to become a member.

Doctrine

Another area in which the Commission is stepping beyond its role is in determining the validity of certain religious beliefs. The draft guidance says that a public benefit assessment of a charity could be affected if it is seen to be 'misinterpreting' or 'misusing' a particular doctrine or teaching.⁴⁵ We object to the suggestion that the Commission can decide if a viewpoint based on the Bible is legitimate; this is clearly outside its remit.

Public opinion

Some parts of the draft guidance suggest that a religious charity's public benefit could be affected by the way its beliefs and activities are viewed by the public.⁴⁶ Public opinion can change with the wind, but in 2,000 years Christianity has not changed. It still benefits society, even if society doesn't agree with it. The charitable status of an organisation should not depend on its success in a popularity contest; these things should be assessed objectively.

Visit christian.org.uk regularly for the latest news

■ By Mike Judge

Many of the articles from this *Update* were first published on our website, christian.org.uk.

Visiting our site regularly is the best way to keep informed about the issues the Institute is involved in.

The site is updated as news breaks throughout the working week on topics like religious liberty, family values and the sanctity of life.

Our articles also include links to resources which help people understand the Christian reasons for the positions we take.

Every Friday, we send an email with the week's headlines – so you get a snap shot of what's happening on the issues you care about. You can click on a



christian.org.uk published the Ladele story before any other news site

headline for the full article.

If you have an email address and want to receive this weekly news alert, you can subscribe via our site or send an email to: info@christian.org.uk

Our site has doubled its audience since the start of the year. It is now read by 30,000 unique readers each month – and that number is growing.

The site contains much more

than news. Our resources section can offer you handy guides on subjects like religious liberty in the workplace. Theological publications are also available, together with an archive of over 100 audio recordings of Christian teaching.

Bookmark christian.org.uk in your web browser and visit us regularly.

New people join The Christian Institute team

■ By Mike Judge

As the nation continues to slide morally, and as Christians face increasing persecution by politically-correct bodies, there has been a need to increase the staff at the Institute.

We are pleased to announce five new members of staff. Dr Goomsu Obasi and Jonathan Timm have joined our administration department. Goomsu is a qualified architect and Jonathan is studying Computing and Business. Two new staff have been appointed



to the research department. Jane Leung is a European Politics graduate and Ben Mitchell is a graduate of Queen's University in Belfast.

Gerald Wood has been promoted to become our Office Manager, allowing Jon Errington to concentrate on his responsibilities as Head of Finance. William Macleod from

Stornoway joins the staff as Assistant Office Manager.

Jane Sampson has moved from administration to become Personal Assistant to Simon Calvert, Deputy Director (Public Affairs).

Mark Richardson, a researcher, is leaving the Institute to take up a post with Hewlett-Packard.

Mark conducted much helpful research into the scientific and ethical implications of proposals in the embryos Bill. The Institute thanks him for his work and wishes him well for the future.

The Institute is grateful to God for providing talented staff who work hard to be a Christian influence in a secular world.