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## So much to give thanks for

The United Kingdom is going through some choppy waters at the present time. We give thanks that God is always in control.

We are grateful for the good news of recent weeks. Plans to liberalise Sunday trading in Belfast were roundly rejected. Christian pharmacists in the rest of the UK will not be forced to go against their conscience in their daily work following our legal intervention. The Scottish Government has also backed down on the most intrusive aspects of its controversial Named Person scheme.

Nevertheless, it is apparent that Christian beliefs on marriage, the family, sexuality, gender and abortion are all under attack.

The Government's plans for the registration and inspection of church youth groups, and the proposed 'Equality Oath', remain a major cause for concern. Christians must continue to stand for God's truth and reject any attempts to equate our beliefs with 'extremism'.

With your help, The Christian Institute will continue to do so.

# Plan for all-day Sunday trading rejected by Belfast City Council

A proposed expansion of Sunday trading has been rejected by Belfast City Council, following campaigners' concerns that family life would suffer. The plan was voted down by twelve votes to three.

Nearly 2,500 individuals and organisations responded to the consultation beforehand. Shop workers' union Usdaw attacked the plans, saying its members were concerned about the effect all-day shopping would have on families.

A survey by the union found almost two-thirds of respondents said they have "already come under pressure to work on Sundays".

John Hannett, General Secretary of Usdaw, warned that the "number one reason" for



John Hannett, General Secretary of Usdaw, welcomed the result



shop workers' opposition is "the detrimental effect this would have on their family life".

The proposal was to designate Belfast as a 'holiday resort' and to allow all-day opening on 18 days a year.

Small trader group Retail NI welcomed the vote, and added

that it "puts down an important marker to the other ten Local Councils not to consider relaxing Sunday trading through the backdoor of Resort Status".

Last year, MPs at Westminster defeated Government plans to extend Sunday shopping hours in England and Wales.

# UK Supreme Court to hear arguments on Ashers case



The Ashers Baking Company case is to go before judges at the UK Supreme Court in the coming months. The UK's highest court has listed a hearing to consider a possible appeal by the Belfast-based bakers, over their refusal to bake a cake bearing the campaign slogan 'Support Gay Marriage'.

The Christian Institute continues to support the

company. We understand the Supreme Court will hear initial arguments from which they will then determine if they are to grant a full appeal hearing.

Daniel McArthur, General Manager of Ashers, has welcomed the decision. He said it showed the importance of the issues and the high-profile nature of the case.

Christian printer wins US appeal



A Christian printer who declined to make shirts for a US gay pride event has won his case on appeal.

Blaine Adamson of Hands On Originals was sued after turning down the order because it promoted a message that conflicted with his "sincerely held religious belief".

# Scottish denominations back same-sex unions despite opposition

The biblical definition of marriage has been dropped by the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC) and the Church of Scotland has taken steps to allow its ministers to perform same-sex weddings.

The SEC now states that 'marriages' will take place in its churches merely "in accordance with the civil law of Scotland".

Speaking against the move ahead of the June announcement Revd David McCarthy, part of the Scottish Anglican Network, said the decision would have "serious consequences for the Church".

Just two weeks before the SEC change, the Church of Scotland's General Assembly

backed a report encouraging same-sex weddings.

The report, from its own Theological Forum, acknowledged that the Bible condemns same-sex acts, but claimed Scripture was framed by cultural context.

Revd Dale London, a Church of Scotland minister in Angus, said that homosexual acts were against the Word of God. He added: "We cannot call good what God has called evil."

However, Revd Prof Iain Torrance, Convener of the Theological Forum, said everyone in the Assembly was on "a spectrum of interpretation" and suggested that there was no theological reason not to allow ministers to conduct same-sex weddings.

The Kirk will now conduct legal research to determine how same-sex weddings in churches can be allowed. Marriage was redefined in Scottish law in 2014.



# Labour wants abortion in NI

The Labour Party has committed itself to 'extending the right of abortion' to Northern Ireland.

Currently, the Abortion Act 1967 does not apply in Northern Ireland, where abortion remains illegal except to preserve the life of the mother. But in its manifesto for June's General Election, the Party set out its explicit support for abortion, saying: "we will work with the Assembly to extend that right to women in Northern Ireland".

Moves to liberalise the Province's abortion law were rejected by the NI Assembly as recently as February 2016.

MLAs voted against amending legislation to allow abortion of children with severely life-limiting conditions by 59 votes to 40. They also voted against allowing abortion in cases of sexual crime by 64 votes to 32.

However, in June the Government announced it would start funding abortions for NI women travelling to England.

Equalities Minister Justine Greening made the pledge after Labour MP Stella Creasy put forward an amendment on the issue.



Stella Creasy MP

## EDITORIAL

# GE2017: Christians must continue to pray



By Colin Hart, Director

June's General Election resulted in Theresa May forming a minority Government with support from the Democratic Unionist Party.

There has been much talk of the uncertainty that arises from what was, for many Westminster-watchers, an unexpected result. The Brexit process is expected to be long and arduous and the need to combat Islamist terror is a political priority.

At the present time, Christians need to be particularly watchful of plans to register and inspect church youth work and to force public office holders to swear an Equality Oath. They pose great danger to religious liberty and free speech.

We have seen in recent weeks only too clearly how holding biblical beliefs on marriage and abortion is sufficient grounds to be denounced as an 'extremist'!

Please take every opportunity to make your MP aware of the pressing

need to ensure that our Christian freedom is protected. They may even be wholly unaware of these draconian proposals. Remind them that Christian citizens are good citizens and not the source of violent extremism, which the Government rightly wants to tackle.

Max Hill QC, the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, was recently asked by BBC Radio 4 if the authorities have all the anti-terror powers they need. His answer was unequivocal – yes they do.

But despite the current turmoil, Christians can remain confident that God is in control. He has not been taken unawares. It is also vital that political uncertainties do not distract us or deter us from doing what we are able to do to make a Christian difference in our nation.

Above all we must pray for "all those in authority" so that we may continue to be allowed the freedom to live godly lives and have liberty to share the Gospel.



## Politically correct West won't admit to the war on Christians



🕒 Dr Tim Stanley

There is a war on Christianity and the West is failing to acknowledge it, Daily Telegraph columnist Dr Tim Stanley has said. He believes political correctness and an unwillingness to recognise the West's Christian heritage is to blame. The journalist and historian wrote: "When Christians are killed for being Christians, politicians overlook it and public interest fades".

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## Same-sex marriage a 'key issue' for Sinn Féin

Gerry Adams has listed same-sex marriage as a 'key issue' for Northern Ireland, despite widespread opposition.

In March the Sinn Féin President said it was "unacceptable" for rival politicians to fail to engage with key issues including homosexual marriage.

Marriage has not been redefined in Northern Ireland despite five attempts in the last five years.

## Most women want lower abortion limit, poll finds

An overwhelming majority of women – 70 per cent – want the abortion limit lowered, a poll has found.

The poll was commissioned by the 'Where do they stand?' group, which encourages people to find out politicians' views on issues including abortion, assisted suicide and embryo research.

Almost 80 per cent of people



support a five-day 'consideration period' before an abortion, as is the case in the Netherlands. Nearly nine in ten people believe sex-selective abortions should be

explicitly illegal.

In Great Britain, abortions generally can take place up to 24 weeks, or up to birth if it is thought that the child has a disability.

## Warning of BBC liberal bias as numbers of LGBT staff revealed



The BBC's "liberal and secular" staff are "dangerously out of touch" with religious people, according to Roger Bolton (pictured). The presenter of Radio 4's Feedback programme said the BBC's workforce is "more liberal and secular than the rest of the country", and shares little common ground with communities for whom religion is central to their lives.

His comments came as a Freedom of Information request, seen by The Christian Institute, showed the BBC employs a disproportionate number

of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual people.

The information reveals that 11.5 per cent of BBC bosses and 10.6 per cent of staff are LGBT. According to the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics only 1.7 per cent of the UK population is lesbian, gay or bisexual.

The number of people who have obtained a gender recognition certificate to change their legal birth sex is only 4,500 – around 0.007 per cent of the UK population.

## Ligonier Ministries' Reformation series

Dr Michael Reeves' 12-part video series on the English Reformation and the Puritans proved to be very popular with Institute supporters.

The series is available until December 2018 at: [christian.org.uk/reformation](http://christian.org.uk/reformation)



## NHS psychiatrist: 'I've seen cannabis ruin lives, don't legalise it'

An NHS psychiatrist and newspaper columnist has warned against the legalisation of cannabis and insisted that the drug "wrecks lives". Dr Max Pemberton said that he had seen many people become psychotic using cannabis. His comments came after police were criticised for not enforcing the law on drugs possession at a pro-cannabis rally.



## Government needs to "come clean" over Equality Oath

The Government is pressing forward with its plans for an Equality Oath according to news reports.

Last December, Cabinet minister Sajid Javid said that he was "drawn" to the idea of an oath which would demand that doctors, teachers and other public office holders swear allegiance to a state-sanctioned view of 'British values'.

In April, The Sun reported that the minister's officials had been holding meetings with interested parties.

Colin Hart, Director of The



Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP

Christian Institute, said: "The Government needs to come clean. From what we are hearing the Government's idea seems to be to get everyone to swear an allegiance to the Equalities Act."

## Teenage pregnancy fall linked to funding cuts, study finds

The fall in teenage pregnancies in the UK can be linked to funding cuts for sexual health services, according to new research. Funding changes meant less advertising for services and made contraceptives less readily available. The findings have been described as a 'wake-up call' to those who continue to claim such services are needed to reduce teen pregnancies.

Professor David Paton and Research Assistant Liam Wright found that the Government's provision of contraception and its sex advice



services may have encouraged risky behaviour, rather than curbed it. Between 1999 and 2010 the Government ran the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, which saw hundreds of millions of pounds spent on such services and sex and relationships education.

However, Prof Paton said: "Contrary to expectations, we found that, if anything, cuts have led to fewer teen pregnancies." The study went as far as to say that "spending on projects related to teenage pregnancy may even be counterproductive".

# Conscience win for Christian pharmacists



Official guidance has kept conscience provisions for pharmacists

Christian pharmacists will remain free to do their jobs in line with their consciences after intervention from The Christian Institute and Christian professionals.

Draft guidance from the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) could have forced Christians in Scotland, England and Wales to provide access to abortifacient drugs or hormone-blockers for changing sex.

In a marked shift in tone it now states: "Pharmacy professionals have the right to practise in line with their religion,

personal values or beliefs". This means they will retain the right to refer people to another pharmacist, provided care is not compromised. The changes were made after the Institute threatened the GPhC with legal action and hundreds of Christian professionals raised objections.

Our response to a public consultation on the proposed guidelines highlighted that freedom of conscience is protected by law, and therefore the GPhC has a responsibility to reasonably accommodate different beliefs.

## Your legacy would help Christians to be salt and light

None of our work would be possible without the generosity of our supporters. Leaving a gift in your will to The Christian Institute would enable us to continue working to preserve Christian freedoms for future generations.



0191 281 5664  
legacy@christian.org.uk  
christian.org.uk/legacy

## Watered-down Named Person Bill launched by Scottish Govt

A watered-down version of the Named Person legislation has been released in a huge victory for our long-running campaign against the intrusive scheme.

A new Bill was produced because The Christian Institute won its case against the Scottish Government at the UK Supreme Court last year.

Judges declared ministers' plans unlawful and also ruled that the new proposals must make clear that any advice offered by a named person is entirely optional.

The new Bill now repeals key parts of the original legislation and accepts the need for named persons to comply with existing human rights, data protection and confidentiality laws.

The No to Named Persons (NO2NP) campaign said it confirms "one of the most

remarkable, ignominious and expensive U-turns in the history of the Scottish Government and a huge victory for mums, dads and children across the country and those who were prepared to spend time and money fighting the scheme through the courts".



John Swinney MSP announced the new legislation

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Registered office: The Christian Institute, Wilberforce House, 4 Park Road, Gosforth Business Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8DG  
Tel: 0191 281 5664 Fax: 0191 281 4272 Email: info@christian.org.uk Website: www.christian.org.uk  
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