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Trusting in God's providence

Another court hearing approaches for Pastor Clive Johnston, but his case is not the only threat to street preaching. Attempts to limit voice amplification in Belfast would unjustly impact gospel freedom.

NI's biggest universities are also restricting what students can post about on social media. This risks limiting their ability to give a biblical view on certain issues.

Much of the CI's recent work has been combatting attempts in Great Britain to introduce assisted suicide and liberalise abortion law yet further. Both could impact Northern Ireland.

We are also continuing to challenge the UK Civil Service's participation in 'Pride' events. Using taxpayer funding in this way undermines public trust.

Church banned from freshers' fair successfully reinstated with CI help

A church that was banned from a university's freshers' event has successfully defended its right to book stalls after The Christian Institute intervened.

Grace Church Greenwich had been attempting to reserve a place at Goldsmiths University's Freshers' Fair. Native, the external company responsible for the booking process, told co-pastor Andrew Sach that while religious groups working on secular initiatives would be permitted, those promoting religious teaching would not.

Good News for Everyone! (formerly GideonsUK) was also barred. The ban affected not only the



▶ Grace Church Greenwich defended its right to book a stall thanks to the CI

Goldsmiths event, but every freshers' fair organised by Native.

Sach contacted The Christian Institute, and our Solicitor Advocate Sam Webster warned the company it was in breach of the Equality Act 2010.

He said both Grace Church and GNFE! "have grounds for a claim under the Act", but that legal action could be avoided if the company agreed to allow all future bookings from Grace Church and other religious groups.

As a result, Native suspended its policy of restricting bookings from religious organisations with immediate effect.

Both Grace Church and GNFE! are now in the process of booking stalls for September.

Top two NI universities accused of censoring gender-critical students

Northern Ireland's two biggest universities have been accused of "silencing" students who uphold the reality of sex.

Ulster University has outlawed "offensive or derogatory" social media comments relating to sex and gender. Similarly, Queen's forbids students from expressing "homophobic or transphobic views" and anything that could be "considered as negative, derogatory or offensive in terms

of a person's gender identity/expression", "sexual orientation" or "marital or civil partnership status".

The Institute's Head of Communications Angus Saul said: "This is a massive infringement

of freedom of speech. They're not talking about tackling on-campus harassment or targeting of individuals, they're talking about censoring people who do not subscribe to their particular view.

"Disagreement with LGBT relationships and gender ideology are protected beliefs, and courts have routinely held that such views are worthy of respect in a democratic society."



COMMENT



By Ciarán Kelly,
Director

Taxpayer-funded 'Pride' celebrations must stop

The Christian Institute has commenced formal legal action against the Civil Service over its official taxpayer-funded participation in 'Pride' marches.

This activity is unlawful. It gives the public the impression that civil servants have taken sides on controversial issues on which they ought, by law, to be impartial.

So far, the response to our concerns has been inadequate, indicating an unwillingness to recognise the depth of indoctrination in the Civil Service. As a result, we have now lodged legal papers with the High Court.

Pride London, the one attended by Whitehall-based civil servants, even banned

"This activity gives the impression that civil servants have taken sides on controversial issues"

political parties because they don't support political demands such as puberty blockers for kids and gender self-ID. These are positions that the taxpayers who fund the Civil Service increasingly reject.

The legal action will affect civil servants in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.



Puberty blocker trial put on hold

The Institute has welcomed the suspension of NHS England's planned puberty blocker trial.

It follows concerns raised by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency about a "potentially significant and, as yet, unquantified risk of long-term biological harms" to the children involved.

The announcement came only a matter of days after NI Health Minister Mike Nesbitt indicated the Province would not take part in the trial, pending the outcome of a legal challenge.

Bayswater Support Group, psychotherapist James Esses, and detransitioner Keira Bell have launched a judicial review, calling the trial "government-funded experimentation on young children".

An Institute spokesman welcomed the news that "this cruel experiment has been put on hold".

"Puberty-blocking drugs can cause irreversible harm. They stop children developing alongside their peers, prolong their fears and anxieties, and prevent gender distress from resolving naturally. Almost every child who takes these drugs ends up taking cross-sex hormones, with drastic, lifelong impacts.

"It's time to ditch this unethical trial altogether."

 Health Minister Mike Nesbitt

'Hate crime proposals need proper scrutiny'

The DUP has refused to rubber-stamp special "transgender protections" under new hate crime proposals.

According to the BBC, Justice Minister Naomi Long wrote to Executive parties last year asking them to endorse a measure she claimed would "increase protection for transgender people" from hate crime.

But Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly told Good Morning Ulster that the DUP had not complied with Long's request as the Minister

had failed to submit a paper to the Executive for review.

In September, Long pledged to introduce "the most impactful hate crime provisions from Judge Murrin's Review of Hate Crime Legislation".

She wants to prioritise

the creation of 'aggravated offences', which would allow tougher sentences in instances where crimes are deemed to be motivated by hostility towards a protected group.

The Justice Minister also said the law should 'recognise intersectionality'.



Institute: PSNI should end 'hate incident' recording

The Christian Institute says the PSNI should stop recording non-crime hate incidents (NCHIs)

following moves to do so elsewhere.

The College of Policing and National Police Chiefs' Council are advising the UK Government to scrap the controversial measures in England and Wales. Under the proposals, officers should only log serious incidents as "intelligence" reports.

Our NI Policy Officer James Kennedy emphasised that ditching the measures in Northern Ireland would ensure that "freedom of speech is protected in Northern Ireland as in the rest of the UK".



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Pro-assisted suicide MPs and Peers fear Bill may fall



Supporters of the Westminster assisted suicide Bill are fearful that the proposals may fail due to lack of time. If it has not been passed when the parliamentary session ends in May, it cannot become law.

Peers have rejected claims of 'filibustering' to delay the Bill, arguing it is so badly drafted it needs extensive reworking.

Bill supporters have threatened the use of the Parliament Acts to bypass the House of Lords.

Prostitution inquiry seeks to tackle 'online retail' of women

A new Stormont group on human trafficking has launched an inquiry into 'pimping websites'.

Its chairman Peter Martin (DUP) said the inquiry aims to expose websites used to advertise individuals for prostitution.

He told the Executive that they "allow the advertisement and purchase of sexual access to women in a way that mirrors online retail". He also argued the websites "reduce human beings to commodities and normalise the idea

that access to another person's body can be bought on demand".

The group also highlighted the low number of prosecutions under Northern Ireland's Human Trafficking and Exploitation Act. It follows the 'Nordic model' of criminalising those who buy sex but decriminalising its sale. Only one person has been prosecuted for

purchasing sex since the Act came into effect in 2015.

Proposals to introduce a similar model in Scotland were rejected by 64 votes to 54 in February.

The CI supports stronger legislation against prostitution. We are calling on politicians to help women leave prostitution behind for good, without legalising the sale of sex.



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Pray continually

1 Thessalonians 5:17

SUNDAY

PRAY That Christian teachers, parents and pupils would have the freedom to express their faith.

MONDAY

PRAY For Pastor Clive Johnston and his wife Sheila and for his legal team.

TUESDAY

PRAY For society to treasure the lives of the unborn and the terminally ill.

WEDNESDAY

PRAY For better enforcement of Northern Ireland's prostitution law.

THURSDAY

PRAY For the media to cover issues of concern to Christians accurately and fairly.

FRIDAY

PRAY For church leaders as they faithfully and boldly preach the Gospel.

SATURDAY

PRAY For the CI, as we seek to influence secular society for Christ.

Abortions at record high five years after Westminster's liberalisation

The number of abortions in Northern Ireland has reached its highest level since the law was liberalised in 2020.

Statistics from the Department of Health reveal that there were 2,899 abortions between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. This is a rise of 3.7 per cent on the previous year and 84 per cent higher than in 2021.

The vast majority of the abortions (89 per cent) took place at home without medical supervision.

TUV MLA Timothy Gaston accused the media of being "deeply dishonest" for claiming that the new abortion regime was



"anything but compassionate"

only needed for "hard cases", and warned that it is "anything but compassionate" to "push women toward ending a pregnancy

instead of receiving real support".

Since Westminster imposed the liberal abortion regime in 2020, 11,192 abortions have been carried out in the Province.

More abortions are also taking place

in England and Wales than ever before.

According to the latest Government figures, an estimated 278,740 abortions took place in 2023 – an eleven per cent rise on the previous twelve months.

NI could follow UK Govt's ban on creating explicit images using AI



Creating explicit deepfake images of people without their consent is now a criminal offence in England and Wales, following reports that social media platform X's AI tool 'Grok' had been used to undress women and children. Dedicated

'nudification' tools are set to be banned under the Crime and Policing Bill.

Alliance MLA Kate Nicholl plans to introduce a similar ban in Northern Ireland to stop such apps and "make it illegal to create non-consensual

sexually explicit images, rather than it just being illegal to share them".

Justice Minister Naomi Long also intends to adopt the UK Government's plan to criminalise pornography depicting strangulation.

Waiting: A message from Pastor Clive Johnston

I don't know many who like queuing! Whether it's in supermarkets, banks or listening to someone tell us: "Your call is important to us".

Like many people, I'm not patient by nature. Yet the Lord is constantly calling us to 'Wait'. In fact, it is surprising how often this is the very thing God calls us to do.

It's hard to believe that it all started on 7 July 2024! For Sheila and me, this has been a very special and different season of our lives because God has called us to wait.

So often waiting is good! It teaches us to trust, so that we see in answer to our prayers that delay is not denial, and that the

Lord may have something quite different in mind. Remember that the Lord Jesus prayed to the Father: "Not my will but yours be done".

Many folks have said they are praying for an acquittal at the next hearing on 31 March. That would certainly be a real answer to prayer! But I've been prompted more and more to simply pray that whatever the result, the name of the Lord Jesus would be glorified. This is a battle for freedom of speech and freedom of religion but it's also an opportunity to graciously witness for Jesus. It's all about Him and His Kingdom.

Thank you for your prayers. We cannot do this without

the fellowship of the Lord's people, and your prayers are an encouragement to us daily. May the Lord himself bless you.

Clive and Sheila Johnston



Noise restrictions for street evangelists would 'effectively ban open-air preaching'

Belfast Council is set to introduce strict new measures impacting street preaching in the city centre.

Evangelists will have their amplification limited to 70 decibels – about the level of a washing machine – and will have to comply with a Code of Conduct issued by the Council. Those breaking the



rules face a maximum fine of £500. Buskers will also be affected.

The plans had been criticised as an attempt to "effectively ban open-air preaching",

as the limit "renders amplification effectively useless".

Given the implications for freedom of expression, Communities Minister

Gordon Lyons could rule the byelaw beyond the competence of the City Council.

The Institute's James Kennedy said: "These absurd new restrictions appear deliberately designed to inhibit Christian witness and are likely to unlawfully discriminate against views the Council finds offensive."

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