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Sanctity of life under attack

The past few months have been among the busiest we have seen at The Christian Institute in a decade, with three major pieces of legislation going through Westminster simultaneously.

There were attacks on both the beginning and end of life. MPs voted to further decriminalise abortion – meaning England and Wales is set to have one of the worst regimes for abortion in the world – and also legalise assisted suicide.

Pray that the House of Lords will do everything in its

power to resist these dangerous changes to the law.

We are also opposing plans to require home-educating parents to provide local authorities with highly intrusive levels of personal information for inclusion on a compulsory register.

But there has also been encouraging news. The Supreme Court ruled that 'sex' in the Equality Act refers to biological sex, not gender identity, and the Westminster Government has resisted pressure to criminalise parents who choose to gently smack their children.

Peers vow to oppose 'poorly drafted' assisted suicide Bill

Peers have pledged to take up the fight against Kim Leadbeater's assisted suicide Bill, after MPs voted by 314 to 291 to back the dangerous proposals.

Dame Esther Rantzen claimed that it was now the duty of the Upper House "to scrutinise, to ask questions, but not to oppose". But Lord Jackson of Peterborough said it was right

for Peers to amend or delay such a "poorly drafted, rushed and barely scrutinised" piece of legislation.

Baroness Monckton, whose daughter has Down's syndrome, said she was "petrified" at the lack of protections in the Bill for those with learning disabilities. Baroness Campbell of Surbiton warned that disabled people's

lives "will be at great risk" if it passes.

The Christian Institute's Director, Ciarán Kelly, urged churches to keep praying against the Bill: "Christians will feel grieved that MPs have shown so little regard for the dignity of human life, so little compassion for the concerns of vulnerable groups, and so little respect for the testimony of medical experts.

"But we must not give up. We must continue to pray, particularly for those in the House of Lords, where we can expect this dangerous Bill to receive much better scrutiny."



MPs take another step towards full decriminalisation of abortion

The House of Commons has voted to allow women in England and Wales to kill their unborn babies at any stage of pregnancy without sanction.

MPs approved Tonia Antoniazzi's amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill by 379 votes to 137, despite pleas to protect unborn children and their mothers.

A number of MPs spoke against the move.

Labour's Rachael Maskell urged colleagues to "consider the baby's safety as much as the woman's safety", while the DUP's Carla Lockhart (right) told the House: "I believe that both lives matter".

In Great Britain, abortion is already permitted for most reasons up to 24 weeks, and up to birth if the child is deemed to have a disability. If the amendment becomes law, inducing a miscarriage outside of these exemptions will no longer be a crime for the mother. Doctors could still face criminal charges if they perform an abortion after 24 weeks.

The Institute's Director, Ciarán Kelly, called Parliament's decision "deplorable".

"This is set to be the most seismic change to abortion law since the Abortion Act 1967.

"An unbearably large number of babies — more than ten million — have been killed in Britain since it passed. Now MPs have put expectant mothers at greater risk too.

"Easy, unrestricted access to abortion pills dramatically increases the likelihood of complications endangering women's health."



Supreme Court upholds definition of 'woman' in landmark judgment

The UK's highest court has ruled that the meaning of the terms 'sex', 'man' and 'woman' in the Equality Act 2010 is "biological and not certificated sex".

Interim guidance on the practical implications of the ruling on biological sex has been issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

The watchdog advises that, regardless of how they identify, people should not be allowed to use facilities designated for the use of the opposite sex.



A consultation on an updated EHRC Code of Practice closed on 30 June.

Following outrage among LGBT activists over the ruling, the Westminster Government has promised it will publish a 'trans-inclusive' draft conversion practices Bill for England and

Wales "very soon".

The judgment also had an impact on sport, with the Football Association announcing that, from next season, men will no longer be allowed to play in women's matches.

Last year, teenage footballer Cerys Vaughan was banned

for 'transphobia' after asking a bearded opponent competing against her in a women's match if he was a man. She has now urged Lancashire FA to apologise to her and called the FA "cowards" for waiting for the Supreme Court's decision to change its rules.

Government told to 'wake up' amid 'serious harms' caused by gambling

MPs have urged the Government to crack down on gambling amid the 'serious financial, physical and mental harm' it can cause, including suicide in some cases.

The House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee noted that although 80 per cent of the population are exposed to gambling advertising each week, it has still not been

banned before the watershed, and problem gamblers feel "there is no escape".

According to The Guardian, Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy paused plans to allow the proliferation of high-stakes gambling machines on the high street over "concerns about the strength of protections for vulnerable people in the adult gaming centre sector".

More than 30 council leaders told Nandy that some communities were witnessing "a groundswell" of gambling operators, "seemingly targeting areas of higher deprivation in a bid to maximise profits".



Young adults fuel growing demand for Bibles

Bible sales are booming, seemingly thanks to increased interest among Gen Z.

Christian publisher SPCK reported an increase of 87 per cent between 2019 and 2024, and identified it as a generational culture shift.

The Bible Society said sales of its youth edition of the Good News Bible have almost doubled since 2021.



New film honours Scottish heroine of the Holocaust

The life of Scottish missionary Jane Mathison Haining is to be honoured in a film for high school students.

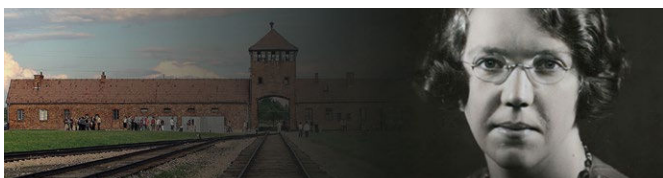
Commissioned by Unison, the documentary tells the story of the matron of a girls' home in Hungary, who refused to stop caring for Jewish girls as World War II broke out.

Rejecting the chance to return home in 1939, she told the Church of Scotland: "If these children need me in days of sunshine, how much more do they need me in days of darkness?"

Shortly after the invasion of Hungary by Hitler's army in 1944, Haining was betrayed, arrested and transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she died three months later, at the age of 47.

Haining was declared a British Hero of the Holocaust by the UK Government in 2010.

Unison plans to formally launch the resource in high schools across Renfrewshire from January 2026. If successful, it will distribute the film more widely.

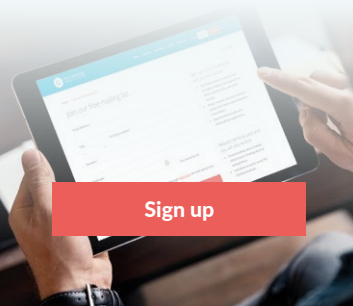


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Online Safety Act cracks down on illegal content



Social media platforms are now required to take “robust action against illegal content and activity”, including child sexual abuse and extreme pornography.

Under the Online Safety Act, Ofcom can fine companies in breach of their duties up to £18 million or 10 per cent of their qualifying worldwide revenue, whichever is greater.

The National Education Union’s Daniel Kebede raised concern that children may be viewing such content in school.

He said the “average 12-year-old has access to the most hardcore pornography on their mobile phone”, which is “incredibly damaging to the wellbeing of young boys and their perceptions of women, girls, sex and relationships”.

No-fault divorce leading to ‘animosity’ between couples

Allowing couples to divorce without a reason has led to an increase of irrelevant financial claims, which often fuel conflict, according to a senior family lawyer.

James Grigg said the issue has become more

common under no-fault divorce, “resulting, ironically, in increased costs and delays”. He noted that apportioning blame was previously a “therapeutic step in the healing process”, and removing it “from the human

psyche is far more complicated” than removing it from law.

Former MP Miriam Cates has emphasised that society needs to rediscover “the fact that marriage matters”.



Universities shaken as Sussex given massive fine for free speech failure

The University of Sussex has been fined £585,000 by the Office for Students (OfS) for failing to uphold free speech.

The fine is 15 times higher than any the watchdog has previously issued.

In 2020, philosophy professor Kathleen Stock had said the claim 'transwomen are women' is fiction. This sparked death threats and student protests across the university, leading to her resignation.

In a letter to The Times, more than two dozen free speech advocates welcomed the clear and proportionate sanctions over the university's serious failures to uphold the rights and liberties of staff.

The OfS has now issued new guidance to ensure academic freedom and free speech are properly protected.

The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act, to which the guidance relates, in force from 1 August, requires universities to promote freedom of speech or risk even more severe fines.



Toddler suspended for 'transphobia or homophobia'

A toddler has been suspended from nursery for being 'transphobic or homophobic', Government statistics have revealed.

Data from the Westminster Department for Education shows that in 2022-23, a child of three or four was suspended for "abuse against sexual orientation and gender identity".

Another 93 pupils at state primary schools across England were suspended or excluded for the same reason that year – including ten from Year 1, aged just five or six.

Govt refuses to impose smacking ban in England

The Westminster Government has rejected fresh attempts to criminalise parents who smack their children.

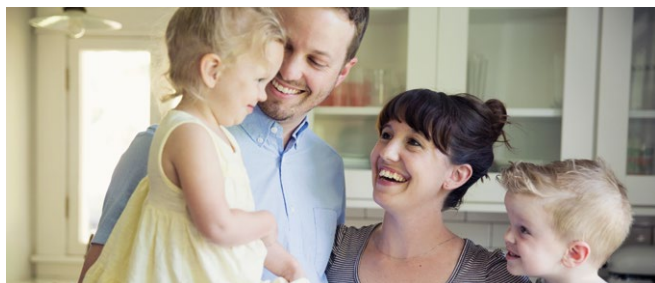
Jess Asato MP proposed amendments to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to "abolish the common law defence of reasonable punishment" in England, but it was not put to a vote.

The Education Minister Stephen Morgan said the Government will review the

impact of Scottish and Welsh bans "before taking such a significant legislative step".

A similar response was given to Baroness Finlay of Llandaff in the House of Lords.

A spokesman for The Christian Institute's Be Reasonable campaign emphasised that prosecuting loving parents does "nothing whatsoever to help children in families where there is real abuse going on".



Pastor's 'buffer zone' prosecution raises key constitutional matters

Pastor Clive Johnston has instructed Northern Ireland's former Attorney General John Larkin KC to lead his defence team in seeking a High Court ruling on whether laws on abortion censorship zones also ban acts of worship.

At Coleraine Magistrates' Court in March, Mr Johnston pleaded not guilty to charges under the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones)



▲ Pastor Clive Johnston

Act for holding an open-air Sunday service on the fringes of a zone around the town's Causeway Hospital last year.

The retired pastor, who is being supported

by The Christian Institute, was preaching on John 3:16 and did not mention abortion.

His lawyers told the judge that the case involves 'crucially important devolution

and constitutional matters'.

Following legal advice, Police Scotland has confirmed that prosecutions will not be brought under buffer zone legislation for incidents that take place while an abortion centre is closed.

Earlier this year, Dr Livia Tossici-Bolt was required to pay £20k in costs for holding a sign offering conversation in a council-imposed zone in Bournemouth.

MPs and Peers criticise Government's proposed home education 'overreach'

MPs and Peers have warned that forcing home-educators to register with their local council would be intrusive and unnecessary.

Under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, parents would have to provide not only their names and addresses, but the amount of time each child spends receiving education from each parent.

They would also have to provide the same information for anyone who educates the child, and update it within 15

days of any change.

The Lib Dems' Vikki Slade branded the demands "overreach", while Conservative Bradley Thomas argued the Bill has the potential to 'stigmatise' home-educators.

Lord Jackson of Peterborough concluded that it amounted to "state-mandated

surveillance of family life on an unprecedented scale" for citizens choosing "a perfectly legal form of education".

Top human rights law expert Aidan O'Neill KC, commissioned by The Christian Institute to review the Bill, warned the measure may be "incompatible" with human rights law.



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Tear off and keep

Pray continually

1 Thessalonians 5:17

SUNDAY

PRAY With thanksgiving for all of God's blessings on the UK.

MONDAY

PRAY For Kim Leadbeater's dangerous legislation on assisted suicide to fall.

TUESDAY

PRAY That the reality of biological sex would be recognised across our society.

WEDNESDAY

PRAY That Westminster would introduce greater restrictions on gambling.

THURSDAY

PRAY For schools to reject harmful secularism and instead promote biblical morality.

FRIDAY

PRAY That policymakers would recognise the harmful impact of drugs on the lives of so many.

SATURDAY

PRAY That the Lord will bless the staff and work of The Christian Institute.

