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## Holding out the good news

A year has passed since Westminster first gave its backing to Kim Leadbeater's assisted suicide Bill. Since then, in Scotland, Liam McArthur's Bill has sadly also made a lot of progress. If they become law, Northern Ireland would be put under great pressure to fall into line, as happened with abortion.

We will continue to stand for hope against the despair of assisted

suicide, holding out the good news of fullness of life in Christ.

Our Street Preacher's Charter will help protect the freedom to preach this Gospel. An NI version will be published in due course. But with the threat of a new 'conversion practices' law and pressure to de-Christianise Religious Education, there is still much to do to uphold gospel freedom.

# Westminster and Holyrood scrutinise assisted suicide Bills

At Westminster, more than 1,000 amendments – a near-record number – have been tabled as the House of Lords attempts to address the deficiencies of Kim Leadbeater's dangerous assisted suicide Bill.

Even among those who agree with the principle of assisted suicide, there is widespread acceptance that wholesale changes are necessary because of the lack of due diligence and proper scrutiny.

Such is the scale of work still required, the Government has allocated an additional ten days between January and April for further consideration of what has been dubbed



a 'licence to kill'.

Medical, legal and charitable sector experts submitted evidence about the threat to vulnerable people from inadequate palliative care, lack of consent and the high risk of coercion.

In Scotland, a raft of amendments designed to mitigate the worst aspects of

a similar Bill tabled by Liam McArthur have been blocked by a Holyrood committee.

Amendments to record the cause of death as assisted suicide, allow families to request a review, and to allow hospices and care homes to opt out were among those rejected. However, one to allow doctors to raise the subject unprompted

was approved.

MSPs warned that the Bill's failure to address life expectancy would allow people with many years to live to access assisted suicide. They added that it offers no protection for people with conditions such as anorexia nervosa and Down's syndrome, and that it lacks safeguards against coercion.

# GB church leaders decry proposals for new 'conversion practices' law

More than 1,300 church leaders and pastoral workers across Britain are urging the UK Government to abandon its commitment to a "full, trans-inclusive ban" on so-called conversion practices.

In an open letter organised by The Christian Institute's Let Us Pray campaign, the leaders, pastoral workers and around 5,000 other Christians are warning Equalities Minister

Olivia Bailey MP about its potential impact.

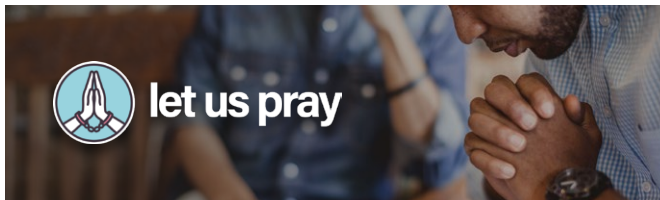
They say such a law could "criminalise mainstream, historic Christian teaching on marriage and sexual ethics, and make sharing the Gospel with some people illegal".

The Government has promised to publish its draft 'conversion practices' Bill for England and Wales "very soon". Signatories to the letter

say it will "not be possible to draft legislation in this area that does not infringe on the ordinary work of churches and family life".

Alliance MLA Eóin Tennyson consulted in 2024 on his plans for similar legislation in Northern Ireland. In an opinion commissioned by the Institute, Aidan O'Neill KC warned that the "fundamentally illiberal" proposal would be "beyond the legislative competence" of Stormont. As yet, no Bill has been brought forward.

Despite public opposition, the Scottish Government plans to push ahead with its own ban should Westminster's approach not go far enough.



## Institute calls on Executive to do more to foster 'culture of marriage'

The Christian Institute has urged the Executive to encourage marriage, rather than accelerate family breakdown.

Responding to a Department of Finance (DoF) consultation, the Institute argued that removing fault-based grounds for divorce and reducing separation periods would shift the focus from reconciliation to a society where marriage is considered disposable.

Northern Ireland Policy Officer James Kennedy said: "When families are stable,

children are more secure, outcomes improve, and communities flourish. The Government should be investing in policies that promote marriage, rather than hasten its breakdown."

He emphasised: "This is about more than legal process, it's about what kind of society we want to be. If we want to build a culture that values commitment, responsibility, and long-term care, we need laws that uphold those ideals, not weaken them."

Of 405 consultation responses, 65 per cent favoured "no change to the current law", and 80 per cent believed 'fault' "should be retained in some shape or form".

Michael Foster, Head of Civil Law Reform at the DoF, noted "general concern" that "by making divorce easier, we jeopardise marriage and the family".



# Whistle blown on BBC trans news bias

Evidence that LGBT activists within the BBC censored news coverage critical of transgender ideology has been made public.

Leaked documents reveal that an advisor on the Editorial Guidelines and Standards Committee had warned executives of fears that LGBT "staffers" were "keeping other perspectives off-air".

According to The Daily Telegraph, Michael Prescott heard reports of "what sounded like effective censorship by the specialist LGBTQ desk within News" soon after starting his advisory role.

His 19-page document also refers to findings of "unintended editorial bias", an absence of "significant voices", "little or no coverage" questioning the quality of care given to gender-confused children, and disproportionate coverage of drag queen stories.

The leaked memo also said beliefs on gender identity were often reported as "established fact rather than contested". Too many staff, it argued, "have never considered the idea of 'gender identity' to be either spurious or offensive to many people".



# Ministers act to help protect children from trans ideology

Minister of Health Mike Nesbitt has committed to investigating controversial trans-promoting clinic GenderGP.

The Minister told Stormont that he would instruct the Medicines Regulatory Group to review the content of the online clinic. He was responding to MLA Doug Beattie's concerns it enables minors to access puberty-blocking drugs without a prescription.

Founded by disgraced medic Dr Helen Webberley, the private clinic, currently based in Singapore, provides



information to children on how to obtain puberty blockers. This is despite a UK-wide ban on prescribing the experimental drugs to under-18s.

Separately, the Education Minister has ditched controversial LGBT guidance for schools.

'Supporting Transgender Young People' was first published in 2019. It pushes staff to use

a gender-confused child's 'preferred pronouns' and allow them to access "toilets which match their gender identity".

The guidance has now been withdrawn after Education Minister Paul Givan recognised it "does not reflect departmental policy and is inconsistent with the law in Northern Ireland".

## CI Chairman Revd Dr Richard Turnbull promoted to glory

On 26 November, The Christian Institute's Chairman, Revd Dr Richard Turnbull, died of cancer aged 65.

Institute Director Ciarán Kelly said: "Richard's testimony was that of full assurance in the great and precious promises of God in Christ. The reality of his relationship with our risen Saviour has shone through."

His friend and fellow Trustee, Revd James Leggett, added: "We will miss his wisdom, insight, humour and love. Our loss is heaven's gain."

Richard is survived by his wife Caroline, their four adult children and his father, Alan.



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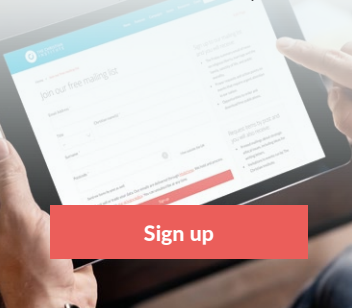
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# PSNI doubles down on non-crime hate incidents

The Police Service of Northern Ireland has refused to stop recording non-crime hate incidents (NCHIs).

Following the Metropolitan Police's decision to stop investigating allegations of 'perceived hate', the Service told the Belfast News Letter it had "no plan" to change its current recording procedures.



The Met explained that ending investigations would "provide clearer direction for officers, reduce ambiguity and enable them to focus on matters that meet the threshold for criminal investigations".

But the force will still log the incidents, which can appear on enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks in England and Wales, with potentially adverse effects on employment prospects.



# King Charles joins Pope in 'celebration of ecumenism'

A British monarch and Roman Catholic pontiff have shared in prayer and worship for the first time since the Reformation – an event billed by Buckingham Palace as "a celebration of ecumenism".

King Charles III, Supreme Governor of the Church of England, joined Pope Leo XIV

in a Sistine Chapel service that included Bible readings, English prayers and Latin chants.

Editor of Evangelical Times and Institute Trustee Mike Judge branded the act: "a public denial of the Reformation truths for which men and women shed their blood".



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


## We'd love to meet you

We have over 60,000 supporters around the UK and visit over 300 churches a year to talk about key issues for Christians.

If you would like your church to be one of them, email us at: [sandra.mackay@christian.org.uk](mailto:sandra.mackay@christian.org.uk)



**Callum Webster,**  
Northern Ireland Officer 



## Pray continually

1 Thessalonians 5:17

### SUNDAY

**PRAY** For our Street Preacher's Charters to embolden Christians to share the Gospel.

### MONDAY

**PRAY** Against a 'conversion practices' ban that would outlaw ordinary church activity.

### TUESDAY

**PRAY** Giving thanks that schools remain free to teach the truth of the Bible.

### WEDNESDAY

**PRAY** That parents who give their child a mild smack will not be turned into criminals.

### THURSDAY

**PRAY** Giving thanks that society is turning against gender ideology.

### FRIDAY

**PRAY** That God will protect the institution of marriage from more liberal divorce laws.

### SATURDAY

**PRAY** That the Lord will continue to bless the work of The Christian Institute.

# Supreme Court rules against 'exclusively Christian' RE lessons

The Supreme Court has ruled that in controlled primary schools in Northern Ireland, exclusively Christian RE lessons and some arrangements for Christian collective worship are unlawful.

A legal challenge was launched on behalf of a seven-year-old girl and her father against the Department of Education (DofE). The father described the family as non-religious, and feared Christian teaching in school had led to his daughter following Christian practices such as prayer.

The DofE had successfully appealed a 2022 High Court decision in his favour, but this has now been overturned by the



Supreme Court and the original ruling stands.

The Court decided that the right of withdrawal from collective worship and RE lessons was not enough to avoid the girl being "stigmatised". It said that by only teaching Christianity, religious

education was not being provided "in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner".

However, it acknowledged that Christianity remains the "most important religion in Northern Ireland" and that the DofE is permitted to focus the "greater

part" of RE on Christianity.

The judgment does not change the law in Northern Ireland. It remains a requirement that the Core Syllabus for RE – which must be taught in all state-funded schools – is based on the Bible.

### COMMENT



By **John Denning**,  
Head of Education

Many people will be surprised and disappointed by this judgment. What we now call controlled schools

were established by the Church long before state funding became available.

But it is important not to exaggerate what it means. The law still ensures every child (unless withdrawn) in a state-funded school is taught about the core tenets of Christianity, based on the Bible.

The challenge now is to present different views without turning RE into a multi-faith mish-mash.

Churches will still retain significant input into the Core Syllabus, and school governors as well as teachers will still have a significant role to play.



# Street Preacher's Charter: 'A timely shield for those who dare to speak'

The Street Preacher's Charter is our new resource for evangelists in England and Wales, outlining key legal principles as well as good practice.

The Charter, endorsed by Open Air Campaigners GB and Open-Air Mission, seeks to help preachers to engage with the public and the police with confidence.

Using key extracts from the law combined



with real-life scenarios, it sets out how the law operates, and the rights and responsibilities of police and street preacher alike.

**a "very useful tool for the police"**

At its launch in Central London, politicians and church leaders commended the resource.

Baroness Foster thought it would prove a "very useful tool for the police". Mike Judge, pastor and editor of Evangelical Times, called it "a timely shield for those who dare to speak — and a timely corrective for a society tempted to silence them".

Work is underway on a similar Charter for Northern Ireland.

# Smacking ban would be 'unnecessary, costly and harmful' Institute warns

The Christian Institute has warned that the proposed smacking ban in Northern Ireland risks undermining efforts to tackle genuine abuse.

Alliance MLA Michelle Guy has tabled an amendment to the Justice Bill to criminalise parents who give their children a mild smack.

So far, Stormont has not followed Wales and Scotland in making reasonable chastisement a criminal offence.

New research from the

Institute, 'Does Smacking Contribute to Negative Outcomes for Children?', analysed 37 peer-reviewed studies and found no evidence to support a ban on smacking. It backs investment in parental support, family stability and further research, instead of new legislation.

The Institute's James Kennedy said: "Currently, the law permits only what the courts deem 'reasonable'. So why would we waste millions dragging police and social services into these cases?"

He reasoned that instead, "those resources should be protecting children from genuine abuse and tackling real crime".



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