

INSIDE

➤ Parents sidelined as controversial 'Relationships Education' announced

➤ Sunday school inspection plans provoke 18,000-strong reaction

Making a difference

As 2017 unfolds we give thanks to God for his great and continued goodness to us. We are thankful that the Scottish Government has agreed to curtail its intrusive Named Person scheme and for the huge success of the No to Named Persons (NO2NP) campaign.

However, there are now alarming proposals to introduce a form of sex education for primary school children in

England, while Christian pharmacists face having their conscience rights trampled upon.

Through prayer and action Christians can make a difference in these areas, just as they did with the strong response to the Government's consultation on Ofsted inspections of church youth settings.

Thank you for your support – keep on making a difference.

Named Person climbdown a great victory for parents

Personal information about families will only be shared in exceptional circumstances in an overhauled Named Person scheme.

The climbdown by the Scottish Government comes after a lengthy campaign by The Christian Institute and other concerned groups and parents.

Education Secretary John Swinney told the Scottish Parliament that a new Bill amending the Named Person legislation would be brought forward, with implementation of the scheme delayed until 2018.

Mr Swinney agreed to ensure that sharing personal information under the reworked Named Person scheme would comply with existing law. Personal information will only be shared without parents' consent in "exceptional circumstances", such



➤ John Swinney addresses the Scottish Parliament

as cases of child abuse.

Campaign group NO2NP, which is backed by the Institute, said that the concession had only come after the Government had caused two years of "fear and confusion" among parents. The group said: "They are reverting to the existing threshold of 'risk of harm'. It's about time."

The Christian Institute spearheaded legal action that led to a historic Supreme Court ruling last year. Judges stated that the data sharing provisions in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 breached the right to a private and family life under article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Parents sidelined as controversial 'Relationships Education' announced

The Government is to consult on plans for 'Relationships Education', to be taught as a statutory subject in primary schools across England.

It will mean teaching young children about "different types of relationships", which could include homosexuality,

transsexualism and same-sex marriage. Ministers have denied parents the right to withdraw their children from the classes.

An amendment to the Children and Social Work Bill gives Education Secretary Justine Greening the power to legislate for

Relationships Education and a secondary school subject called Relationships and Sex Education (RSE).

RSE would include teaching on "sex, sexual health and sexuality". The Government states that parents would retain the right to withdraw their children from RSE but the details have not yet been set out.

Responding for The Christian Institute, Deputy Director Humphrey Dobson said:

"Primary school relationships education could expose young children to concepts that they and their parents fundamentally disagree with for religious or philosophical reasons.

"For example, it could be used to manipulate children into agreeing with same-sex marriage. At the very least, the Government must allow parents to withdraw their children from these lessons."



🕒 'Relationships Education' to be compulsory for primary schools

Sunday school inspection plans provoke 18,000-strong reaction

Plans to give schools' regulator Ofsted legal powers to register and inspect out-of-school settings prompted a major outcry from Christians.

Around 18,000 responses were received during the public consultation on the idea according to Lord Nash, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools. He

also revealed that the Government is "determined to regulate in this area", but intends to "tread carefully".

A few weeks earlier, Labour MP Stephen Timms described the plans, which could affect Sunday schools and church youth groups, as "absurd", and said they show that Government ministers see religious faith as "a problem".



🕒 Lord Nash and Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP

Lord Waddington,
1929 - 2017



Lord Waddington, a tireless supporter of Christian values and freedoms, passed away at the end of February, aged 87. The Lancashire-born barrister turned politician served as Home Secretary in Margaret Thatcher's Government, Leader of the House of Lords and latterly as Governor of Bermuda.

During his time in the Lords, he worked alongside The Christian Institute in campaigns to uphold free speech. He also opposed the weakening of cannabis laws and spoke out in support of religious liberty and the UK's Christian heritage.

In 2008, when the Government proposed a 'hate speech' law that threatened to criminalise criticism of homosexual acts, Lord Waddington secured a vital amendment to protect free speech. Known as the 'Waddington amendment', it made sure that "discussion or criticism of sexual conduct or practices" were not covered by the offence.

The Institute's Simon Calvert described Lord Waddington as a "great man" who was an "extremely committed and capable defender of Christian values and freedoms".

EDITORIAL

Pray for those in authority



By Colin Hart, Director

On 22 March an Islamic terrorist launched a shocking attack on the UK Parliament in Westminster. At least four people have been murdered, including courageous PC Keith Palmer.

While we pray for the grieving families and the dozens injured, Christians must also pray for those in authority over us (1 Timothy 2:1-2). We are deeply thankful for the police and security services, who put their lives on the line to protect us all. The 22 March attack shows what they are up against.

The horrific attack on Westminster must lead us to pray - for wisdom for our governing authorities, for protection from terrorism, and that the response of those in authority will be right and effective.

Once again it was not a Christian - or an atheist - who carried out this act of terrorism. Our leaders need to concentrate on the real issues and not spread the net so widely that every person with strong

beliefs, no matter how peace-loving or innocuous, is put on the same level as an Islamist seeking violent jihad.

Security will be reviewed at the Houses of Parliament, of course. But let's also pray that the right lessons are learnt generally without over-reaction or panic.

In January David Anderson QC, the former Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, warned that the Government's current policy on *non-violent* extremism could see people who practise their faith in a traditional, conservative way face police investigations. This policy looks so wide of the mark. The Government must focus on targeting the real problem of Islamist terror.



David Anderson QC

Strong Lords backing for Bill to curb sharia councils



A Bill aiming to curb the influence of sharia councils in the UK has received strong support in the House of Lords. The legislation was introduced by Baroness Cox – a patron of The Christian Institute.

It comes after persistent concerns that women are suffering because of councils which back polygamy and discriminate against women. However the Government has not given the Bill its support.

Police continue to ignore cannabis offences, new figures show

Cannabis possession warnings and fixed penalty notices have more than halved in a four-year period, according to new figures. The Times reported that the number of cannabis warnings fell from 72,172 in 2012 to 35,343 in 2016 while fixed penalty notices for possession fell from 16,074 to 6,915.

Kathy Gyngell, co-editor of The Conservative Woman, accused some police forces of “antipathy towards criminalising cannabis”.



Heterosexual civil partnerships blocked by Court of Appeal

Civil partnerships for heterosexuals – which it has been estimated would cost the taxpayer billions – have been blocked by the Court of Appeal in London.

Judges ruled against Rebecca Steinfeld and Charles Keidan, who said they reject the “sexist trappings” of marriage.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4’s World at One, Institute Director Colin Hart welcomed the ruling. He explained that legal challenges had only arisen because of the Government’s decision to redefine marriage.

In the UK, civil partnerships have been available exclusively

to same-sex couples since 2005, granting them all the legal rights of married couples.

In 2014, same-sex marriage was introduced in England, Scotland and Wales, meaning homosexual couples had the choice of either marriage or a civil partnership.

A consultation, also in 2014, revealed that over three quarters of 10,000 respondents disagreed with heterosexual civil partnerships.

The Government has previously acknowledged that the cost of heterosexual civil unions would be £3-4 billion in public sector pensions alone.

Pharmacy plans threaten Christian conscience



The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) has been consulting on new guidance which would force pharmacists, including Christians, to provide services which go against their conscience. They would be required to provide access to abortifacient drugs such as the morning after pill, and hormone blocking drugs which are used by transsexual patients.

Under the GPhC’s

revised guidance, pharmacy professionals are told to make sure they do not “impose” their values and beliefs on other people.

Dr Peter Saunders, CEO of Christian Medical Fellowship, described the plans as “unethical, unnecessary and quite possibly illegal”. It is feared that Christians would find it impossible to enter the profession if the guidance was to be brought into force.

Surge in babies surviving after birth at 23 weeks

The number of babies who survive after being born at 23 weeks has risen significantly. The Sunday Times found that 70 per cent of babies born at 23 weeks are now surviving in some hospitals. A previous nationwide study found a survival rate of 19 per cent.

Dr Vimal Vasu, an expert in neonatal medicine, said that “better survival rates” as a result of focusing on attempting to save the lives of premature babies was a “self-fulfilling prophecy”.



Sex is defined at birth, not chosen later: Jenni Murray

Dame Jenni Murray has said that sex is fixed at birth and not selected at a later date. Dame Jenni, a presenter on BBC Woman's Hour, faced a backlash from transsexual activists for the comments – as well as a warning from the BBC about being “impartial” on controversial issues.

Dame Jenni wrote: “Your sex, male or female, is what you're born with”. She challenged the “hijacking of language” by transsexual activists and moves to allow men who live as women to become girl guide leaders.

LGBT lobby group Stonewall denounced the comments and prominent transsexual India Willoughby called the presenter a “dinosaur”, adding: “Let's hope a similar extinction is coming for her in the not too distant future.”



▶ BBC Woman's Hour presenter Dame Jenni Murray

Responding to the row, a BBC spokesman said it had reminded her “that presenters should remain impartial on controversial topics covered by their BBC programmes”.

Hacksaw Ridge: Oscar-winning film shows importance of respecting conscience

A film which tells the incredible true story of a conscientious objector in World War Two has won two Academy Awards.

Hacksaw Ridge tells the story of Desmond Doss. As a medic on the Pacific island of Okinawa he saved 75 lives and became the first conscientious objector to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Many Christians would not share Doss' pacifist views, but if

conscience can be respected in a time of war it should be respected all the more in a time of peace.

Today conscience

is still under attack from many sides, as seen in cases such as Ashers Baking Company in Northern Ireland and the recent

proposals to remove conscience protections for pharmacists (see left). Hacksaw Ridge's message is as vital in 2017 as it was in 1945.

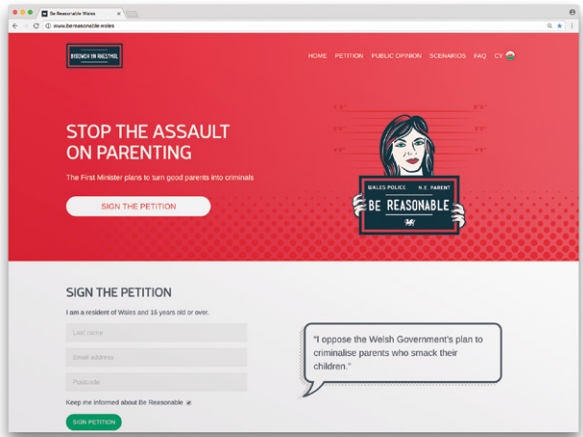


'Be Reasonable' campaign launched against smacking ban proposals

A new campaign, backed by The Christian Institute, has been launched against Welsh Government plans to criminalise parents who smack their children. *Be Reasonable* is urging residents of Wales to sign a petition against proposals to remove the defence of 'reasonable chastisement' from the law.

The website, BeReasonable.wales, gives examples of how the change could affect parents, children and child protection agencies. As well as parents facing fines and jail, police and social workers would be inundated with trivial incidents, leaving genuine cases of abuse obscured.

If you're a resident of Wales and over 16 years of age, sign the petition at www.BeReasonable.wales



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/support

Govt considers 'Equality Oath' for all public office holders

All holders of public office could be forced to swear an 'Equality Oath', showing their allegiance to so-called British values, a Cabinet minister has said. Sajid Javid, the Communities Secretary, believes those who do not accept such values will "struggle to play a positive role in British life".

Institute Director Colin Hart responded: "Equality sounds nice but it is in the name of equality that Ashers Baking Company has been taken to court, B&B owners sued and a faithful Christian registrar forced out of her job. This idea is wrong-headed and needs to be stopped before it causes untold damage." The Independent newspaper



said such an oath would deny the right to dissent. It asked: "Why should anyone have to sign up to some officially approved list of moral rules if they don't believe in them? This is effectively the case if their livelihood depends on it."

CHRISTIANINSTITUTE @CHRISTIANORGUK CHRISTIANORGUK CHRISTIANORGUK

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
Registered in England as a charity Charity No. 100 4774 Company No. 263 4440. A charity registered in Scotland Charity No. SC039220