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Upholding sanctity of life, defending free speech and much more...

We are very grateful to God and mightily relieved that the House of Commons blocked the assisted suicide Bill. Tens of thousands of Christians made this a matter for prayer and action over the past few months.

We give thanks to God that the margin of victory, more than 200 votes, sends a clear message about the sanctity of life and should ensure that such a Bill does not return to Parliament for a long time.

There have also been major developments in other important areas of our work.

Such is the scale of the Scottish Government's unjustified interference in family life, we have decided to appeal against the Named Person scheme in the Supreme Court.

The Institute has also begun a new campaign called 'Defend Free Speech' to combat the Westminster Government's proposals for Extremism Disruption Orders in England and Wales. These dangerous proposals represent a very real threat to religious liberty and freedom of expression. We will do all we can to oppose them.

Victory! MPs reject assisted suicide Bill

In a major win for all those who oppose euthanasia, over 300 MPs voted against an assisted suicide Bill in September.

The vote sees off an attempt to introduce legislation which would have posed widespread dangers to the elderly and disabled.

The lengthy House of Commons debate was filled with speeches that were both passionate and clear about the risks of introducing assisted suicide, as politicians raised religious, medical and legal concerns.

Fiona Bruce (Con), who led opposition to the Bill, criticised its



Fiona Bruce, Rob Ffello and Dr Philippa Whitford opposed the plans.

so-called safeguards and described it as "legally and ethically totally unacceptable".

She concluded by saying Parliament should protect the vulnerable – not legislate to kill them.

Rob Ffello (Lab) called the proposals "misguided" and noted

that there were many good ways to alleviate suffering without resorting to assisted suicide.

Dr Philippa Whitford (SNP), a former cancer surgeon, spoke for the vast majority of medical staff when she told MPs: "I have

never considered as a doctor that death was a good treatment for anything".

The final vote saw MPs from all the main parties oppose the Bill, with the Commons as a whole decisively rejecting the proposals by 330 to 118.

Ex-MI5 chief: 'Anti-terror law could target harmless street preachers'

Government plans to 'tackle extremism' in England and Wales continue to be challenged for their vague remit and the serious damage they would cause to freedom of speech.

The proposed Extremism Disruption Orders (EDOs) are set to be included in a new counter-extremism Bill later this autumn. But critics have been warning that EDOs could lead to ordinary views being branded extreme.

David Cameron has said he wants to end this country's "passively tolerant society" where "as long as you obey the law, we will leave you alone". However, David Anderson QC, the



Sir Jonathan Evans, former Director General of MI5, warns that harmless street preachers could be caught by EDOs.

independent reviewer of terrorism laws, has highlighted that "all sorts of people" could come under suspicion due to the proposals.

In September, the Times Educational Supplement reported that more than 100 teachers heard environmental protesters being equated

with extremists. A police officer leading a training course on the Government's counter-terrorism strategy used Green MP Caroline Lucas as an example of an "extremist" citing her opposition to fracking.

And Sir Jonathan Evans, former Director General of MI5, warned

that "harmless evangelical street preachers" could be targeted by the Government's crackdown.

His warning came even before the proposal for a 'national register of faith leaders' was leaked to a national newspaper.

Under the plans religious leaders will have to be registered and subjected to Government training and security checks before being allowed to work with the public sector.

The Christian Institute and the National Secular Society have launched the Defend Free Speech campaign to combat the introduction of EDOs.

For more information visit defendfreespeech.org.uk

Are you an 'extremist' for supporting marriage?

do so. The new legislation specifically targets hate speech, so teachers will still be completely free to express their understanding of the term 'marriage', and their moral opposition to its use in some situations, without breaking the new laws. The EDOs, in this case, would apply in situations where a teacher was specifically teaching that gay marriage is wrong.

▲ Letter from Mark Spencer MP

The Government's plans for EDOs seem to be so broadly defined that they risk jeopardising the free speech of those who support traditional marriage.

In a letter to one of his constituents in July, Mark Spencer MP stated that the new measures would be used to stop teachers from teaching that gay marriage is wrong.

Mr Spencer's letter followed suggestions from Education

Secretary Nicky Morgan that if a pupil believes that 'homosexuality is wrong', it could raise extremism alarms.

In September, there were comments on the Today programme from one of the front-line staff responsible for implementing 'Prevent', part of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy.

Polly Harrow, Head of Safeguarding and Prevent at Kirklees College in West Yorkshire, said the

Government's approach seeks "not just tolerance, but acceptance of difference and others" and that although people can believe homosexuality is wrong – "if you speak it out loud you might be breaking the law".

Before he became Justice Minister, Dominic Raab MP said: "Those engaged in passionate debates – such as Christians objecting to gay marriage – could find themselves slapped down." On the current evidence he might well be right.



Christians 'flying the rainbow flag' issued challenge



Influential evangelical pastor Kevin DeYoung (pictured) issued a stark challenge to Christians who celebrated the US Supreme Court's recent decision to redefine marriage.

His post for The Gospel Coalition website has been shared over 400,000 times on Facebook.

It posed 40 questions for pro-gay marriage Christians, including: "What Bible verses led you to change your mind?"

"As you think about the long history of the church and the near universal disapproval of same-sex sexual activity, what do you think you understand about the Bible that Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, and Luther failed to grasp?"

"What arguments would you use to explain to Christians in Africa, Asia, and South America that their understanding of homosexuality is biblically incorrect and your new understanding of homosexuality is not culturally conditioned?"

DeYoung said these questions are not meant to be "snarky or merely rhetorical", but are "sincere", and aimed at causing Christians to "slow down" and think about the flag they are flying.

Northern Ireland pastor on trial for criticising Islam in sermon

A preacher in Northern Ireland facing jail for comments he made about Islam has received widespread support – from secularists as well as Christians.

James McConnell (pictured) – a former leader of Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle – made the remarks in a sermon which was available online.

He said: "Islam is heathen, Islam is

satanic, Islam is a doctrine spawned in hell" and is being prosecuted under the Communications Act. Hundreds turned up to support him at his court appearance.

The National



Secular Society said the case against the preacher was "palpably harmful to religious freedom and the fundamental right to freedom of expression".

And atheist journalist Suzanne Breen commented: "Freedom of speech isn't only for polite persons of mild disposition airing their views within Government-policed parameters".

News from around the world

USA



Same-sex marriage was imposed across the US by the Supreme Court in June, although in his dissenting opinion Chief Justice John Roberts asked: "Just who do we think we are?"

Following the decision, marriage clerk Kim Davis was jailed for refusing to issue same-sex marriage licences in Kentucky. Released after six days, she thanked her supporters and gave glory to God.

Also in the US, abortion giant Planned Parenthood has been rocked by a series of undercover videos alleging that the organisation is selling the body parts of aborted babies.



South Africa



In South Africa a student was reinstated to her university's student council after being expelled for disagreeing with same-sex marriage on her personal Facebook page.



ROI



The Republic of Ireland saw as many as 25,000 people attend a pro-life rally in July. The event was described as a "huge gesture of solidarity" in the wake of calls to liberalise the country's abortion law.

Meet the team: John Denning

John Denning is the newest member of The Christian Institute team. He taught in state schools for 17 years, and has been Head of Science.

Passion to protect

John is passionately committed to Christian education and will use his background and experience to help Christian teachers, governors, parents and pupils.

The Christian Institute continues to stand for the right of schools to operate in accordance with a Christian ethos in the face of intrusive and unprecedented anti-faith attitudes from some Ofsted inspectors.

The appointment reflects the growing demands from parents and teachers who have contacted the Institute for help.

John has first-hand experience of Ofsted's

intrusive approach to implementing 'British values' from his time as Chairman of Governors in a state school. He was shocked to discover that inspectors had asked children highly personal questions about sex and body image.

Applying Christian thinking

Talking about his initial priorities John says: "The immediate need is to do everything possible to protect schools with a Christian ethos. Ofsted is not above the law and we need to keep a close eye on its activities.

There is also growing parental concern about the activities of named persons in Scotland."

Having a member of staff fully dedicated to the area of Christian education will enable us to create new resources to help schools to apply Christian thinking to the curriculum and allow us to work more

Ofsted and DfE 'ignored anti-Christian intolerance'

In July, The Christian Institute wrote to Education Secretary Nicky Morgan (pictured) to say that Ofsted and the Department for Education have given "inadequate attention" to the "bullying of Christian pupils".

The letter, from Institute Director Colin Hart, criticised the response to schools involved in the Trojan Horse scandal.

Mr Hart said it was "striking" that official reports listed numerous examples of anti-Christian intolerance but that none of these had made it into the Ofsted reports.

He called on Mrs Morgan to ensure that Ofsted learnt that "the mistreatment of Christian pupils is a problem that deserves its attention".



closely with Christian schools in the longer term.

'Wonderful opportunity'

As John puts it: "We have a wonderful opportunity to develop a curriculum alongside schools that helps the teaching of all subjects to be brought under the Lordship of Christ. That includes 'British values'. Christians have made an enormous contribution over the centuries to shaping the British traditions of upholding the rule of law and respecting others as made in the image of God – whether or not

we agree with them. I'm looking forward to the contribution we can make to this debate."

He concludes by expressing just how much he is looking forward to getting to know more people in Christian education.

"As a Christian parent, and former teacher and governor I will hopefully have stood in the shoes of many of the people who come for help.

"Above all my role will be about encouraging them by defending their right to provide Christian alternatives to the increasingly secular ethos within education. I've only just started but I'm enjoying getting stuck in."

◀ John is married to Jenny and they have 4 children.



Mum 'furious' at doctors' offer to abort her son

A mother from Cumbernauld has said she is "furious" at doctors who misdiagnosed her unborn child as disabled and told her to have an abortion.

Gemma Rogers said she "always wanted to be a mum" and couldn't bear the thought of abortion.

Her son Ciaran is now three years old and completely healthy.



MPs and Peers: Drug taking is a 'human right'

A small group of MPs and Peers suggested in August that drug users could use human rights legislation to stop them being prosecuted.

Labor MP Keith Vaz (pictured), Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, slammed the group saying it was misinterpreting the intentions of the European Convention on Human Rights.



Fight against named persons moves to the Supreme Court

The fight against the Scottish Government's controversial Named Person scheme will continue in the Supreme Court after Scotland's highest court ruled that the legislation does not conflict with human rights or data protection laws.

Responding to the judgment, the Institute's Director, Colin Hart, said that the decision would be appealed.

"We are in a better position as a result of parts of this ruling. Those implementing the scheme will have to tread more carefully in the light of today's judgment. But this is not enough."

Mr Hart highlighted that the Named Person scheme described by the judges was "completely different" to the one being implemented on the ground and therefore an appeal to the Supreme Court was required "to settle the matter once and for all".

Under the SNP's plans, all Scottish children will be assigned a 'state guardian' who will be responsible for their wellbeing.



Professional bodies argue this will overburden an already struggling network of social workers, teachers and health professionals, leading to vulnerable children being overlooked. Police Scotland also gave a stark warning that the bureaucracy could delay the rescue of children from abuse.

The Christian Institute is spearheading the legal action against the plans.

COMMENT

Could Scots scheme come to rest of UK?



The Scottish Government remains fully committed to rolling

out its intrusive state guardian scheme to every child under the age of 18.

As yet, no similar scheme exists in the rest of the UK – but for how long?

Sidelineing of parents, escalations for non-compliance and data sharing without permission are all hallmarks of the Named Person scheme.

Instances of parents being quizzed about their children by local authorities after taking them to A&E for treatment are already occurring. The NHS shares information without permission.

It is possible that this sort of hassling of parents could even deter some from taking a child to casualty in the future.

In September there was a very disturbing case of a 14-year-old schoolboy from the north of England who

had his details logged on a national crime database without parental knowledge.

It was only after the boy had been questioned by teachers with police present that his mother was informed.

"Where was the appropriate adult for my son?" she asked afterwards.

She also claimed that when she complained about her son's treatment she was warned it "could make matters worse".

Government breaks promise over Sunday trading plans

In early August the Government issued a snap consultation on empowering local authorities to extend Sunday trading hours.

The Christian Institute highlighted that in doing this the Government was going back on the assurances it had made to campaigners ahead of the General Election that there were 'no plans' to change the law.

In the consultation, ministers recommend that local authorities be given power



to allow shops to open for longer on a Sunday because of the "lucrative" tourism industry and the convenience of online shopping.

Director Colin Hart said: "This is a very

serious issue affecting many Christians across the country, forcing them to choose between their faith and their job.

"Extended Sunday trading impacts not just shop assistants,

but lorry drivers, cleaners, security guards and a whole host of other workers.

"Christian employees already receive inadequate protection from the current Sunday trading laws and these plans make things worse.

"There is no doubt that liberalising Sunday trading will lead to more pressure on people to work on Sundays, harming family life and further interfering with Sunday as a day of rest."

Olympian and Christian missionary Eric Liddell honoured by China

In August, Eric Liddell, the British Olympic champion who later became a missionary, was honoured for his commitment to the Chinese people. A statue of the athlete was erected in the city of Tianjin.

At the 1924 Paris Olympics, Liddell switched from the 100m to 400m to avoid running on a Sunday – and set a new world record.



Eric Liddell Centre

Celebrities oppose Amnesty call to decriminalise prostitution

In August Amnesty International voted to support the decriminalisation of prostitution – a move heavily criticised by major Hollywood stars.

The organisation's new policy seeks to protect the "human rights of sex workers, through measures that include the decriminalisation of sex work".

A petition against the policy has been signed by more than 10,000 people, including A-list actresses Anne Hathaway, Emma Thompson, Meryl Streep and



Flickr/Vincent Luigi Molino

Opposed: Meryl Streep

Kate Winslet.

Petitioners say they are "deeply troubled" by the proposal to "adopt a policy that calls for the decriminalisation of pimps, brothel owners and buyers of sex".

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