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Protecting gospel freedom

The thrilling victory at the Supreme Court in the Ashers case creates a UK precedent that should help to protect gospel freedom for years to come. The Court held that compelled speech undermines free speech.

Standing up for God's good design in relation to the sanctity of life, biological sex and traditional marriage requires free speech. Away from the headlines we've been busy addressing a number of deeply worrying proposals coming out

of Westminster and the devolved assemblies.

Christians and others must not be required to use pronouns they regard as false. They must remain free to promote marriage as being only between one man and one woman for life. They must remain free to make the case for the unborn as made in the image of God.

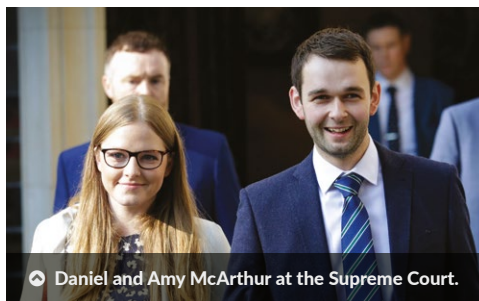
We thank God for the resounding Ashers win but, as you will see, we still have an immense amount of work to do.

Ashers couple thank God after landmark Supreme Court victory

On Wednesday 10 October 2018 Ashers Baking Company was resoundingly vindicated by the UK Supreme Court. The day will live long in the memory of Christians in the UK.

It represents the culmination of a faithful stand lasting nearly four and a half years for the McArthur family.

In 2014 they declined to decorate a cake with the message 'Support Gay Marriage' for an LGBT activist. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland took them to the County Court, where they were fined £500 for discrimination. Helped by The



▶ Daniel and Amy McArthur at the Supreme Court.

Christian Institute, Ashers contested this ruling. They lost in the Court of Appeal. But at the Supreme Court five Justices agreed unanimously that their action was lawful because it was about the message on the cake, not the customer who ordered it.

Speaking after the landmark ruling, Daniel and Amy McArthur gave glory to God.

Daniel said that, despite its difficulties, the lengthy legal battle was 'absolutely worth it'. "We knew we were doing what God wanted us to do and we believe we've been following in

his will the whole time".

Amy added: "God has been good and brought us through the challenges that have come with the court case."

The couple urged other Christians: "Don't be afraid to take your stand".

Since 2006 our Legal Defence Fund has helped to protect Christian religious freedom. Because of your support, we have been able to stand by this brave and humble Christian family throughout their ordeal.



Twofold attack on marriage



Marriage in Great Britain is under attack from the twin threats of no-fault divorce and heterosexual civil partnerships.

At Westminster, the Government has launched a consultation on allowing divorce in England and Wales for no reason, bowing to pressure from The Times newspaper and

divorce lawyers.

Under the proposals a spouse would be able to get a divorce simply by requesting it.

Top family lawyer Baroness Deech has said the plans are deeply flawed.

The Christian Institute's Ciarán Kelly told The Financial Times that under the current system

thousands of couples use the time to change their minds about divorce. He said "no reason' divorce simply greases the tracks for marriage breakdown".

The news was followed by Theresa May announcing Government support for heterosexual civil partnerships. The 'marriage-lite' unions offer the benefits of

marriage but without the commitment to a lifelong relationship.

In 2013 Pensions Minister Steve Webb estimated the cost to taxpayers from such a proposal could run into the billions.

The Scottish Government has also announced it will consult on extending civil partnerships to heterosexual couples.

Parental freedom threatened by Relationships and Sex Ed plans



Parents of primary school children will be able to withdraw them from sex education classes but not from Relationships Education, Government plans have confirmed.

However, parents of secondary school pupils could lose their right of withdrawal. Headteachers will be able to overrule parents.

Schools will decide what is taught about LGBT issues, but

must be respectful of religious views, the draft guidance says.

The Department for Education said the subjects will come into force from September 2020.

John Denning, The Christian Institute's Education Officer, called parental withdrawal "a vital protection for parents and children. We will continue to engage with the Government to encourage them to address this."

Transgender surge inquiry announced as activists accused of gagging free speech

The rapid rise in referrals of children for 'gender confusion' has prompted Equalities Minister Penny Mordaunt to call for an urgent inquiry.

Mordaunt wants to understand why the number of girls being referred has risen 4,400 per cent in the past nine years.

Government officials will look into potential causes, including the influence of social media and the promotion of transgender issues in schools.



🕒 Referrals for girls with gender confusion have risen 4,400 per cent since 2009.

The concerns are shared by MPs. A ComRes poll found 59 per cent said the sudden rise in children identifying as transgender is worrying and has not been properly explained or discussed.

MPs also admitted they were scared of openly speaking against radical gender ideology for fear of accusations

of transphobia.

The poll came as LGBT activists and feminists rejected pressure to stifle debate on the issue.

In letters to national newspapers, 195 campaigners said the freedom to discuss controversial Government proposals is being severely limited. Some of Stonewall's own

supporters accused the gay rights group of bullying people who disagree that men can become women.

In September, it was revealed that Guide leaders were told to leave the organisation when they opposed guidance saying boys could share tents, changing areas and shower facilities with girls.

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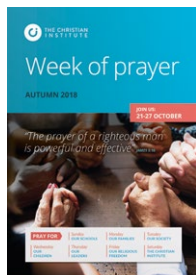
If you would like your church to be one of them, contact us at: development@christian.org.uk



National Week of Prayer

Thank you for joining with us in prayer for major issues affecting families, churches and schools around the UK. Thank you also for your prayers for all of us here at The Christian Institute.

Don't forget that you can pray with us all year round by using the PrayerMate app.



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Ashers: the lawyer's view

By Sam Webster,
In-house Solicitor

The judgment of the United Kingdom Supreme Court in *Lee v Ashers Baking Company* has created a precedent which will be followed by courts in all parts of the UK in their future application of discrimination and human rights law.

The principles involved will impact other cases for years to come, and not only in the sphere of goods and services. This is good news.

Obviously it remains unlawful to discriminate on grounds of protected characteristics such as religion or sexual orientation. And the judgments in earlier B&B cases still stand.

The Ashers case was about the proper scope of discrimination law, with particular focus on the issue of compelled speech. It is therefore essential that business owners seek appropriate legal advice for their own particular set of circumstances.

The phrase 'landmark judgment' can often be overused. But in terms of what will surely flow from the Ashers ruling, it is most apt.

Read the full
article online:
[christian.org.uk/
asherscomment](http://christian.org.uk/asherscomment)

Sam Webster

Northern Ireland maintains law on marriage and abortion

In October, Westminster politicians failed in their attempt to change the law on marriage and abortion in Northern Ireland.

An amendment by Stella Creasy and Conor McGinn was ruled 'outside the scope' of an emergency Bill on Northern Ireland – meaning MPs did not even debate it.

MPs did vote to require the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland



Fiona Bruce speaking in Parliament

to provide guidance on the issues. But, while this increases pressure on the Government, it does not change abortion or marriage law.

MPs Fiona Bruce

and Sir Jeffrey Donaldson spoke passionately against the move, which they said lacked respect for the wishes of the people of Northern Ireland.

Opposition to smacking ban in Wales revealed in consultation



Consultation respondents voiced concerns on Carwyn Jones' proposal.

Welsh Government plans to criminalise parents for smacking their own children have failed to win clear support.

Outgoing Welsh First Minister Carwyn Jones wants to make it a criminal offence for parents to use 'reasonable chastisement' – which could even include picking up a misbehaving child.

But results from a consultation showed respondents were concerned about "law abiding and caring

parents" who use "reasonable" methods being stigmatised.

One wrote: "Your proposal will have the effect of treating ordinary loving parents like real abusers and cause unnecessary anxiety for their children".

Be Reasonable, a group supported by The Christian Institute, is spearheading opposition to the ban. Its poll of Welsh adults found 76 per cent do not want parental smacking to become a criminal offence.

Most vulnerable at risk from court decision

Patients suffering from brain damage lost an important safeguard in July.

Supreme Court judges ruled that food and fluids can be withdrawn, without a court's permission, if families and doctors agree.

Following the judgment, the British Medical Association (BMA) went further, suggesting the ruling should be extended to people with conditions such as dementia.



Hate crimes to be reviewed

The Law Commission in England and Wales is to review how protected characteristics including sex and gender are treated within hate crime laws.

Justice Minister Lucy Frazer made the announcement in September.

In 2009 hate crime laws were used against Christian hoteliers Ben and Sharon Vogelenzang over a conversation about Islam. With the CI's assistance, the case was dismissed.



Government backs Britain's 'proud free speech record'



'Buffer zones' will not be introduced around abortion centres by the Government, Home Secretary Sajid Javid has announced.

His decision followed a consultation which drew over 2,500 responses.

Mr Javid said barring all pro-life activities would "not be a proportionate response", because they nearly always involve simply "praying,

displaying banners and handing out leaflets".

"In this country, it is a long-standing tradition that people are free to gather together and to demonstrate their views. This is something to be rightly proud of", he added.

Despite this, abortion giant BPAS said it would continue to put pressure on local councils to introduce exclusion zones around the country.

Top judge commends CI's 'most important' Named Person case

Baroness Hale, President of the UK Supreme Court, has said The Christian Institute's legal victory against the Scottish Government's Named Person scheme is a 'most important' case.

In 2016 the Institute received a unanimous ruling in favour of its challenge to the unlawful scheme.

Considering the possibility of devolved assemblies making illegal laws, Lady Hale said it was a "rare event so far". But she pointed

out that a challenge to such a law "succeeded in the Christian Institute case".

In July, a panel tasked with producing guidance for implementing the watered-down Named Person scheme admitted it was not going to



meet its September deadline – adding to ongoing delays.



Teaching about same-sex marriage in schools: Govt guidance 'legally flawed'

Government guidance that could silence independent schools on the issue of same-sex marriage is "legally flawed", a human rights expert has said.

In a legal opinion commissioned by The Christian Institute, Prof Christopher McCrudden said the Department for Education has failed in its duty to have due regard to the



rights of Christians.

The guidance states that a school would fail to meet obligations if it "suggests that same-sex marriages or civil partnerships should not be recognised as being lawful unions under civil law".

Prof McCrudden argues that this wording amounts to an "effective prohibition" on teaching that suggests same-sex marriage should not be lawful.

According to The Sunday Times the Government is now rewriting the guidelines.



Your legacy will 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 will help us to continue working to preserve Christian freedoms for future generations.



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Police have apologised to a Christian street preacher after threatening him with arrest and forcing him to leave Bath city centre.

The Christian Institute supported Dale McAlpine after he was accused of committing a 'hate crime' and police issued a dispersal notice.

Following our intervention, Avon and Somerset Police admitted "there

should have been no threat of arrest" and that freedom of speech is "an essential part of a democratic society".

Institute Director Colin Hart said: "Christians have the freedom

to preach on the streets. That right was hard-won down the centuries and it is important that it is upheld. The law cannot be used to clamp down on legitimate free speech."



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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
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