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Give thanks to the Lord

We have had good news from all over the UK recently.

In Northern Ireland there have been important victories for marriage and religious freedom.

Plans to fast-track 'sex changes' have been blocked in England and Wales. The Government has also taken steps to protect school children from radical transgender ideology in the classroom. And the Scottish Government has made a significant, albeit limited, concession to free speech in its still-dangerous hate crime Bill. We give thanks to God.

Through prayer and action, Christians have made a difference in all these areas. But we cannot be complacent. Pressure to continue 'DIY' abortions is growing. They will put at risk thousands of women, as well as their unborn babies.

We are particularly concerned at how the controversy surrounding 'conversion therapy' is being used in an attempt to constrain prayer, pastoral care and the preaching of God's Word.

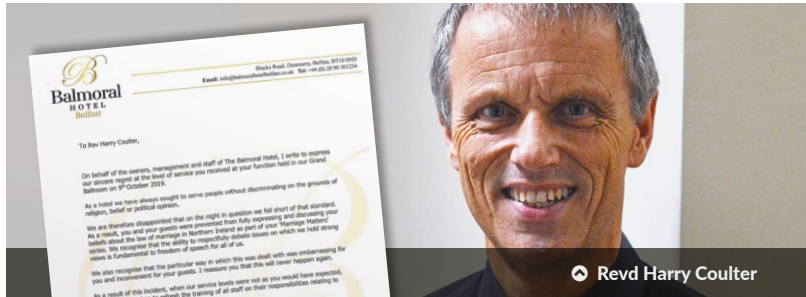
Christians must remain vigilant and ready to defend gospel freedom.

Hotel that stopped pro-marriage event apologises after CI steps in

A Belfast hotel has apologised unreservedly to a church minister after it forced him to abandon a public meeting in support of traditional marriage.

Revd Harry Coulter had been holding the meeting for around 50 people in October 2019 when staff at the Balmoral Hotel in Dunmurry told them to leave because someone had complained.

The Christian Institute issued legal proceedings against the hotel on Revd Coulter's behalf for unlawful discrimination and breach of contract. A year after the incident,



➤ Revd Harry Coulter

the hotel has given the Carrickfergus minister a full, written apology and settled his claim.

The manager admitted that staff had discriminated against Revd Coulter on the basis of his beliefs, and expressed his "sincere regret".

In the letter he accepted that the hotel's action had infringed upon the pastor's freedom of speech and assured him it would "never happen again". He also promised to retrain staff to ensure they uphold free speech in the future.

Revd Coulter said he was "very satisfied" with the outcome.

Thanking The Christian Institute for its support, he added: "I encourage Christians who face similar challenges to their religious liberty to contact them for help."

CI challenges NI Civil Service over trans pronouns diktat

The Christian Institute has challenged the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) over a new policy telling staff they risk the sack if they do not use transgender people's preferred pronouns.

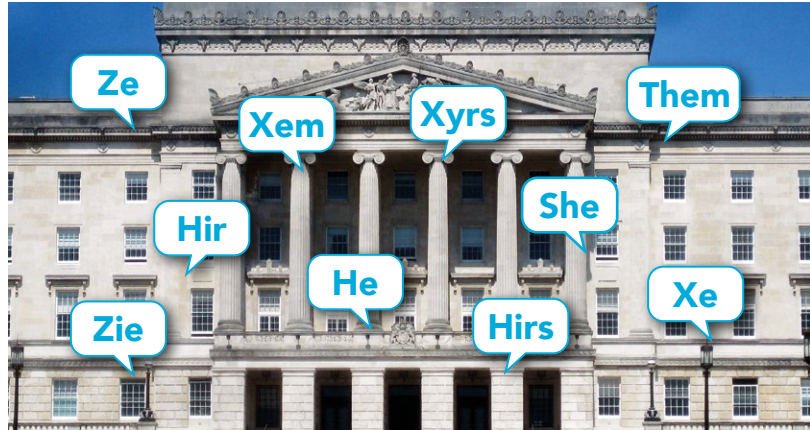
Institute Director Colin Hart said: "This policy contains statements of dubious legality and at various points drives a coach and horses through women's rights to privacy.

"The NICS needs to go back to the drawing board to deal with these serious problems and make sure it properly reflects the law."

"This policy contains statements of dubious legality"

The diktat, brought in while the Stormont Assembly was still suspended, requires that "names and pronouns should be followed in accordance with the individual's wishes". Persistent 'misgendering' will be treated as harassment and could lead to disciplinary action including dismissal.

Among the examples of gender identities the



policy also expects staff to recognise are: "transgender, transsexual, gender-queer, gender-fluid, non-binary, gender-variant, crossdresser, genderless, agender, nongender, third gender, two-spirit, bi-gender, trans man, trans woman, trans masculine, trans feminine and neutrois".

It also states that all those who say they are transgender can use the toilets and changing rooms provided for the opposite sex.

Of the nine groups consulted in making the changes, seven were trans activist groups, including Stonewall and GenderJam.

Former Finance Minister Mervyn Storey MLA, said the decision should not have been taken at the "whim"

of civil servants and should be revisited.

Employers have a duty not to put their staff in a position where they are forced to use words with which they profoundly disagree without strong justification. They must also try to accommodate the religious beliefs of staff. Imposing a blanket requirement on staff to use colleagues' preferred

pronouns against their conscience cannot be justified.

In October 2018, the UK Supreme Court found unanimously that compelled speech breached the European Convention of Human Rights. In its judgment in the Ashers case, the Court ruled: "Nobody should be forced to have or express a political opinion in which he does not believe."



Amy and Daniel McArthur of Ashers Baking Co.

Stormont Ministers promise ban on 'conversion therapy' practices

NI Government Ministers are working to ban 'conversion therapy' in the Province.

Communities Minister Carál Ní Chuilín is leading on the issue backed by Justice Minister Naomi Long. Ní Chuilín called the practice "inhuman". Long has called it "a form of torture". However, they have not yet indicated which specific practices they wish to ban.

In October, the LGBT activist leading calls for a ban in Northern Ireland, Micky Murray, denied that it would be "tantamount to banning religious views".

Speaking to the BBC NI Talkback programme, Murray said they were two "different issues". But in England, LGBT campaigners Steve Chalke and Jayne Ozanne want the Government to take action



Carál Ní Chuilín MLA is leading plans to ban 'conversion therapy'. This could include preaching which does not affirm homosexual lifestyles.

against any prayer, private conversations and preaching which does not affirm homosexual or transgender lifestyles.

Psychotherapists have also admitted they are afraid to question children who say they want to 'change sex', in case they are also accused of 'conversion therapy'.

One, a former governor of England's only gender identity service for children and young people, said "politicisation" of the issue had "interfered with good clinical care".

Ní Chuilín is yet to set a timetable for taking legislation forward but said she was committed to progressing as quickly as possible.

How to give to the work of the CI

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QC: 'Hate crime review threatens free speech on gay marriage'

A leading UK barrister has warned that a proposed expansion of hate crime law in Northern Ireland severely threatens free speech.

Currently, criticising same-sex marriage is explicitly protected by a clause in the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987. The hate crime review, led by Judge Desmond Marrinan, is considering scrapping the clause.

Thomas Leonard Ross QC said such a move could result in people being taken to court for disagreeing with same-sex marriage. Mr Ross, a former president of the Scottish Criminal Bar Association, has



Naomi Long MLA

also been outspoken in his criticism of the hate crime legislation being proposed in Scotland.

Justice Minister Naomi Long has said the review is expected to be completed by the end of November, but new legislation is unlikely to be brought to the Assembly before May 2022.

Vunipola: 'Jesus comes before colour'

Rugby star Billy Vunipola has said his Christian faith prevents him 'taking the knee' in support of Black Lives Matter.

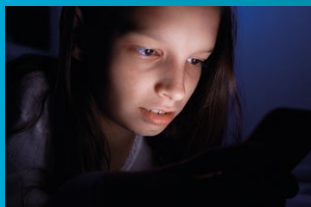
Vunipola, who plays in the English Premiership, explained: "They were burning churches and Bibles. I can't support that. Even though I am a person of colour, I'm still more a person of, I guess, Jesus".



High Court to rule on porn checks delay

Children across the UK could be protected from online pornography if the High Court in London tells the Government it must introduce strict age-verification checks.

Regulations approved by Parliament in 2018 required those visiting a pornographic website from a British IP address to prove that they were over 18. The plans were dropped last year.



Marriage 'best for society' says new think tank study



Influential think tank the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) has published a report saying that marriage delivers significantly better outcomes than cohabitation.

Over the past decade, the number of cohabiting couples with dependent children has risen by over a quarter in the UK, and it is now the fastest growing family type. But the CSJ said "marriage secures stability in a way cohabitation does not" and the Government should "stop pretending" they are equally beneficial.

The report highlights that "children from stable families

are less likely to be excluded and tend to do better at school, are less likely to be involved with the criminal justice system and have better employment outcomes". But it also noted that the benefits of marriage's "unique commitment", extend to wider society.

In England and Wales however, the Law Commission has been accused of trivialising marriage for proposals that would allow couples to marry in a hot air balloon or while sky diving.

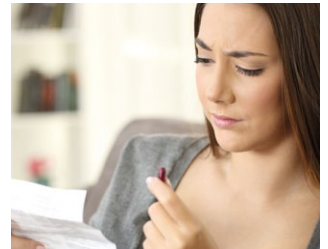
The Christian Institute said 'anything goes' ceremonies "trivialise the marriage bond".

NI Govt warns of 'risks to women' over DIY abortions

Women in Northern Ireland are putting themselves at risk if they have abortions at home, the NI Department of Health (DoH) has said.

Medical abortions involve taking two tablets - mifepristone and misoprostol. Currently in Northern Ireland, mifepristone must be taken under medical supervision.

This has been criticised by pro-abortion group Alliance for Choice. However the DoH stressed that medical abortions required "direct medical supervision within the health and social care system".



Safeguards preventing unsupervised abortion in the rest of the UK were removed under emergency coronavirus regulations in March. At least two women are known to have died after taking the drugs.



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THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE

Week of prayer

AUTUMN 2020

JOIN US 29 NOV TO 5 DEC

"Give thanks the LORD, for he is good. His love endures for ever."

Psalm 118:1

PRAYER	DEVOTIONAL	WORSHIP	REFLECTION
WORSHIP	DEVOTIONAL	WORSHIP	REFLECTION
WORSHIP	DEVOTIONAL	WORSHIP	REFLECTION

Week of prayer

29 NOV to 5 DEC

Scottish hate crime Bill has UK-wide implications



Following mounting pressure, the Scottish Government has amended its controversial hate crime Bill, but serious implications remain for the whole of the UK.

The legislation originally stated that an offence would be committed if anyone used words or behaviour 'likely to stir up hatred', regardless of intent. This will now be amended to acknowledge that a person must have 'intended to stir up hatred'.

However, many other aspects of the Bill, including the

threshold of 'abusive' words and absence of robust free speech clauses, remain unchanged.

The law would cover all publications distributed in Scotland - including those from the rest of the UK. If the police decided a newspaper, magazine or book on sale was 'intended to stir up hatred', they could obtain a warrant and arrest the editor or author.

The Bill has attracted strong criticism from the police, lawyers, academics, authors, actors and comedians as well as The Christian Institute.

NI Health Minister to consult public on alcohol pricing

The Health Minister has committed to a public consultation on Minimum Unit Pricing for alcohol.

Robin Swann said: "The impact of alcohol misuse is being felt by too many families and communities across Northern Ireland on a daily basis.

"We need to consider fully every option available to us to reduce this blight on our society. The impact alcohol has on our health service is clear and we must try to address the issue."

Last year, it was reported



Robin Swann MLA

that introducing a minimum 50 pence per unit price in Scotland had reduced the amount of alcohol purchased by 1.2 units per week.

Threat to NI church weddings withdrawn after CI pressure

The General Register Office for Northern Ireland (GRONI) has withdrawn a threat to churches in the Province after The Christian Institute intervened.

GRONI had written to places of worship threatening to ban them from performing all weddings if they did not indicate whether or not they would conduct same-sex ceremonies. The Institute's Callum Webster said many church leaders had found the letter "highly intimidating".

The turnaround came after the Institute contacted the GRONI pointing out that places



of worship are opted out of same-sex weddings by default, and told it to withdraw the ultimatum.

In response, the Office said it

was "not the intention to cancel registration of officiants" and it apologised "unreservedly" for the error.

The Christian Institute's Deputy Director for Public Affairs, Simon Calvert, said the quick response had been necessary to reassure places of worship that they could "continue to carry out weddings - the union of one man and one woman" without re-registering.

In England, 22,500 non-Anglican places of worship are registered for weddings but only around 250 are registered for same-sex weddings.

Hear from the CI



Callum Webster,
Northern Ireland Officer

If you would like your church to hear more about our work **in-person*** or **online** email sandra.mackay@christian.org.uk or call **028 9094 1667**.

**Subject to COVID restrictions*

Northern Ireland's Commissioner for Children and Young People has called for abortion to be promoted to young girls in the Province.

Koulla Yiasouma told the Northern Ireland Office that it should introduce compulsory teaching on the "prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion" to girls as young as 13.

She called the content of RSE



lessons should no longer be advisory, and called for the "provision of tailored pre and post abortion services" for girls and young women.

The Institute's Northern Ireland

Officer Callum Webster said it was "deeply troubling to see a taxpayer-funded commission that is supposed to be protecting the interests of children promoting abortion to such young girls".

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