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Give thanks to the Lord

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

The Scottish Government has made a significant, albeit limited, concession to free speech in its dangerous hate crime Bill.

Plans to fast-track 'sex-changes' have been blocked in England and Wales. Westminster has also taken steps to protect school children from radical transgender ideology in the classroom.

And in Northern Ireland there have been important victories for marriage and religious freedom. 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 thousands of women at risk, 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.

Hate crime Bill improves but big concerns remain unaddressed

Following mounting pressure, the Scottish Government has amended its deeply unpopular hate crime Bill by increasing the threshold for committing an offence.

The legislation originally stated that if anyone used words or behaviour 'likely to stir up hatred', they would be committing an offence, 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 Bill has attracted strong criticism from the police, lawyers, academics, authors,

actors, comedians and religious groups in recent months.

The Scottish Police Federation, which represents front-line officers, told Holyrood's Justice Committee that the new offences

would see officers "policing speech" and would "devastate the legitimacy of the police in the eyes of the public".

Thomas Ross QC, a past president of the Criminal Bar Association, warned: "The language used in the Bill is so difficult to understand that it will be impossible for the man or woman in the street to know when the line is likely to be crossed."

Free to Disagree, a campaign backed by The Christian Institute, is spearheading opposition to the plans.

Scots Govt to reflect as gender self-ID plans dropped by Westminster

The Westminster Government has dropped its plans to make it much easier for people in England and Wales to 'change sex'.

In 2018, it consulted on plans to amend the Gender Recognition Act to allow people to change legal sex by 'self-identification'.

Proposals included removing the requirements for a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria and to have lived as though a member of the opposite sex for at least two years.

In Scotland, similar plans to introduce 'self-ID' were shelved in April due to the coronavirus outbreak. A Bill is not expected to be brought to Holyrood before next year's elections.

But in September, UK Equalities Minister Liz Truss announced only minor changes would be made for England and



Wales. These include reducing the cost of a gender recognition certificate and the intent to move the process online. She also confirmed that the rights of service providers to offer single-sex spaces would remain.

A Scottish Government spokesman said the impact of the announcement on Scotland was being "carefully considered".

The Christian Institute's Ciarán Kelly welcomed Truss's statement but said more needed to be done to protect under-18s.

"Some schools have fallen for the myth that gender is 'on a spectrum' or can be 'non-binary'. Youngsters have been pushed into life-altering decisions such as taking cross-sex hormones. This has to stop."

Govt consults on making 'temporary' DIY abortion scheme permanent

The Scottish Government has begun consulting on turning an emergency scheme allowing 'DIY' abortions into a permanent arrangement.

New rules allow women to take the two pills required for an abortion at home if they have had a remote consultation with a doctor. A mother is allowed to take the pills while up to twelve weeks pregnant. The

change was supposed to be for a "limited period" in response to the pandemic.

It follows a move by Westminster to extend its measures which had also originally been billed as 'temporary'.

The consultation comes despite an ongoing police investigation in England after a baby was unlawfully aborted when its mother took the pills at 28 weeks.



At least two women are also known to have died after taking the drugs.

In Northern Ireland, the Department of

Health has warned women that they would be putting themselves at risk by having DIY abortions at home.

Church leaders to UK Government: 'don't close our churches again'

In September, almost 700 church leaders wrote to the UK's governing authorities, urging them not to close churches again as they strive to reduce cases of coronavirus.

The open letter was co-authored by Institute Trustee Revd William Philip of The Tron Church, Glasgow, and four other church leaders. It has now reached almost 900 signatories.

The letter set out clear support for appropriate measures to combat COVID-19 including "rigorous hygiene, social distancing and appropriate risk assessment".

It argued: "As a result church worship presents a hugely lesser risk of transmission than pubs, restaurants, gyms, offices and schools; and it is more important than them all."

"As we live in the shadow



Christian Institute Trustee Revd William Philip co-authored the letter.

of a virus we are unable to control, people urgently need the opportunity to hear and experience the good news and hope of Jesus Christ, who holds our lives in his hands."

The church leaders concluded: "We therefore wish to state categorically that we

must not be asked to suspend Christian worship again."

Revd Philip told the Institute: "What our society needs always, but especially amid an epidemic of fear, is to witness the worshipping church holding out the Gospel of eternal hope."

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Psychotherapists fear 'conversion therapy' label as Govt plans ban

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

One, a former governor of the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust's Gender Identity Development Service in London, said "politicisation" of the issue had "interfered with good clinical care".



It comes as the Government considers a ban on the practice.

LGBT activists Steve Chalke and Jayne Ozanne want the Government to take action against any prayer, private

conversation and preaching which does not affirm homosexual or transgender lifestyles. They claimed that, in the future, churches could be prosecuted.

Opt-out organ law to be introduced

Scotland's 'opt-out' organ donation system will come into effect next year, it has been announced.

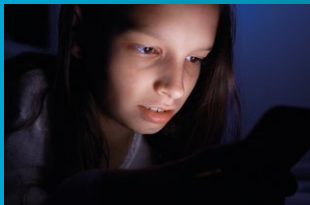
Currently, people have to choose to donate their organs after death. But from March 2021 adults in Scotland will be automatically registered as organ donors unless they explicitly opt out. The Scottish Parliament voted to change the law last year.



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".

SNP told assisted suicide plans would force out people of faith

Taking a pro-assisted suicide stance would force people of faith to leave the SNP, one of its former council leaders has warned.

An activist on the party's National Executive Committee wants to introduce a motion on the issue at its annual conference in November with a view to gaining support for legalisation.

Chris McEleny,



who recently stepped down as the SNP Group Leader for Inverclyde, urged the party "against any policy changes" on assisted suicide, and hoped that such matters would "be

left to individual conscience".

In the last decade, two assisted suicide Bills have been defeated in the Scottish Parliament after MSPs were given a free vote.



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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."

PRAY FOR:

- OUR COUNTRY
- OUR LEADERS
- OUR COMMUNITIES
- OUR FAMILIES
- OUR NATION'S UNITY
- OUR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
- OUR MARRIAGE & FAMILY
- OUR JUSTICE
- OUR ENVIRONMENT

Week of prayer

29 NOV to 5 DEC

COMMENT

Scottish Govt has wrong approach to tackling hatred



By Nigel Kenny, Scotland Officer

The Scottish Government's hate crime Bill is causing considerable alarm. People from all walks of life are deeply troubled that expressing a view on various subjects could be criminalised under vague new 'stirring up of hatred' offences.

For Christians, the threat posed by these proposals is acute. Many biblical views are already considered 'hateful' by opponents of the Christian faith. Under the Government's plans, Christians who discuss marriage, sexuality or gender in public – or even at home – could be reported and arrested. Churches and other Christian organisations could be targeted

by vexatious reports. The Bible itself could be considered 'inflammatory material'.

The Government claims its proposals are necessary to tackle crimes motivated by hatred. But it has not provided any evidence to suggest that extending hate crime laws in this way would reduce crime or help victims.

As Christians, we know that hatred is wrong. We are called to love our neighbours as ourselves and model the love of Christ to the world. So we cannot ignore changes to the law that would undermine the freedoms and protections of others.

Many Christians have written to MSPs to express concerns over the hate crime Bill. We must continue to make our voices heard.

Scottish Govt consults public on tackling purchase of sex

The Scottish Government is considering changing the law on prostitution to criminalise the purchase of sex.

Community Safety Minister Ash Denham MSP (pictured) launched a consultation, and called prostitution "a form of commercial sexual exploitation" that should be treated as

"violence against women".

Currently, it is not illegal to buy or sell sex in Scotland, but running a brothel, kerb crawling and public solicitation are criminal offences.

The consultation runs until 10 December. It outlines how other countries deal with the issue and asks which approach Scotland should take to end demand for prostitution.

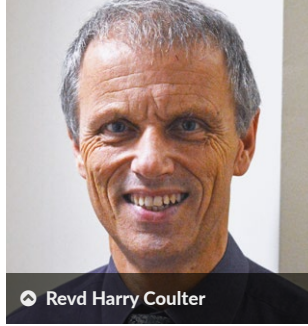


Hotel that halted pastor's pro-marriage event settles claim after CI intervenes

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 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, hotel management gave the minister a full written apology and settled his claim.



Revd Harry Coulter

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."



Hear from the CI



Nigel Kenny,
Scotland Officer

If you would like your church to hear more about our work [online](#) or [in-person](#)* contact: scotland@christian.org.uk

*Subject to COVID restrictions

Smacking ban: "Call 999 on parents" says Scots Govt

The Scottish Government has told the public to "call 999" if they see a parent or carer smacking their child.

The controversial smacking ban came into effect on 7 November. Government ministers had repeatedly denied it was intended to criminalise parents, but new guidelines direct those who witness a smack to "call 999 to report a crime in progress".

Dr Ashley Frawley of the Be Reasonable group said: "This confirms what we've been saying from day one – the smacking



ban will turn ordinary, decent mums and dads into criminals."

Holyrood's own consultation revealed that 97 per cent of submissions by members of the public opposed a ban.

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