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## Standing for Christian truth

Christians are called to be salt and light. Often this is not easy, but believers need to be ready to count the cost and stand firm.

We give thanks to God that Kenneth Ferguson and Lancashire Festival of Hope have both been wonderfully vindicated for their willingness to defend the biblical view of marriage. These cases will help protect other Christians from unlawful discrimination. Cornerstone fostering agency has also resolved not to abandon Christian teaching on marriage

and sexual ethics, despite pressure from Ofsted and the courts.

The need for legal action to defend religious freedom on contentious issues such as same-sex marriage highlights the risk from an overly-broad conversion therapy ban. The freedom to faithfully declare the Gospel of Christ should not be endangered by the criminal law. That is why we are spearheading a new campaign – Let Us Pray. The ordinary work of churches needs to be protected.

## 'Let us pray', campaign urges Govt amid 'conversion therapy' ban

A new campaign has been launched to protect the ordinary work of churches from an overly-broad ban on so-called conversion therapy.

Activists are pushing the Government to ban any prayer, preaching and pastoral guidance which contradicts LGBT theology. Let Us Pray, a campaign spearheaded by The Christian Institute, warns that this would breach human rights law and should be rejected.

Let Us Pray supports tackling "pseudo-medical abuses" if they are found to be occurring. But it warned politicians to "be wary of activists exploiting



concerns about abuse to further their own agendas against Christians".

On its website, [letuspray.uk](https://letuspray.uk), the campaign highlights how a broad ban could also impact areas

including preaching, communion and church membership.

Campaign spokesman Simon Calvert said: "We simply want to protect the freedom of Christians to teach and

practise their beliefs. A conversion therapy ban must not include prayer."

Top human rights lawyer Jason Coppel QC has confirmed that criminalising the expression of mainstream Christian beliefs about traditional marriage would breach the Government's obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Christian Institute has threatened the Government with judicial review if the proposed ban criminalises the ordinary work of churches.

▶ **Join the campaign:**  
[letuspray.uk](https://letuspray.uk)

# Christian CEO vindicated after dismissal for marriage beliefs

An Employment Tribunal has ruled that Scotland's biggest grant-making trust unlawfully discriminated against its CEO because of his Christian views on marriage.

The Institute has supported Kenneth Ferguson throughout his battle, including underwriting his legal costs through its Legal Defence Fund.

The Tribunal found Kenneth Ferguson was unfairly dismissed by The Robertson Trust in March 2020. It also found that he had been subjected to religious discrimination by the Trust and its Chairwoman, Shonaig Macpherson, for believing that marriage



Unfairly dismissed: Kenneth Ferguson

is exclusively between a man and a woman.

Following the ruling, Mr Ferguson expressed relief that the ordeal was over. He said: "I was treated by The Robertson Trust in a way I had never been treated before in my whole professional life. But I'm satisfied that

justice has been done. The Tribunal has ruled that they were wrong to behave that way and I'm grateful."

He added: "I also want to thank those who have supported me and prayed for me, especially those at The Christian Institute who have been such a blessing to me."

The Institute is also helping Stirling Free Church, where Mr Ferguson is an elder, in its legal action against the same trust – also for unlawful discrimination.

Macpherson has subsequently stepped down from The Robertson Trust.

## Methodist Church backs same-sex marriage

The governing body of the Methodist Church in Great Britain has backed proposals that contradict the Bible's teaching on marriage and sexual ethics.

At the Church's annual Conference in June, representatives voted to redefine marriage, conduct same-sex weddings and affirm cohabitation.

Following the move, leading proponent of the change Sam McBratney told the Institute that ministers remained free to teach that marriage is a lifelong union between one man and one woman.

But the Chairman of Methodist Evangelicals Together, Revd Dr David Hull, said that some evangelicals within the Methodist Church were already reporting facing opposition to faithful biblical preaching and teaching on sexual ethics.

The Methodist Church is Britain's fourth largest denomination, with approximately 165,000 active members.

In September, the Church in Wales voted to allow same-sex marriage blessings in its churches, with a view to redefining marriage in the future.



The Evangelical Fellowship in the Church in Wales rejected the decision and called the denomination to a renewed commitment to biblical teaching.

# Discrimination against Christians lands council with £100,000 bill

Blackpool Council has been ordered to pay £25,000 in damages and £84,000 in costs for discriminating against a local Christian festival involving over 200 churches.

In 2018, adverts for Lancashire Festival of Hope were controversially removed by the Council over guest speaker Franklin Graham's biblical views on marriage and sexuality.

But earlier this year, Manchester County Court ruled overwhelmingly in favour of festival

organisers, stating the Council had shown "wholesale disregard for the right to freedom of expression".

The Court also ordered the Council to apologise. In a statement posted on Blackpool Council website, the Leader of the Council admitted the decision to ban the adverts had unlawfully discriminated against Christians.

Steve Haskett, a Trustee and Director of Lancashire Festival of Hope, told The Christian Institute that he was satisfied with the result. He said



that if the Council's intention had been "to silence Christians" from speaking publicly about their beliefs on marriage, it had backfired. "The fact is", he said, "the law protects our ability to hold and express our

beliefs about marriage. These beliefs are mainstream, sincerely held, and indicate no malice towards any person".

The Institute described the court ruling as "good news for the Good News".

## How to give to the work of the CI

None of our work would be possible without the generosity of our supporters.

Giving regularly to The Christian Institute will help us to continue working to preserve Christian freedoms for future generations.

### Give regularly

 [christian.org.uk/donate](https://christian.org.uk/donate)

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### Or call

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## Boris will not back push for lax laws on assisted suicide

The Prime Minister will not support an attempt to remove end-of-life protections for vulnerable people in England and Wales, according to The Daily Telegraph.

In October, it reported that Boris Johnson made the decision after reviewing detailed arguments over the summer. Health Secretary Sajid Javid is also understood to oppose a weaker law.

Mr Johnson's move came ahead of Baroness Meacher's Assisted Dying Bill passing its Second Reading in the House of Lords. Many Peers gave speeches strongly opposing it. The Government remains



neutral. The Bill has a number of other hurdles to pass before it can become law. The House of Commons defeated the last assisted suicide Bill in 2015 by 330 votes to 118.

## Ofsted: 'sex ed politicised by Equality Act'



Ofsted has admitted that some schools have politicised teaching on relationships and gender identity due to confusion over the Equality Act.

The watchdog's Director for Corporate Strategy Chris Jones conceded that school staff have sometimes failed to show "political neutrality" when teaching on "contentious issues".

## BBC admits bias in trans drugs article



The BBC has admitted that an article addressing a High Court ruling on puberty blockers was biased and risked encouraging vulnerable young people to commit suicide.

Following an investigation, it conceded that the article written by former LGBT correspondent Ben Hunte was one-sided and – against media guidelines – gave undue attention to suicide.

## Surrey Police Commissioner: 'Stonewall a threat to women'

Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has urged its police force to cut ties with the LGBT lobby group Stonewall over its promotion of transgender ideology.

Lisa Townsend said the danger of gender self-identification was the "single biggest issue" she received emails about on taking the role. She called Stonewall "a threat to women" for claiming that men who self-identify as female should be allowed in women-only spaces.

She was swiftly supported by PCC colleagues, with the Commissioners



Concerned: Surrey PCC Lisa Townsend

for Suffolk, Dorset, and Wiltshire and Swindon also flagging concerns over the group's influence over policing.

The lobby group has seen an increasing number of public bodies abandon its controversial 'Diversity Champions' scheme,

most recently media regulator Ofcom and the Crown Prosecution Service.

Members pay upwards of £2,500 plus VAT to subscribe to the group's programme, which rewards employers for promoting LGBT ideology inside and outside the workplace.

## Senior MP: 'I wouldn't support a ban on reasonable chastisement'

Former Schools Minister Nick Gibb has said he does not want to see parents criminalised for smacking their children amid calls to ban the practice in England.

Speaking on LBC, while still in post, Gibb said: "I think these are matters for parents, I think reasonable chastisement is allowed within the law."

He added it is "important" that "parents are able to bring up their children as they see fit".

Polling for parents' rights group Be Reasonable found that around three-quarters of the

public are against criminalising loving parents who chastise their children in a reasonable manner.



The Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP





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## High Court rejects Down's abortion law challenge

Disability campaigner Heidi Crowther has said she won't give up after the High Court said it was for Parliament, not the courts, to decide if UK abortion law is discriminatory.

Abortion is legal up to 24 weeks for most reasons and up to birth for children deemed to have a disability, which includes Down's syndrome.



## High Court: 'Fine to put men in women's prisons'



The High Court has ruled that men who say they identify as female are legally permitted to be housed in women's prisons.

The Ministry of Justice allows women's prisons to accommodate men who say they wish to 'permanently' live as if they were the opposite sex, whether or not they have taken any medical or legal steps to 'change sex'.

A female prisoner had challenged the policy. But judges ruled it was lawful, despite accepting it could have a "significant" psychological impact on female inmates.

Currently, at least 16 police forces are recording crimes committed by men who identify as female as if they are offences perpetrated by women - distorting official statistics.

In Scotland, a council recently scrapped plans to provide gender neutral toilets at a secondary school in Inverness after families objected. But the CEO of a rape crisis centre was slammed for implying that victims who want single-sex spaces to be protected are "bigots" who should expect 'to be challenged on their prejudices'.

## Govt: 'No secular assemblies'

A daily act of collective worship must not be replaced by non-religious assemblies, the Minister for the School System has confirmed.

Baroness Berridge made the Government's position clear in response to a letter sent by the National Secular Society. She wrote that it was "not permissible for a school to apply simply to replace Christian or other religious collective worship with a non-religious assembly".

Lady Berridge added that schools found to be failing to fulfil their

duty to provide worship would be dealt with "on a case by case basis".

Under the law, state-funded schools in England and Wales must conduct acts of collective worship "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character".



# Christian foster agency seeks Supreme Court ruling on evangelical beliefs

In September, the Court of Appeal rejected Cornerstone Fostering and Adoption agency's attempt to overturn a ruling that "evangelical" includes those who reject biblical teaching on sexual ethics.

The agency continues to be supported by The Christian Institute as it seeks leave to appeal to the Supreme Court.

Helpfully, the ruling confirmed that an evangelical foster agency can work exclusively with evangelical carers. It also agreed that Cornerstone had



suffered a significant interference with its right to manifest its religious beliefs.

However, the Court sided with Ofsted in its attempt to impose its own definition of "evangelical" on the Christian foster agency.

The Institute's Simon Calvert said the court ruling showed a "fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of Christianity".

In 2019, Ofsted issued a report downgrading the fostering service from

"Good" to "Requires Improvement" and demanding that Cornerstone abandon its religious ethos.

The following year, the agency won the key part of its legal action against the regulator when the High Court agreed that Cornerstone was entitled to recruit only those who share its Christian faith.

But the agency appealed the second finding which said it could not require its carers to abide by its evangelical Christian beliefs on sexual conduct.

## Hear from the CI



Development Officer  
James McIntosh

If you would like your church to hear more about our work, please contact: [england@christian.org.uk](mailto:england@christian.org.uk)

## Radical abortion plans ditched

An attempt to repeal all legal protections for the unborn in England and Wales has been shelved.

In July, Dame Diana Johnson MP dropped her controversial amendment to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, which would have introduced abortion on demand up to birth.

Christian MP Fiona Bruce described New Clause 55 as "truly shocking", while Sally-Ann Hart MP said that such a "radical abortion law" had no place in the UK.



Dame Diana Johnson MP

Christian Institute supporters were among the numerous constituents that MPs said had been in touch urging them to oppose the change.

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