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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.

# 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



➤ Unfairly dismissed: Kenneth Ferguson

Chairwoman, Shonaig Macpherson, for believing that marriage 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 subsequently stepped down from The Robertson Trust.

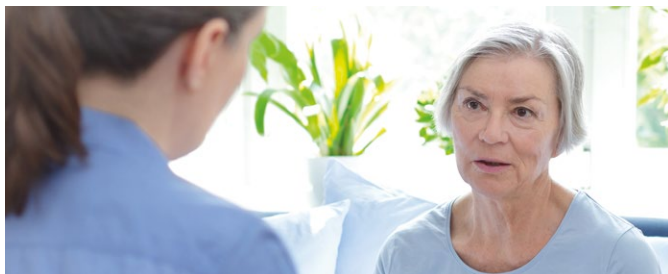
# Attempt to legalise euthanasia suspended in the Oireachtas

In July, the Justice Committee of the Oireachtas halted the progress of a Bill attempting to legalise euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Had the Bill passed, residents in Northern Ireland would have been able to travel to the Republic to be killed.

Following a public consultation on the 'Dying with Dignity' Bill, Senators said that it had "serious flaws" and should not proceed. Instead a special parliamentary committee is to be set up to examine the issue.

According to the Justice Committee's report, a concern frequently raised by the public was that the Bill could result in the "abuse of the sick and vulnerable, who may perceive themselves to be a burden on



their family and feel pressured into opting for assisted dying".

Significantly, the majority of medical submissions were also opposed to the Bill.

Responding to the news, campaign group Hope Ireland said: "The Government should be assisting people to live, not assisting them to die."

End-of-life protections are

also under attack on the British mainland. The House of Lords passed Baroness Meacher's Bill in October. The UK Government remains neutral. The Bill has a number of other hurdles to pass before it can become law.

A consultation on Scottish proposals from Liam McArthur MSP is underway, with a vote anticipated next year.

# 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 downgraded the fostering service from "Good" to "Requires Improvement" and demanded that Cornerstone abandon its religious ethos.

The following year, the agency won the key part of its legal action against Ofsted when

the High Court agreed that Cornerstone was entitled to recruit only those who share its Christian faith.

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

# 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".

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

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## Scot hate crime Bill to cost over £1 million

A Freedom of Information (FOI) request has revealed that the Scottish Government's controversial hate crime Bill will cost the country around £1.2 million to implement.

The startling price tag was uncovered through an FOI request from the Institute-backed Free to Disagree group.

In Northern Ireland, Judge Desmond Marrinan published his review of hate crime law last year. It prompted strong opposition - including from Institute supporters - over the implications for free speech and religious liberty. New legislation



is not expected to be brought to the Stormont Assembly before May 2022.

# Gender doc charged with catalogue of failings



A GP suspended for running an unlicensed transgender clinic for children is facing allegations of misconduct at a medical tribunal hearing.

Helen Webberley is facing a total of 29 charges from the General Medical Council (GMC). These include failure to "provide good clinical care to three patients, and that in September 2016 she prescribed inappropriately to two patients".

After she was suspended by the GMC in 2018, Webberley moved her puberty-blocking drugs business, GenderGP, to Spain. Now owned by a Hong Kong company, it bypasses regulatory safeguards to issue prescriptions to children in the UK via an online service.

Representing the GMC, Simon Jackson QC said: "Dr Webberley compromised the patients' safety and treatment outcome and put them at risk."

The hearing is ongoing.

# Methodist Church in Ireland affirms biblical marriage



The Methodist Church in Ireland has announced that it will continue to affirm marriage as "between one man and one woman" for life.

The statement came after the Methodist Church in Great Britain backed proposals that contradict the Bible's teaching on marriage.

At its 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, warned that some evangelicals within the Methodist Church were already reporting facing opposition to faithful biblical preaching and teaching on sexual ethics.

# BBC admits trans drugs story risked encouraging suicides

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.

The piece written by former LGBT correspondent Ben Hunte failed to report safety concerns with the experimental drugs.

He also contravened

media guidelines by reporting speculation that the High Court ruling could lead to self-harm and suicide among teenagers. The article was later edited to remove the suggestion of causation.

The Corporation's complaints unit conceded that the article's suicide references "went beyond what was editorially justified" and that it "should



have done more" to reflect arguments against the drugs. Hunte has now left the BBC.





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## Court rejects challenge to 'unfair' Down's abortion law



A woman with Down's syndrome has said she won't give up after London's High Court rejected her claim that the UK's abortion law is discriminatory.

Under current legislation, abortion is permitted up to 24 weeks for most reasons but is available at full-term for children deemed to have a disability, which includes Down's syndrome.

The High Court rejected the case brought by Heidi Crowter and fellow campaigner Máire Lea-Wilson, saying it was a matter for Parliament.

Taking inspiration from the evangelical William Wilberforce's campaign to end slavery, Crowter said "the fight is not over".

"When the going got tough he kept going and I'm going to do the same, because I want to succeed in changing the law to stop babies like me being aborted to birth, because it is #DownrightDiscrimination".

In England and Wales, abortions of babies with Down's syndrome increased from 656 in 2019, to 693 in 2020 – a rise of 5.6 per cent.

## Poll: Majority of ROI public support single-sex spaces

A majority of people in the Irish Republic have backed the provision of single-sex spaces in an online poll by market research company RED C.

Of the 1,001 adults surveyed, 64 per cent agreed that hospitals "should be required to provide single sex wards, rather than mixed wards", with only 23 per cent in disagreement.

Over 60 per cent of respondents stated that public buildings such as schools should have to provide single-sex toilets. A quarter opposed the statement.

Majorities also

agreed that men who self-identify as female should not be allowed to compete in women's games and that women should not have to share changing rooms with men.



# Westminster-imposed abortion faces pushback in N Ireland

Northern Ireland Secretary Brandon Lewis has ordered the Stormont Executive to ensure abortion services are fully operational across the country no later than 31 March 2022.

Lewis was acting on unprecedented powers granted to him by Westminster.

The Presbyterian Church of Ireland called the edict “destructive” and “insulting”.

The Church of Ireland also hit out, affirming that “every human being is created with intrinsic dignity in the image of God



with the right to life”. It called for legislation to be developed that “safeguards the wellbeing of both the mother and unborn child.”

In early October, the High Court in Belfast heard a legal challenge to the

decision to grant Lewis the power to override the Stormont Executive.

Northern Ireland’s former Attorney General, John Larkin QC, is representing the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children.

He told the Court: “Here we have a minister of the Crown issuing a direction, with no status given to the direction”, before adding: “no-one is obliged to respond”.

Abortion has risen dramatically in the Province since a radical abortion regime was imposed by Westminster last year. In the twelve months prior to the law being changed, 22 abortions were performed in Northern Ireland. Department of Health figures revealed that in the year following this had risen to 1,345.

## Hear from the CI



Callum Webster,  
Northern Ireland Officer

If you would like your church to hear more about our work, please email [sandra.mackay@christian.org.uk](mailto:sandra.mackay@christian.org.uk) or call 028 9094 1667

## ‘Let us pray’, politicians urged amid ‘conversion therapy’ ban

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

Activists are pushing Westminster and Stormont 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.



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”.

In May, the Institute warned it “will not hesitate” to take legal action if the NI Executive moves to criminalise the ordinary work of churches.

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

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