



INSIDE

- ▶ 'Let us pray', campaign urges Govt amid 'conversion therapy' ban
- ▶ Christian foster agency seeks Supreme Court ruling on evangelical beliefs
- ▶ Discrimination against Christians lands council with £100,000 bill

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.

Church in Wales votes to allow blessings for same-sex couples

The Church in Wales has voted to allow same-sex marriage blessings in its churches.

In September, new rules were introduced to allow same-sex couples who are already legally married or in a civil partnership to receive a blessing from a willing Church in Wales minister. They will be implemented for five years, with a view to redefining marriage in the future.

The Institute's Wales Officer, Gareth Edwards, said the vote "tragically ignores the Bible's clear teaching".

The Evangelical Fellowship in the Church in Wales



accused the Church of undermining the "unchangeable standard" of marriage between one man and one woman "as the proper place for sexual intimacy and the basis of the family".

The decision to disregard biblical

teaching on sexual ethics follows that of the Methodist Church in Great Britain. In June it voted to redefine marriage, conduct same-sex weddings and affirm cohabitation by 254 votes to 46.

The Chairman of Methodist Evangelicals

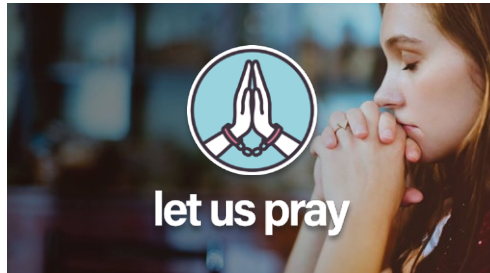
Together, Revd Dr David Hull, told The Christian Institute that he was "greatly saddened" by the decision to "abandon the teaching of the Christian Church held throughout history and still held by the majority of Christians around the world today".

'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, 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 Institute has threatened the Westminster Government with judicial review if the proposed ban criminalises the ordinary work of churches.

 Join the campaign:
letuspray.uk

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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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.

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.

Council drops trans guidance amid legal threat from parents

A council in South Wales has temporarily withdrawn its transgender guidance for schools after parents threatened a legal challenge.

It came after a boy at school in Rhondda Cynon Taf told his parents he believed he was a girl. Just days later the school informed his parents he had requested for his name to be changed on the register and asked to join girls’ PE classes.

At a meeting with the

school, his parents said that their son, who was under 14 years old, should have counselling before any changes were made. But they were told that teachers had already begun to call their son by a female name in line with the Council’s guidance.

The toolkit advised schools that a male pupil who identifies as a girl “is a girl who outwardly at this point resembles a ‘boy’”. It will now be reviewed.



Campaign group urges politicians to protect children from gambling ads

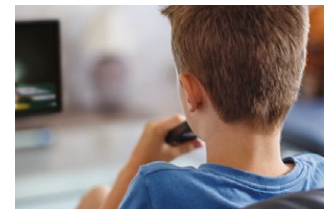
A campaign group has called for more to be done to tackle gambling addiction among children.

The Coalition Against Gambling Ads (CAGA) made the appeal on a visit to the Welsh Parliament as part of a tour of Britain to raise awareness about the issue.

CAGA’s campaign bus, adorned with the words “We’ve AD enough”, says that “450,000 11-16 year olds gamble” and “55,000 are already addicted”.

The UK Government is

responsible for gambling legislation in England and Wales. It is currently considering changing the law. This could see the largest changes to the running of the industry since 2005.





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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'.

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.



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 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.

Hear from the CI



If you would like your church to hear more about our work, please contact: wales@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.



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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Registered office: The Christian Institute, Wilberforce House, 4 Park Road, Gosforth Business Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8DG
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