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Pray for marriage

Christians in the UK face many profound challenges in the public square. These include ongoing threats to religious liberty, the atheist onslaught on Christianity's role in public life, and the Government's plans to redefine marriage. You can find out more in this newsletter.

The Christian Institute has been working hard to protect family, faith and freedom. There have been recent encouragements such as the Communities Secretary's swift action in restoring the freedom to pray to local councils.

Many people are concerned about the Government's plans to create same-sex marriage. Redefining marriage in law is a profoundly important issue which would affect generations to come. The new definition would be promoted by public bodies, including schools.

Christians know how important marriage is. The Institute is doing everything it can to encourage people to stand up for marriage. We are asking Christians to make the protection of marriage a matter for urgent and sustained prayer.

Coalition for Marriage launched

A grassroots campaign group has been launched to oppose the redefinition of marriage in the UK.

The Coalition for Marriage (C4M) is a group of organisations and individuals who support the current definition of marriage and oppose any plans to redefine it.

The Christian Institute is one of the partner organisations supporting the campaign.

In its first three weeks over 180,000 people added their names to the C4M national petition. It is open to anyone resident in the UK over the age of 16 and can be signed online at: www.c4m.org.uk

The Government at Westminster is consulting on redefining marriage in England and Wales to create same-sex marriage. Its aim is to allow a change in the law to be made before the end of the current



Lord Carey spoke at the launch along with Lord Brennan QC, Fiona Bruce MP, David Burrowes MP and Colin Hart, Campaign Director.

Parliament in May 2015.

Homosexual activists are demanding this radical change which would abolish the traditional definition of marriage and impose a new version on the whole of society.

The C4M petition is supported by people of many different backgrounds from

across Britain. Leading public figures including politicians from the Conservative and Labour parties, lawyers, academics and religious leaders, have signed affirming that marriage is between one man and one woman for life and should not be redefined.

Government consults public on amending Section 5

The Government has held a public consultation on whether “insulting” words or behaviour should continue to be a criminal offence.

The consultation closed in January and it appears that 2,500 responses were received.

Currently Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986, which applies to England and Wales, criminalises “threatening, abusive or insulting” words or behaviour which are likely to cause “harassment, alarm or distress”.

The “insulting” limb of Section 5 has had a



Police told Jamie Murray to stop displaying Bible verses on a TV screen in his café as they breached Section 5.

damaging effect on free speech. It has been used, for example, to issue a court summons to a 16-year-old protester for holding a placard calling Scientology “a dangerous cult”.¹

In September a Christian café owner in Blackpool, Jamie Murray, was told by police to stop playing a DVD of Bible verses because it breached Section 5. He has since lodged a formal

complaint with the police.

The Government blocked a debate on amending Section 5 last October at Report Stage of the Protection of Freedoms Bill in the House of Commons.

But there is strong support for a change in the law from politicians of all stripes, civil liberties groups and Parliament’s Joint Committee on Human Rights.

The Government has yet to release the results of the consultation or its response.

¹ *Guardian Online*, 23 May 2008

Would you consider leaving a gift to The Christian Institute in your will?

None of our work would be possible without the generosity of our supporters. Leaving a gift in your will to The Christian Institute would help us plan for the future, and enable us to continue working to preserve our freedoms for future generations.

To find out more, visit christian.org.uk/support or email legacy@christian.org.uk

Image: Fotolia/Simonia

Bill to tackle discrimination by Sharia courts attracts widespread support

A Bill which aims to tackle the problem of Sharia courts has received the backing of a number of Muslim women’s groups.

Muslim Women’s Network-UK, Muslim women’s rights group ‘Inspire’ and the Iranian and Kurdish Women’s Rights Organisation have all voiced their support.

Prominent Muslim campaigner Tehmina Kazi has welcomed the Bill as a “pioneering proposal” and supported the move to criminalise Sharia courts which falsely claim legal status.¹

Baroness Cox’s Bill was introduced to the House of Lords last year. It has also continued to attract widespread support in both the media and in Parliament.



The Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill was introduced by Baroness Cox.

¹ *Harrow Observer Online*, 12 January 2012

B&B owners lose appeal



Christian guesthouse owners Peter and Hazelmary Bull have lost their appeal against a ruling that their policy of restricting double rooms to married couples discriminated against a homosexual couple.

Last year a County Court ordered the Bulls to pay £3,600 in damages to Steven Preddy and Martyn Hall, the two men who were denied a double room at the Bulls' guesthouse. The Chymorvah B&B near Penzance is also the Bulls' own home.

The appeal was heard by three judges at the Court of Appeal in November. The judges upheld the previous ruling which found the policy to be discriminatory on grounds of sexual orientation – despite the fact that the policy was also applied to unmarried heterosexual couples.

However, the Court did say that a new intolerance should not take root against Christians because of their beliefs about sexual ethics.

Government tells councils: keep praying if you want to

The Government has written to all local councils in England, telling them that new laws restore their power to hold prayers at official meetings if they want to.

In February a High Court judge ruled that local councils had no lawful power to hold prayers during official business.

The extraordinary ruling came about because the National Secular Society (NSS) and an atheist ex-councillor sued Bideford Town Council in Devon.

But in the significant ruling, the High Court rejected the principal claims of the NSS that the saying of prayers during formal council meetings discriminates against, or breaches the human rights of, atheist councillors.

The Christian Institute's Legal Defence Fund backed the Council.

The atheist campaign to ban prayers has only succeeded in strengthening the freedom of councils to pray if they want to.



Eric Pickles MP has restored councils' power to hold prayers in formal meetings through his Localism Act.

In response the Communities Secretary, Eric Pickles MP, fast-tracked the commencement of new laws which overtake the Court's ruling. The new Localism Act restores the right of councils to hold prayers as part of their formal meetings.

Mr Pickles said: "We are striking a blow for localism over central interference, for freedom to worship over intolerant secularism, for Parliamentary sovereignty over judicial activism, and for long-standing British liberties over modern-day political correctness."

Christian demoted for Facebook comment on civil partnerships



A Christian has been demoted and subjected to a 40 per cent pay cut over comments he made about civil partnerships on Facebook.

Adrian Smith was disciplined by Trafford Housing Trust for using his personal

Facebook page to post the comment "an equality too far" with a link to an article on the registration of civil partnerships in churches.

The homosexual activist Peter Tatchell is among a number of critics who have

challenged the Trust's actions. He has made clear that while he does not agree with Mr Smith's opinions, he defends his freedom of speech.

Mr Smith is taking his employer to court, backed by The Christian Institute.

Tesco distances itself from top employee's 'evil Christians' barb

A senior Tesco employee has provoked great controversy after he described Christians who oppose the redefinition of marriage as "evil".

Nick Lansley, the Head of Research and Development at Tesco.com, wrote the comments on his profile page on the photo-sharing website Flickr.com. He said: "I'm also campaigning against evil Christians (that's not all Christians, just bad



ones) who think that gay people should not lead happy lives and get married to their same-sex partners."

As a result many Christians refused to shop at Tesco over the Christmas period.

Tesco subsequently moved to distance itself from Mr Lansley's offensive comments,

insisting that it abhors criticism of religion, and instructing him to remove the remarks.

The supermarket giant also faced a public backlash for dropping its support for the Cancer Research 'Race for Life' and shortly after announcing it would become a headline

sponsor of Britain's largest homosexual festival Pride London 2012.

However, Tesco has since indicated that it will not sponsor future gay pride events, but will instead look for other ways to support its homosexual staff network, 'Out at Tesco'.

Tesco has also recently restored its commitment to Cancer Research UK, making the charity its Charity of the Year from March 2012.

Civil partnerships will not be forced on churches

The Government has assured churches that they cannot be forced to host civil partnerships against their will.

The promise came during a Parliamentary debate secured by Baroness O' Cathain on regulations to implement the scheme for England and Wales.

A Government minister affirmed that civil partnerships cannot be registered in religious premises unless the religious body involved consents.

Secularist vote on Christian assemblies fails in the Lords

A vote to change the law on Christian assemblies was abandoned in the House of Lords in October due to a lack of support for the proposal.

Lord Avebury, a Lib Dem Peer and an honorary associate of the National Secular Society, tabled amendments to the Education Bill to remove the requirement for Christian worship in schools.



Lord Avebury called for the current law on Christian assemblies to be "jettisoned".

The House of Lords debated his amendments, at the end of which he wanted to push for a vote, but lacked support from other Peers.

Currently schools must have a daily act of collective worship which is "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character."