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Living as salt and light in the UK

It has been an incredibly busy few months. We're delighted that after much hard work our Living Christianity series is now on sale. We pray this will become a valued resource for Christians.

There is more good news. Both the Charity Commission and the Equality and Human Rights Commission are taking action to protect free speech. They can do more, but have addressed some of our concerns. In Scotland, what remains of the Named Person scheme lurches from one crisis to the next.

But we need to stay vigilant. We have strongly objected to plans for local authorities in England to grade church youth groups on their adoption of 'British values'. In Northern Ireland we are standing up for the good laws on marriage and abortion. And in Scotland and Wales we continue to defend parents' freedom to lovingly discipline their children without fear of prosecution.

Thank you for standing with us as salt and light in the UK. Please pray for us and the nation.

Institute warns Education Secretary over youth group 'kitemark' scheme

The Christian Institute has written to Education Secretary Damian Hinds warning about the potential for misuse of a 'kitemark' scheme for grading youth groups.

Opposition from the Institute and its supporters saw plans for Ofsted to inspect groups including Sunday schools dropped in April last year.

The Department for Education is now considering a voluntary code of conduct for groups to sign up to. It is also piloting a grading scheme, where local authorities can award gold, silver or bronze ratings.

The Institute's Simon Calvert told Mr Hinds that the 'standards' were highly subjective.

"Anecdotal evidence suggests that some church groups could be denied a top-level kitemark by the local authority because



▶ The CI warned Damian Hinds MP that Christian youth groups could be disadvantaged for holding orthodox religious views under the scheme.

of their orthodox religious views (for example on marriage). This could have serious implications for grant funding, use of local authority facilities and venues."

Mr Calvert said its references to 'extremism' suggest the guidance is "a repackaged attempt to inspect against so-called British values".

The consultation on registering and inspecting

Sunday schools and church youth groups prompted around 18,000 responses, forcing the Government to admit it needed to "tread carefully".

According to official figures, 75 per cent of respondents said Ofsted should not be able to investigate out-of-school settings, expressing concerns about Ofsted's "capacity, expertise and neutrality".

Value of free speech highlighted in charity extremism guidance



By Colin Hart,
Director

There was no fanfare in the mainstream media but it is something worth celebrating – especially by Christians.

In new guidance on 'extremism' the Charity Commission strongly defends the importance of free speech. It says that being controversial is not necessarily a bad thing. How true. Throughout history, people who challenged the prevailing thinking of the day have been branded 'extremists'. Wilberforce, Shaftesbury, Bunyan – even John Wesley – were all once seen as threats to 'modern society'.

Complaints to the Commission are frequently used as a campaign tactic to cause trouble for Christian groups and churches. So we're very encouraged that its guidance on extremism takes a strong line defending free speech. The charity regulator has now



acknowledged the "long and successful history of trustees and their charities being in the forefront of social change and promoting ideas that, at the time, were unpopular or controversial".

Better reported has been the new free speech guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission for universities. Both sets of guidance are very welcome. Perhaps an indication of a recognition that there are many unscrupulous campaigners trying to manipulate the law to censor their opponents.

Discrimination law is used as a pretext to discriminate. False

allegations of 'hate speech' are used in an attempt to get the police to gag reasonable views. We've been able to help stop the censorship of some university Christian Union speakers. We've led the challenge to Extremism Disruption Orders, which were quietly dropped. In the Ashers

case we stood against compelled speech. Working with our supporters, it's been great to play a part in shifting opinion more strongly in favour of free speech.

For more information see: christian.org.uk/cc-charities and christian.org.uk/ehrc-universities

Ashers won't seek costs after legal win



Ashers Baking Company will not be seeking costs against the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, following its Supreme Court victory.

Director of The Christian Institute Colin Hart said: "This complex case involved significant issues of

wider public interest, including balancing the requirements of discrimination law and human rights."

He explained that it was important to be "consistent", as the Institute had previously argued that in such cases each side should pay its own costs.

Mr Hart also acknowledged that many people had faithfully supported the McArthur family during the case. He said: "Due to the generosity of Christian Institute supporters, Ashers are not out of pocket as a result of defending this legal action".

Brexit uncertainty: How should we as Christians respond?

The uncertainty surrounding Brexit is a cause of anxiety for many. Here, Christian Institute trustee Rupert Bentley-Taylor helps us think about how best to respond as Christians.



We should start with thanksgiving: thanksgiving that God is sovereign. We should remember that our God is not tossed to and fro by Brexit – he is absolutely, totally sovereign over what happens.

Secondly, we should rejoice that we actually live with many privileges which we can easily take for granted.

We are told to pray for “kings and all those in authority” that we may live “peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Tim 2:1-2). So we should be praying that churches



thrive and the Gospel can be preached freely.

And finally, we should pray against civil disorder and intimidation as well as the coarsening of public discourse.

So I think we should be giving thanks, rejoicing and praying against certain things in the midst of trouble. Together, let's pray God would spare us from what is unjust and evil and give us opportunity to proclaim the Gospel.

The full article is available at: christian.org.uk/brexit-response

Would you like us to visit your church?



We visit over 300 churches a year to talk about the work of The Christian Institute.

If you would like your church to be one of them, contact us at: development@christian.org.uk

Medics oppose 'rigged' poll on assisted suicide stance

The Royal College of Physicians (RCP) is facing a significant backlash over a controversial poll of its 35,000 members regarding its stance on assisted suicide.

Historically, it has been opposed to legalisation. But under a new policy, unless 60 per cent of its members vote for or against, it will switch to a 'neutral' stance.

Campaigners say the poll is therefore



a “sham”, and “rigged” in favour of a move to neutral, which they say is “inferred support” for legalisation.

Over 1,800 doctors and medics

have complained to the RCP, and it has been threatened with legal action by John Saunders, the former chairman of its ethics committee.

Thousands speak up against C of E 'misreading Scripture'

More than 3,000 Church of England clergy and office holders are challenging the Church over its acceptance of transgender ideology.

In an open letter they have urged the House of Bishops to "revise, postpone or withdraw" new guidance on celebrating transgender 'transitions'.

The guidelines support churches' use of 'affirmation of baptism' services to mark a person's 'gender transition'. The service would affirm previously made promises and use their new name and pronoun.

The letter reiterates that baptisms are solely for celebrating new life in Jesus Christ and says the guidance "misuses the baptism liturgy" and "misreads Scripture".

Revd Ian Paul, a member of the Archbishops' Council, said: "The fact that so many, from a wide range of traditions in the Church, have been prepared to 'put their heads above the parapet' is an indication of the strength of concern expressed here."



◀ Revd Dr Ian Paul

Lords drop bid to impose same-sex marriage on NI



▶ Lord Hayward withdrew his amendment to introduce same-sex marriage to Northern Ireland following impassioned debate in the Lords.

A bid to impose same-sex marriage on Northern Ireland was dropped after a debate in the House of Lords on 1 March.

The Institute's Deputy Director, Ciarán Kelly, welcomed the outcome as "good news and a clear answer to prayer".

Lord Hayward tabled an amendment to a Bill introducing heterosexual civil partnerships in

England and Wales. Had it been passed, it could have led to the redefinition of marriage in the Province over the heads of its elected representatives.

A separate amendment to undermine rules preventing the Church of England and the Church in Wales being forced to perform same-sex ceremonies was also withdrawn.

Police apologise to pensioner quizzed over trans comments

A 74-year-old woman has received an apology from police after she was questioned over online comments about transgenderism.

In a blog post, Margaret Nelson wrote: "Gender's fashionable nonsense. Sex is real. I've no reason to feel ashamed of stating the truth."

Suffolk Police later apologised, saying it had made a "misjudgement".



▶ Suffolk Police apologised for "misjudgement".

In 2005, elderly Christian couple Joe and Helen Roberts were subjected to an 80-minute interrogation after the couple disagreed with their local council's pro-

homosexual policy.

Intervention by The Christian Institute also led to them receiving an official apology from Lancashire Police for their poor treatment.

BPAS wants UK abortion free-for-all

The head of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) has praised New York state's controversial new abortion law, which effectively permits abortion up to birth for any reason. While it has provoked outrage in the US, Ann Furedi (pictured) wants the permissive law to be adopted by the UK.



Prof. Welsh Govt ignored crucial smacking research

A respected academic who contributed to the Welsh Government's consultation on smacking says his research has been misquoted and ignored.

Prof Robert Larzelere (pictured) called on politicians not to defy the "relevant evidence" by banning smacking.

He complained the Government report "failed to summarise all of the most important studies, before claiming that it provided an evidentiary base for a smacking ban".



The latest issues arising from gender ideology



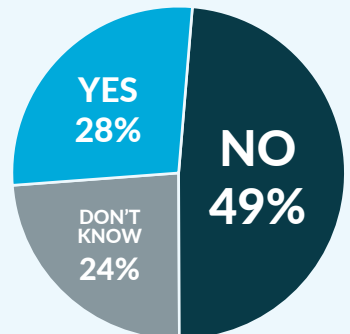
- In Scotland, citizens will solely have "male" and "female" options on their 2021 census, after MSPs rejected the idea of including "non-binary".
The decision was welcomed by women's rights groups. They also warned that new transgenderism guidance for schools – which the Institute opposed – could negatively impact other children.
- A secondary school teacher revealed that 17 children at her school said they were 'changing gender'.
- In Brighton, primary school teachers are being encouraged to tell children that "all genders" can go through menstruation.
- Nursery staff in Scotland have been told not to call children 'boys' and 'girls' by the taxpayer-funded Care Inspectorate.
- A mother has been warned by social services that her daughter could be taken into care because she was not affirming the child in 'changing sex'.

POLL

Should it be made easier for transgender people to change their legal gender?

Source: The poll was conducted by YouGov which interviewed 1660 GB Adults between 16 and 17 December 2018. Data were weighted to be demographically representative.

YouGov
What the world thinks



Named Person guidance delayed again



John Swinney has been criticised for not accepting defeat on the scheme.

The Scottish Government has suffered yet another blow to its Named Person scheme, as the development panel tasked with reworking it have admitted they are struggling.

Professor Ian Welsh, who chairs the panel, says it is proving difficult to provide the necessary safeguards “without making the draft code detailed and complicated”.

He added that an “overly complex code of practice would not be user-friendly”.

The scheme’s main proponent, Deputy First Minister John Swinney, was criticised by a spokesman for NO2NP, which opposes the scheme:

“Rather than accepting defeat in the Supreme Court and leaving the named person to operate under the same information-sharing laws as everyone else, he insisted on trying to save face by bringing in a new bill.”

Key data-sharing provisions in the original legislation were struck down by the Supreme Court in July 2016 following a lengthy court battle spearheaded by The Christian Institute.

Your legacy will help Christians to be salt and light

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



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legacy@christian.org.uk
christian.org.uk/legacy

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work, our responsibilities as citizens, and more.

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

Tel: 0191 281 5664 Fax: 0191 281 4272 Email: info@christian.org.uk Website: www.christian.org.uk

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