



## INSIDE

▶ English council risks court over primary school sex ed policy

▶ More than 9 in 10 Belfast shopworkers oppose Sunday trading

▶ **COMMENT** Identity politics undermines the fabric of our society

▶ Gambling on credit cards to be banned in GB

## Upholding religious liberty in the UK

Religious liberty and free speech are at the forefront of our work. We can give thanks that we enjoy such vitally important freedoms in our country.

These days there are attempts to suppress views which don't conform to politically correct thinking. This is most readily seen with opposition to same-sex marriage and transgenderism. Such views might even be logged as 'hate incidents' by police. But encouragingly, people are starting to challenge this liberal orthodoxy. The law, and most people, still

treasure genuine tolerance.

We're very pleased that the Government has taken action to protect the freedom of people in Northern Ireland to disagree with same-sex marriage. More needs to be done.

We are also encouraged that the UK Government is not minded to remove the good legal protections against assisted suicide. This will help uphold the sanctity of life. But Christians will be greatly concerned about the impact that new liberal abortion laws will have on the Province.

## UK Govt acts to protect free speech on same-sex marriage in N Ireland

Safeguards for free speech and religious liberty were in place just in time for the first same-sex weddings in February.

The Christian Institute had warned the Northern Ireland Office that it faced possible legal action if protections applying in the rest of the UK were not extended to the Province.

Former Northern Ireland Secretary Julian Smith confirmed a series of legal changes to coincide with the introduction of homosexual marriage.

Public order law was amended to underline that criticising it is not an offence. Equality law was also changed so that religious bodies and staff cannot be sued for declining to take part in a blessing or other event marking a civil same-sex wedding. A consultation on protections for religious



▶ Former Northern Ireland Secretary Julian Smith announced the changes.

settings closed in February but the results have not yet been published.

The Institute's Simon Calvert welcomed the news but warned: "We will be monitoring closely to ensure that the guidance needed to protect freedom of speech and conscience in schools and workplaces is clear and robust.

"It is also important that there is proper training and

guidance for the police to ensure respect for freedom of speech on these issues."



First Minister Arlene Foster said homosexual marriage was "imposed" on Northern Ireland, and should not have been introduced without Stormont's agreement.

# English council risks court over primary school sex ed policy

Lawyers acting on behalf of The Christian Institute have written to Warwickshire County Council over a catalogue of errors in its relationship and sex education policy for primary schools.

Given its serious legal flaws, failure to respond satisfactorily will see the Institute pursue a claim for judicial review.

It comes as parents across Great Britain are increasingly concerned that inappropriate sex education is being taught in lessons about 'relationships'.

The *All About Me* programme is used in over 200 Warwickshire primary schools. It contains assertions likely to mislead teachers and pupils, such as "transgender children have the



right to use whichever toilet or changing room they feel most comfortable using". It also encourages schools not to inform parents if their children are sharing rooms overnight with pupils of the opposite sex.

Materials designed for use in lessons promote LGBT issues and include gratuitously

graphic sexual images. But they make no reference to marriage – something required by law.

From September 2020 there will be compulsory Relationships Education lessons for primary pupils in England, and Relationships and Sex Education for secondary pupils.

Northern Ireland is not affected.

Most of the content should be uncontroversial as it addresses areas such as bullying and friendships. However, LGBT activists and groups selling sex education materials have pushed to include highly contentious and inappropriate content.

# GPs still oppose assisted suicide

In February, the Royal College of General Practitioners opted to maintain its opposition to assisted suicide.

An independent survey of 6,674 members found that 47 per cent said the College should oppose a change in the law. Of the remainder, 40 per cent backed a change and eleven per cent favoured neutrality.

The announcement followed the UK Government saying it has no plans to review the current safeguards against assisted



suicide in England and Wales.

Writing to pro-life campaign group Care Not Killing, Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland QC also expressed his

reservations about weakening the law, recognising that it would endanger vulnerable people.

Buckland said: "Personally, I have grave doubts about the ability of legislation to be watertight when it comes to the potential for abuse."

Care Not Killing's CEO, Dr Gordon Macdonald, welcomed the news, saying: "The current law works well."

The laws on assisted suicide in Northern Ireland are devolved to Stormont.

# MPs call on UK Government to close 'abuse of trust' loophole

A long-running child protection campaign by The Christian Institute received a boost in January.

A group of MPs called for an end to sports coaches and religious figures being allowed to have sexual relationships with 16 and 17-year-olds with whom they have a position of trust.

Current legislation in England and Wales protects them from this abuse by teachers, social workers and police officers. But it does not apply to sports coaches or church leaders.

In their report,



MPs called for the Sexual Offences Act to be amended and for publicity to highlight its new scope.

Closing the 'abuse of trust' loophole

has been an Institute campaign since 1999.

The Christian Institute's Ciarán Kelly said amending the law would be "a positive step towards protecting

young people from all forms of sexual exploitation".

In 2017 the UK Government said it would change the law, but later backtracked.

Would you like us to visit your church?



We visit around 100 churches a year in Northern Ireland to talk about the work of the Institute.

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

## GB to ban gambling on credit cards from April

The Christian Institute has welcomed a GB-wide ban on using credit cards to place bets. It is set to come into force on 14 April.

The Gambling Commission's Chief Executive said the new measure should reduce the risk of people "gambling with money they do not have". Some are understood to have accumulated tens of thousands of



pounds in debt.

Payment services such as PayPal will be included in the ban, but the National Lottery will be exempt.

The then Culture

Minister Helen Whately said there is more to be done: "We will be carrying out a review of the Gambling Act to ensure it is fit for the digital age".

## UK firsts for 'marriage-lite'

The UK's first heterosexual civil partnerships have taken place following a change in the law on 31 December 2019.

The Supreme Court had ruled in June 2018 that civil partnerships should be available to opposite-sex couples.



◈ Civil partners Charles Keidan and Rebecca Steinfeld

## Feeling left out at school counts as 'hate crime' says CPS

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has said that if a pupil believes they have been excluded from a friendship group because of their sexual orientation it could be a 'hate incident or crime'.

The new guidance for schools was written alongside LGBT activist groups. Other examples include "rejecting someone" and "not wanting to work with them".



## Liberals attack CofE after it affirms traditional marriage

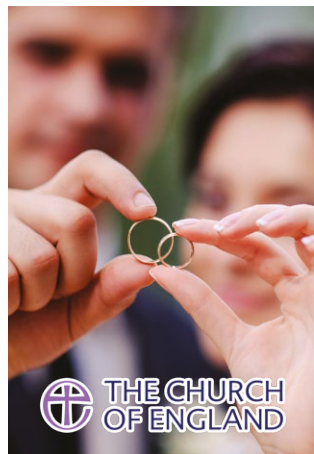
The Church of England has been attacked by LGBT campaigners, including one serving bishop, for restating the biblical position on sexual morality.

A statement from the House of Bishops in January said sexual relationships outside heterosexual marriage "are regarded as falling short of God's purposes for human beings". But it admitted that the Church has a study underway which will "inform further deliberations".

Opponents claimed the statement "significantly damaged the mission of the church".

Following the controversy, the Church released a statement apologising for the timing but not the content of its statement.

In December, the new Archbishop of York was announced. Bishop Stephen Cottrell has advocated 'looking again' at biblical texts on sexuality "to see what they are



actually saying to our situation", claiming "for what we know now is not what was known then".

Bishop Cottrell also said there was "no reason" why thanksgiving prayers could not be offered for same-sex civil partnerships.

## Parents who smack their kids set to be criminalised in Wales

The Welsh Government has followed Scotland's example and voted to ban smacking. From 2022, parents who give their children a mild smack risk prosecution.

The Bill was passed despite huge opposition from the public and local councillors. Two-thirds of individuals responding to last year's consultation opposed the Bill. A



survey of more than 200 councillors also revealed more than 7 in 10 of them oppose the move.

The unpopular ban is expected to cost taxpayers up to £8 million over the

next five years.

Last October, the Scottish Parliament also voted to criminalise parents who smack their children in the face of widespread public opposition.



following Jesus in  
every area of life



Buy now from  
[thegoodbook.co.uk](http://thegoodbook.co.uk) or  
[livingchristianity.org.uk](http://livingchristianity.org.uk)



[livingchristianity.org.uk](http://livingchristianity.org.uk)

## Abortion biggest global cause of death in 2019

More than 42 million abortions took place last year, making it the single largest cause of death world-wide.

In comparison, deaths due to all illness, including cancer, accounted for around 21.2 million deaths.

The World Health Organisation estimates that around 125,000 abortions take place every day.



## COMMENT

# Identity politics undermines the fabric of our society



By Colin Hart,  
Director

'Identity politics' has come to dominate public debate.

This divisive ideology fractures society into groups formed around characteristics such as gender, sexuality, or ethnicity, and pits people against one another in an arms race of victimhood.

Those deemed to be the 'most oppressed' are given the highest status. Everyone is expected to endorse their 'rights'. Questioning their demands is considered hateful. Failing to champion socially liberal views on transgenderism, homosexuality or abortion makes you unfit to take on public office or even take part in public debate.

Identity politics clearly

damages free speech and religious liberty. Christians and others with dissenting views have faced marginalisation and sometimes direct hostility for failing to conform. It also undermines social cohesion, making people intensely individualistic and unconcerned for society as a whole.

Mercifully, people are starting to wake up to the damage this does. Academics, journalists and commentators on the left and the right are increasingly speaking out against it.

As Christians we seek the good of all, not just some. We recognise that because human beings are made in the image of God, we have intrinsic and equal value rather than one based upon a hierarchy of characteristics. It's a belief that stands in marked contrast to the polarisation of identity politics.

## Ex-transsexual takes NHS to court over gender ideology

Transgender ideology may be unquestioned in many areas of education and the mainstream media, but people directly affected by the issue are taking action.

One former transsexual is challenging the

NHS in court over its policy of giving drugs to gender-confused children. Keira Bell was given cross-sex hormones when she was a teenager, but has now returned to

living as a woman.

She said: "I do not believe that children and young people can consent to the use of powerful and experimental hormone drugs", adding they should not be offered to under-18s.



# More than 9 in 10 Belfast shop-workers oppose Sunday trading

Over 90 per cent of Belfast shopworkers are opposed to extending Sunday trading hours, a recent survey has revealed.

It was conducted by the trade union Usdaw, which said that allowing shops to open for longer would have a “negative impact” on workers, families and communities.

Usdaw found that 92 per cent of its members say Sunday trading should not be



extended, with more than two-thirds saying they had already been pressured to work on

a Sunday. A majority of respondents felt that working on Sundays would mean less time

spent with family and friends.

Usdaw's General Secretary Paddy Lillis said the Union was firmly against extending Sunday trading hours. He added that those in favour of the plans “have not been able to show it will lead to economic benefits or job creation”.

Belfast City councillors have twice rejected attempts to liberalise Sunday trading in recent years.

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.



☎ 0191 281 5664

✉ [legacy@christian.org.uk](mailto:legacy@christian.org.uk)

🌐 [christian.org.uk/legacy](http://christian.org.uk/legacy)

## ‘Flawed’ quickie divorce Bill revived by Prime Minister

Boris Johnson has revived plans to make divorce much quicker and easier in England and Wales.

Under the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill, spouses will be able to simply walk away from a marriage. They will not have to give a reason and their spouse will be unable to contest the decision. A similar Bill ran out of time ahead of the General Election.

Institute Director Colin Hart said “making divorce easier and quicker will lead to more divorces and more broken families”.



In a debate in the House of Lords, Lord Farmer told Peers the no-fault divorce Bill was “fundamentally flawed because it not only ignores the urgent need to strengthen families, but weakens them”.

THE LATEST NEWS AND RESOURCES: **CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK**



CHRISTIANINSTITUTE



@CHRISTIANORGUK



CHRISTIANORGUK



CHRISTIANORGUK

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](mailto:info@christian.org.uk) Website: [www.christian.org.uk](http://www.christian.org.uk) | Printed in March 2020  
Registered in England as a charity Charity No. 100 4774 Company No. 263 4440. A charity registered in Scotland Charity No. SC039220