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# Defending the Gospel

The Institute works to ensure that churches and Christians are free to “preach the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

Around the UK, LGBT activists are seeking to exploit concerns over so-called conversion therapy to restrict preaching, pastoral care and prayer. For some, simply sharing a Christian testimony is grounds to be sacked.

But there is good news. The Government is taking a tougher line with universities on free speech. This will help Christian

Unions and pro-life groups which are increasingly marginalised by hostile students’ unions. The Law Commission’s decision to think again on criminalising ‘hate speech’ in the home is also welcome. The Scottish Government needs to follow suit.

We thank God that he continues to provide us with the resources to equip Christians to be salt and light in our society – especially in these difficult times. Thank you too for standing with us.

## Prayer branded ‘conversion therapy’ in latest attack on gospel freedom

A Tory MP has called on the Government to include any prayer inconsistent with LGBT theology in its proposed ban on so-called conversion therapy.

Alicia Kearns said ‘abhorrent practices’ must be criminalised. Other LGBT activists have also targeted pastoral care and sermons.

The MP for Rutland and Melton alleged that attempts to stop someone expressing their chosen gender identity or sexual orientation “range from ‘therapy’ and prayer sessions, to aversive treatments like electroshocks or even ‘corrective’ rape”.



▶ Alicia Kearns MP: Criminalise ‘abhorrent practices’.

She also made it clear that she wants a ban to include parents who disagree with their child embracing transgender ideology or taking ‘sex swap’ drugs.

It is among an increasing number of attempts to restrict the core activities of churches, both here and abroad.

LGBT activist and General Synod member Jayne Ozanne is leading a multi-faith group calling on the Government to ban “all attempts to change, suppress or erase a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression”. She has said that churches

engaging in prayer, private conversation and teaching which does not affirm LGBT lifestyles should “face the full force of the law”.

Pastoral advice and prayer which upholds the Bible’s teaching on sexual ethics was recently branded as ‘conversion therapy’ and outlawed in Victoria, Australia. The state’s Attorney General has said religious educators, teachers and ministers will be ‘re-educated’ by the Government to prevent them breaking the law.

Inside ▶ LGBT activists demand sacking of NI official for sharing Christian testimony

# Institute welcomes tough new measures on uni free speech

The Government has announced a range of tough new measures to ensure that free speech is not restricted at universities.

After an increasing number of students, staff and academics have been silenced or no-platformed, Education Secretary Gavin Williamson warned of a “chilling effect” leaving people feeling they cannot freely express themselves.

Places of higher education will now be subject to a new free speech condition in order to be registered in England and access public funding. If universities and colleges break this condition, the Office for Students will have the power to impose sanctions upon them, including financial penalties.

Individuals will also now be able to seek compensation for losses through the courts if they are expelled, dismissed or



Education Secretary Gavin Williamson warned of a “chilling effect”.

demoted as a result of the free speech duties being breached.

The new rules will also apply to students’ unions.

The Institute’s Simon Calvert said the announcement would be a “welcome boost” for Christian Unions, pro-life groups and others who “don’t fit with the narrow, secularist, socially liberal ideology that dominates

university campuses.

“For decades, we have known of cases of Christian Unions being disaffiliated from the students’ union – usually for holding orthodox beliefs about sexual ethics. We’ve all heard stories of Christian groups having their event bookings cancelled, or pro-life groups being effectively voted off campus”.

# Ofcom chief who likened gender critics to racists took advice from Stonewall

Ofcom’s Chief Executive has compared people who disagree with transgender ideology to racists, during a discussion about BBC impartiality.

Dame Melanie Dawes told the House of Commons culture committee it would be “extremely inappropriate” for those who recognise biological sex cannot be changed to be included

in TV or radio debates on transgenderism. Dame Melanie likened it to giving a platform to “people saying that racism is OK”.

Under questioning, the head of the communications regulator repeatedly stated that Ofcom had been taking advice from pro-trans lobby group Stonewall on how to bring ‘balance’ to debates on transgenderism.



Ofcom’s Chief Executive Dame Melanie Dawes

Committee member Damian Green MP said her suggestion that “anyone who disagrees with any aspect of the current orthodox trans rights position is the equivalent of an

old-fashioned racist” was “probably an inappropriate position for a senior regulator”.

Dame Melanie claimed her comments had been “mischaracterised”.

# LGBT activists demand sacking of NI official for sharing Christian testimony

LGBT activists have called for the Northern Ireland Education Authority to sack a board member who shared the testimony of a gay man who became a Christian.

Former DUP minister Nelson McCausland shared the testimony of Becket Cook, an American who lived a homosexual lifestyle until he came to Christ.

Although the article plainly addresses Christian conversion, critics accused Mr McCausland of promoting "conversion therapy practices". A petition was launched

to have him removed from his job.

One activist who is also a local councillor tweeted that conversion therapy is "abuse" and that Mr McCausland "must resign". Others urged the Education Authority to remove him "with immediate effect".

Mr McCausland said those complaining "must have misread or misunderstood" the article.

Mr Cook himself said he has "never had conversion therapy", and told The Christian Institute there is often confusion around his conversion



◀ Former DUP minister Nelson McCausland

"from atheism to Christianity".

He explained he still experiences same-sex attraction, but has chosen to remain single and celibate.

"I left the gay life behind because I am a follower of Christ. Homosexual activity is incompatible with the

teachings on this in the Bible."

In an exclusive interview Mr McCausland told the Institute he 'is not intimidated' by those seeking to use controversy over 'conversion therapy' to restrict gospel freedom.

## How to give to the work of the CI

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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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## Paralympic legend: 'Ditch blanket DNR orders'

Paralympic legend and disability campaigner Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson has spoken out against people with disabilities being given blanket Do Not Resuscitate orders (DNRs) without their knowledge.

Lady Grey-Thompson told the BBC that the 'blanket' orders should not be happening, and said talks need to take place between the NHS and disability groups.

The eleven-time GB & NI gold-medallist said: "There shouldn't be a blanket Do Not Resuscitate purely because of somebody's level of impairment." She added: "It's

got to be on a more one-to-one level than that."

In recent months disability charities have revealed that people with learning disabilities were issued with DNR forms during the pandemic because of their conditions.



▶ Baroness Grey-Thompson

# CQC: NHS kids' gender clinic is 'inadequate'

NHS England's gender identity clinic for children has been graded 'Inadequate' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) – the lowest possible rating.

An inspection of the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust's Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) identified "significant concerns". It found that the safety of its services required improvement and that staff were poorly led.

In December 2020, detransitioner Keira Bell, 23, won her case against GIDS after she was given hormone blockers and cross-sex hormones as a teenager.

The High Court agreed it was "highly unlikely" children aged 13 and under could ever genuinely consent to hormone blockers, and "very doubtful" 14 and 15-year-olds could do so.

The CQC report coincided with the disclosure of expert medical testimony from the case. One expert had said giving the drugs was tantamount to conducting "a live experiment" on vulnerable children.

Dr David Bell, a former staff governor at Tavistock, said children had been "very seriously damaged" by being affirmed in their gender confusion.



# Law Commission drops plans to criminalise private conversations

Recommendations to criminalise private conversations in the home in England and Wales have been withdrawn by the Law Commission.

In response to its public consultation "serious concerns" were raised over the proposal to prosecute people for so-called hate speech in private dwellings.

There is currently a 'dwelling defence' in law which protects conversations in the home from police intervention. Prior to the climbdown, the Law Commission, which advises the Government, had recommended its removal.

Chairman Lord Justice Green said the Commission is now looking at "alternative ways" of reforming the law to ensure that any changes are "compatible with both the right to freedom of expression and respect for one's home and private and family life".

In Scotland, Holyrood voted not to include the dwelling defence in its new hate crime legislation.



But after originally posing a major threat to free speech, several improvements have been made. There are stronger protections for religious debate and a section criminalising those in possession of 'inflammatory materials' has been removed. Critics noted that such vague wording could have included the Bible.

Importantly, the Bill should also still protect people who uphold the biological understanding of sex, or a traditional understanding of marriage, from facing criminal investigation.

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# Govt announces plan for tighter abuse of trust law



The Government has announced it will extend abuse of trust legislation for England and Wales to cover sports coaches and church leaders.

Currently the law forbids adults in certain positions of authority, such as teachers and social workers, from engaging in sexual conduct with 16 and 17-year-olds in their care. But it does not apply to sports coaches and religious leaders – a gap the Institute has campaigned against for more than 20 years.

In early March, the Ministry of Justice announced this would be resolved with a measure

within the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

CI Deputy Director Ciarán Kelly welcomed the news, saying dealing with the “glaring omissions” was “long overdue”.

“We’ve been saying for more than twenty years that the abuse of trust offence is far too narrow.

“The Bill can still be improved and encompass driving instructors and music tutors for example. We want to ensure that no loopholes remain. This is a chance to finally put things right. We don’t want to be back here again in another 20 years.”

# Abortion the main cause of death in 2020

Abortion accounted for the most deaths worldwide in 2020 – around 55 per cent of all deaths.

The number exceeds fatalities from coronavirus, cancer and heart disease combined.

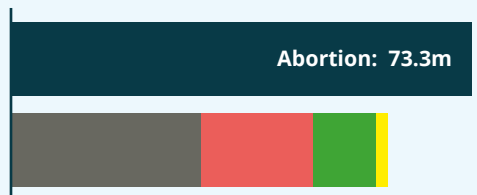
According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), around 73.3 million abortions take place every year. Estimated



deaths from all other causes totalled almost 60m globally last year.

In the UK, abortions became even easier to obtain. DIY home abortions were introduced in Great Britain and a liberal abortion regime imposed on N Ireland.

## CAUSES OF DEATH IN 2020 (WORLDWIDE)



- Cardiovascular diseases: ~18m
- Cancers: ~10m | ■ Covid-19: 1.8m
- Other: ~30m

SOURCES: [the.ci/deaths2020](https://the.ci/deaths2020)

# Same-sex marriage disciplinary hearing a “sham”, tribunal hears

A multimillion-pound charitable trust has been accused of conducting a “sham” disciplinary hearing before dismissing its CEO over his beliefs on marriage.

Kenneth Ferguson is suing the Glasgow-based Robertson Trust. He was sacked when chairwoman Shonaig Macpherson objected to Stirling Free Church renting premises owned by the Trust.

Mr Ferguson is an elder of the church but declared his interests in advance and recused himself from all negotiations.

But Macpherson was reported to be “incandescent” when she learned of the church’s £6,500 agreement to use the



Trust’s conference space in Stirling for its Sunday services, because it does not believe in same-sex marriage.

The Trust’s former Head of Social Investment Katie Campbell told the tribunal that Macpherson was “clearly very angry”

and that her “voice was audibly shaking” after making the discovery.

Mr Ferguson’s lawyer Thomas Cordrey pointed out that prior to the disciplinary hearing, Macpherson told a trustee Mr Ferguson’s action “equals gross misconduct leading to dismissal”.

Cordrey said: “It was all a sham, wasn’t it? You were just ticking boxes to get you to the position you needed to be in to get rid of Mr Ferguson.”

Kenneth Ferguson is being supported by The Christian Institute. The hearing will resume on 10 May.



## Hear from the CI



If you would like your church to hear more about our work [online](#) or [in person](#)\* contact: [england@christian.org.uk](mailto:england@christian.org.uk)

\*Subject to Covid restrictions

## BBC pulls ‘100 genders’ video for children after new complaints

The BBC has removed a resource for children aged nine to twelve which told them there are over 100 ‘gender identities’.

After new complaints, the corporation pulled ‘Understanding Sexual and Gender Identities’ from its BBC Teach website. It claimed that gender is “who you are inside”, but that sex is whether you are born a boy or a girl.

In the video, a teacher said: “So we know we’ve got male and female, but there are over 100, if not more, gender identities now.”



The Christian Institute’s John Denning said the BBC should not have used its teaching materials “to peddle controversial, evidence-free theories as if they were objective facts”.



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