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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).

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.

We are also deeply concerned at the prospect of teaching on Christianity being further watered down in Welsh schools.

The views of a vanishingly small Humanist minority could be given equal weight with the Christian beliefs that have shaped Wales.

But there is good news. The Law Commission has decided to think again on criminalising 'hate speech' in the home. 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 – especially in these difficult times. Thank you too for standing with us.

Welsh Govt pushes ahead with compulsory atheism lessons

Religious Education is set to be scrapped under a Bill championed by Education Minister Kirsty Williams.

The Curriculum and Assessment Bill replaces RE with a new compulsory subject called Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE). It passed its final stage in the Senedd in early March, and will now become law.

Under the Bill, disproportionate time could be spent studying Humanism or atheism. Parents will have no right of withdrawal. But a plan for an 'atheist veto' over any religious teaching in schools has been dropped.



It also repeals key safeguards on the teaching of sex education. Children risk being exposed to materials that are inappropriate for their age and religious background, and may no longer be taught about the nature and

importance of marriage.

The Institute's Wales Officer, Gareth Edwards, said: "The Welsh Government ignored two public consultations which clearly opposed these changes. In the last census only 815 people said they were humanists in the

whole of Wales. Why are they to be handed such influence over the content of religious teaching in schools?"

Former Director of Education for Ceredigion, Gareth Jones, told the Institute that Humanism doesn't "sit comfortably" with teaching RE. "It wants to undermine the whole principle behind teaching religion."

Watch the interview



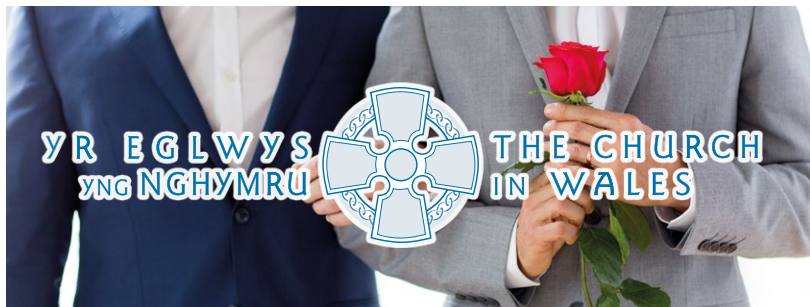
Gareth Jones on RVE
the.ci/garethjones

Church in Wales 'reinterprets Bible' with same-sex marriage blessings

The Church in Wales is taking steps to introduce same-sex marriage blessings to its services, after Bishops proposed radical changes to the Book of Common Prayer.

Presenting the change to its Governing Body, the Bench of Bishops said: "We believe that same-sex relationships can be understood in a radically different way, and that the teaching of Scripture should therefore be re-interrogated."

If approved, same-sex couples who are already legally married or in a civil partnership will be able to receive a blessing from a



willing Church in Wales minister.

The Bench said its decision came after considering "new social, scientific and psychological understandings of sexuality in the last one and a half centuries".

It added that it would affirm "loving and faithful" same-sex partnerships as

"worthy of acceptance by the Church by asking God's blessing upon their commitment".

Responding to the announcement, the Institute's Ciarán Kelly said the Bishops had got their decision-making "the wrong way round".

"It is for the Bible to tell us how to

understand human relationships, not for us to reinterpret the Bible according to the fleeting thinking of the day".

The proposals are open to amendment until the next meeting of the Governing Body in September. If passed, same-sex blessings could begin the following month.

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 Beckett Cook, an American who lived a homosexual lifestyle until he came to faith in Christ.

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



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".

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

In England, Tory MP Alicia Kearns has called for any prayer inconsistent with LGBT theology to be included in a proposed 'conversion therapy' ban.

And recently in Victoria, Australia, pastoral advice and prayer which upholds the Bible's teaching on sexual ethics was criminalised after being branded 'conversion therapy'.

Government 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. It was always obvious to us that leaving out sports coaches, religious leaders and the like would put vulnerable young people at risk.

“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.”

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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.



Welsh Govt wants permanent 'DIY' abortion scheme

The Welsh Government intends to make its temporary DIY abortion scheme permanent.

The law allowing abortions to take place in private homes without medical supervision was introduced during the first weeks of the coronavirus outbreak without parliamentary scrutiny.

It allows both pills for an early abortion to be taken at home in the first ten weeks of pregnancy. Pills are posted after a telephone or video consultation. Women do not need to attend a hospital or clinic in person.

When introducing the change, the Government claimed it would be a temporary measure because of the coronavirus pandemic. Now ministers want to make the change permanent.

A public consultation on the issue closed on 23 February.

In May last year it was revealed that there had been at least nine cases of women taking the pills after the ten-week limit in the UK. One baby died after its mother took abortion pills while 28 weeks pregnant – four weeks beyond the 24-week legal limit for most UK abortions.



Ofcom chief: 'inappropriate to give platform to gender critics'

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.

The quango head likened allowing gender ideology critics to participate in a programme on transgenderism to giving a platform to "people saying that racism is OK".

In the course of her contribution, Dame Melanie said repeatedly that Ofcom had been taking advice from pro-trans lobby group Stonewall on how to bring 'balance' to debates on transgenderism.

"I've spoken to the chief executive myself – and make sure that we give the right information to our broadcasters



Ofcom's Chief Executive Dame Melanie Dawes

so that they can steer their way through these debates without causing offence, and without bringing inappropriate voices to the table on questions like this."

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".

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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, the hate crime Bill currently being considered by Holyrood leaves out the dwelling defence. An amendment to include one was



recently voted down.

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.

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.

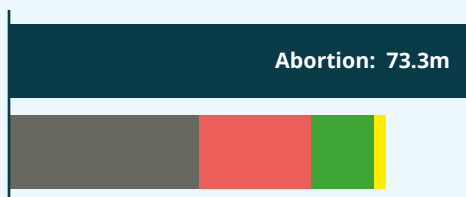
According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), around 73.3 million abortions take place every year. Estimated



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

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



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wales@christian.org.uk

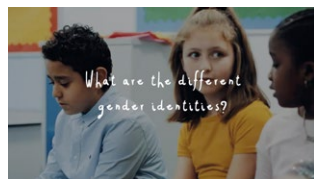
**Subject to Covid restrictions*

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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