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The impact of Christian influence

On 1 August The Christian Institute marks 25 years as a charity. Over that time we have sought to remain faithful to our purpose of being a Christian influence in a secular world.

In this newsletter you will be able to read of the many significant successes we have seen in recent months.

We have seen overwhelmingly positive coverage of the Ashers Baking Co. case and rapid growth in support for our action against

the Named Person scheme in Scotland.

The defeat of extended hours for Sunday Trading in England and Wales and the Government's acceptance of our call for a consultation on its approach to extremism were made possible by the engagement of Christians.

Thank you for your support as we seek to continue to equip you to be a Christian influence in a secular world.

Ashers: 'Our hope in Christ sustains us'



➤ Daniel McArthur speaks outside the Court of Appeal, Belfast, with wife Amy

Judges are considering Ashers Baking Company's appeal against a ruling which said it broke the law by declining to decorate a cake with a pro-gay marriage campaign slogan.

After a dramatic adjournment to legal proceedings in February, the case went before the Court of Appeal in Belfast in May. The delay arose

from a last-minute intervention by the Attorney General for Northern Ireland, John Larkin QC. He questioned if it was constitutionally lawful for Ashers' owners to be forced to express

a political message at odds with their religious beliefs.

The appeal by the McArthur family, owners of Ashers Baking Company, seeks to overturn a 2015 decision by the County

Court, which found the bakery had broken political, religious and sexual orientation discrimination laws when it declined the order for the cake.

Outside court, Daniel McArthur spoke of how his family had been sustained by their hope in God. He said "Jesus Christ has lived a perfect life, He died an atoning death, and He rose from the dead so that we can be reconciled and have peace with God. And it's this hope that sustains us, it is this that gives us joy and it will sustain us whether today we win or we lose this case."

A Christian Institute petition in support of the McArthur family has over 20,000 signatures.



SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

christian.org.uk/supportashers

Govt concedes need to consult over plans to ban 'extremists'

Christians will be consulted on UK Government plans aiming to crack down on extremists in England and Wales, following pressure from The Christian Institute and other free speech advocates.

The proposals for Extremism Disruption Orders (EDOs) have been widely criticised for their potential to undermine freedom of speech.

The Defend Free Speech campaign, which is supported by The Christian Institute, wrote to the Home Office in January calling for a consultation. In May, the Government announced that the new "civil order regime to restrict extremist activity" would be introduced "following consultation".



Plans to consult on EDOs were revealed with the Queen's Speech in May

Defend Free Speech welcomed the move, but cautioned that the continued lack of a clear definition of 'extremism' "risks outlawing any political expression that does not reflect mainstream or popular views".

Speaking for the campaign, the Institute's Deputy Director for Public

Affairs Simon Calvert said the Government had an "unfocused" approach to extremism. He warned: "Unless we can make them see sense, the range of people who could find themselves labelled 'extremist' by their own government is about to get a whole lot wider."

The Government says EDOs are aimed

at "harmful activities of extremist individuals who spread hate but do not break laws". They can be triggered by individuals who break the tenets of the Equality Act and could carry stringent penalties, including being banned from broadcasting and working with children.

The Institute, the Police and street preachers

Some of the less well-known work of the Institute is the advice and training we are asked to provide.

Deputy Director for Public Affairs Simon Calvert spoke to England's National Police Chiefs' Council in March at their conference on the policing of protests. He highlighted why it is so important for the law to protect free speech, using real-



life examples of how laws can be wrongly used against Christians.

In April, in-house Solicitor Advocate Sam Webster provided training for preachers from Open-Air Mission and United Beach Missions. Sam was able to share some of the positive developments in the law over the past few years, including those brought about by campaigns in which The Christian Institute has played a leading role.

"I sought to give the preachers confidence about their rights and protections under the law and to provide some practical guidance on avoiding unnecessary conflict and complaints." **Sam Webster**



The Institute's Sam Webster

25 years of Christian influence

“The need is for robust Christians to think Christianly in all areas of life.”

With this simple statement began the work of what would become The Christian Institute.

For 25 years the Institute has been driven to bring glory to God by focusing on this need. As Christians we are called to be salt and light for Jesus Christ in society. Often we may feel ill-equipped to fulfil such a role. When we see how secular values have taken an increasing hold on our nation we might ask ‘what can I do?’

From the beginning the Institute has sought to help Christians stand for biblical truth – to live out a worldview consistent with biblical principles in every area of life. This is still our deep desire today.

In print and online, in churches and in Parliament, we shall continue in this work for as long as the need remains and God provides.

Christian groups unite to oppose Ofsted church youth work checks



🔗 Churches in England that provide instruction to at least one under 19-year-old for more than 6 hours in any week would be required to register and could be inspected by Ofsted for ‘British values’

UK Government plans for schools regulator Ofsted to inspect church youth work in England have come in for severe criticism over recent months.

The Christian Institute and other Christian groups attacked the Government’s plans as an “unacceptable overreach of the state”. In a joint statement CARE, Christian Concern, the Evangelical Alliance, the Lawyers’ Christian Fellowship and the Institute warned that the plans are “an unwarranted incursion into private religion and family life”.

The scheme would mean any institution in England which provides instruction to under 19-year-olds for more than 6 hours in any week would have to register with their local authority. It could then be inspected by Ofsted for compliance with the vague ‘British values’ test. The Government has not yet published any of the findings of its consultation – nearly six months after it closed.

Back in January, MPs from the across the political spectrum came together in a debate to urge the Government to drop its proposals, calling them ‘unlawful’, ‘unworkable’ and ‘hopelessly broad’.

They spoke out again in May after proposals were formally put forward as part of the Queen’s Speech.

Sir Gerald Howarth (Con) said it was “clearly absurd” to regulate groups such as Sunday schools. Gavin Robinson (DUP) said the “sweeping, authoritarian measures” would be far “too wide and far too shallow”, when tackling extremism required “a measure that is deep and narrowly focused”.



🔗 Colin Hart, Institute Director for 25 years

Blanket ban on 'legal highs'



On 26 May a law banning 'legal highs' came into force. The Psychoactive Substance Act outlaws any substance "capable of producing a psychoactive effect in a person who consumes it". Alcohol and caffeine are excluded. Those involved in supply or production of the drugs face a prison sentence of up to seven years.

End to blood safeguard in NI



Northern Ireland's lifetime ban on blood donations from any man who has had sex with another man will be lifted on 1 September.

The safeguard exists because of medical advice showing that this group has a higher risk of sexually acquired blood-borne viruses like HIV. A one-year ban, the system in place in the rest of the UK, will replace it.

BBC highlights the work of The Christian Institute

The Christian Institute and some of its legal cases featured in a BBC documentary in March.

'The Battle for Christianity' interviewed Deputy Director Simon Calvert at some length on the Institute's work.

The cases of Ashers Baking Company and B&B

owners Peter and Hazelmary Bull featured on the programme, with an Institute interview with Daniel and Amy McArthur particularly prominent.

Mr Calvert noted that there has been an "unhealthy scepticism" of Christians, resulting in their marginalisation. But, he said, Christians

should continue to follow Christ.

"The way forward is not for the church to simply imitate the society around us, the way forward is for the church to be the church - to follow Christ, to follow the teachings of the Bible."

Simon Calvert



▶ Institute staff Ciarán Kelly, Simon Calvert and Jane Leung appeared on the BBC documentary 'The Battle for Christianity'

Stormont faces new campaigns for abortion and same-sex marriage

Stormont politicians have tabled a series of Private Members' Bills (PMBs) pushing for abortion and homosexual marriage.

Alliance and Sinn Féin MLAs want abortion to be made legal when an unborn child has been diagnosed with a severely life-threatening condition. In February, MLAs voted by 59 to 40 against such a change to the law in the Province.

The same parties, along with the SDLP, have also tabled PMBs calling for the introduction of same-sex marriage. The

redefinition of marriage has previously failed to pass the Assembly despite five attempts in under four years.

If a petition of concern is tabled, a majority of MLAs from both sides of the community is required before a Bill can be passed.



Named person opposition mounts as Scottish Govt digs in its heels

NO2NP

34,058 people have signed the petition so far

SIGN PETITION
NO2NP.ORG

The No To Named Persons (NO2NP) campaign, backed by The Christian Institute, has gone from strength to strength in recent months.

Over 34,000 people in Scotland have now signed a petition against the scheme, and concerned parents ensured it became a crucial issue on the doorstep during the 2016 Holyrood elections.

However, the mounting opposition has been belittled by Deputy First Minister John Swinney, who told the Scottish Parliament it was 'shameful' for people

to raise concerns about information sharing and privacy. He vowed to press ahead with the scheme.

Concerns have also begun to gather momentum in the rest of the UK. Introducing the issue on BBC Question Time, David Dimbleby was unable to hide his bewilderment as he described the scheme as "stranger and stranger".

His comments came as it emerged that the Scottish Government had endorsed the idea that children should see themselves as 'plants' and their named person as

'Head Gardener' – with parents merely 'Gardeners'.

A legal challenge to the scheme is being spearheaded by The Christian Institute. The Supreme Court heard the case in March and is expected to issue

its ruling before the legislation is fully rolled out in August.

If implemented under current wording, every child in Scotland will be assigned a state guardian to monitor their 'wellbeing'.



◀ "Stranger and stranger": David Dimbleby's reaction when the Named Person scheme was explained on BBC Question Time

Govt investigation into sharia law commences

A Government review into the application of sharia law in England and Wales has begun. Persistent concerns have been raised that women are suffering because of sharia law, with Baroness Caroline Cox – a Patron of The Christian Institute – speaking out repeatedly on the issue. The review is expected to conclude in 2017.

Welsh parents face smacking ban

Loving parents would be banned from giving their own children an occasional smack under plans put forward by Wales' First Minister.

Carwyn Jones has pledged to legislate to remove the defence of 'reasonable chastisement' as one of his priorities in the new Assembly term.

This would represent massive state interference in family life and could easily criminalise loving mums and dads.

The Welsh Assembly has debated the issue of parental smacking a number of times in recent years.

The change is supported by Labour and Plaid Cymru. But a poll released in 2014 showed that 7 in 10 people in Wales opposed a ban on parents smacking their children.



◀ First Minister Carwyn Jones

Victory! Extended Sunday Trading defeated

In a major win for opponents of extended Sunday Trading, MPs voted 317 to 286 in March to drop the UK Government's controversial plans.

The vote saw off the Government's second attempt in just a few months to pass proposals that could have seen Sunday Trading hours lengthened throughout England and Wales.

MPs from across the political spectrum spoke out against the plans contained in the Enterprise Bill, in a debate that emphasised the importance of family life.



David Burrowes (Con), who led opposition to the move, highlighted that "Sunday is still special for many people". He also criticised the Government's treatment of its consultation, which

received over 7,000 responses. Despite opposition from trade unions, religious bodies, small businesses and individuals, it pushed ahead with the plans, claiming support from the majority of local authorities and large

and medium-sized businesses.

Labour MP Jonathan Reynolds noted: "Sunday is when my family and I attend church, and the opportunity to do so should not be denied to people who have to work Sundays".

On what he called "a day to remember", Institute Director Colin Hart said it was a "wonderful and encouraging victory for the millions of people who would have had their family life further undermined had this blinkered legislation gone through".

Your legacy will help Christians to be salt and light

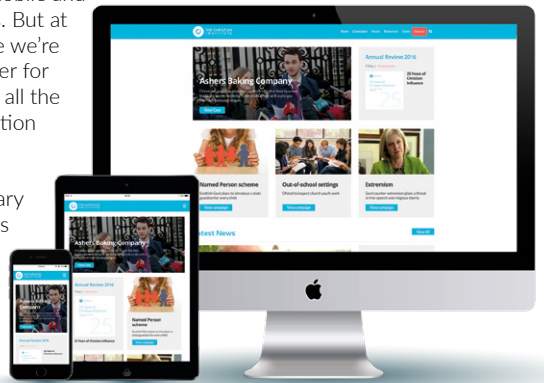
None of our work would be possible without the generosity of our supporters. Leaving a gift in your will to The Christian Institute would enable us to continue working to preserve Christian freedoms for future generations.

☎ 0191 281 5664
✉ legacy@christian.org.uk
📍 christian.org.uk/support

A new look for the website

We live in a world of rapidly changing technology. We're making some changes to our website ensuring it continues to lead the way as a trusted resource for Christians on complex and controversial issues.

You'll notice some visual differences as we bring it into line with best practice for mobile and tablet devices. But at the same time we're making it easier for you to access all the latest information on our work, including our extensive library of publications and audio/video features.



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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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