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So much to give thanks for

The United Kingdom is going through some choppy waters at the present time. We give thanks that God is always in control.

We are grateful for the good news of recent weeks. The Scottish Government has finally backed down on the most intrusive aspects of its controversial Named Person scheme.

In addition, Christian pharmacists will not be forced to go against their conscience in their daily work following our legal intervention.

Nevertheless, it is apparent that Christian beliefs on marriage, the family, sexuality, gender and abortion are all under attack.

The Government's plans for the registration and inspection of church youth groups, and the proposed 'Equality Oath', remain a major cause for concern. Christians must continue to stand for God's truth and reject any attempts to equate our beliefs with 'extremism'.

With your help, The Christian Institute will continue to do so.

Watered-down Named Person Bill launched by Scottish Govt

A watered-down version of the Named Person legislation has been released in a huge victory for our long-running campaign against the intrusive state guardian scheme.

Key aspects of the original scheme were struck down last year when the UK Supreme Court ruled in favour of The Christian Institute and others in the case against the Scottish Government.

Judges declared ministers' plans unlawful and also ruled that the new proposals must make clear that any advice offered by a named person is entirely optional.

The new Bill now repeals key parts of that original legislation and accepts the need for named persons to comply with existing human rights, data protection and confidentiality laws.



➤ John Swinney MSP announced the new legislation

The No to Named Persons (NO2NP) campaign said the new legislation is a "100 per cent climbdown on the SNP's original plan of a statutory duty to share information about people's private lives almost without restriction".

"The new proposals confirm one of the most remarkable, ignominious and expensive

U-turns in the history of the Scottish Government and a huge victory for mums, dads and children across the country and those who were prepared to spend time and money fighting the scheme through the courts".

MSPs will now debate the Children and Young People (Information Sharing) (Scotland) Bill in the coming months.

UK Supreme Court to hear arguments on Ashers case



The Ashers Baking Company case is to go before judges at the UK Supreme Court in the coming months. The UK's highest court has listed a hearing to consider a possible appeal by the Belfast-based bakers, over their refusal to bake a cake bearing the campaign slogan 'Support Gay Marriage'.

The Christian Institute continues to support the

company. We understand the Supreme Court will hear initial arguments from which they will then determine if they are to grant a full appeal hearing.

Daniel McArthur, General Manager of Ashers, has welcomed the decision. He said it showed the importance of the issues and the high-profile nature of the case.

Christian printer wins US appeal



A Christian printer who declined to make shirts for a US gay pride event has won his case on appeal.

Blaine Adamson of Hands On Originals was sued after turning down the order because it promoted a message that conflicted with his "sincerely held religious belief".

Scottish denominations back same-sex unions despite opposition

The biblical definition of marriage has been dropped by the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC) and the Church of Scotland has taken steps to allow its ministers to perform same-sex weddings.

The SEC now states that 'marriages' will take place in its churches merely "in accordance with the civil law of Scotland".

Speaking against the move ahead of the June announcement Revd David McCarthy, part of the Scottish Anglican Network, said the decision would have "serious consequences for the Church".

Just two weeks before the SEC change, the Church of Scotland's General Assembly

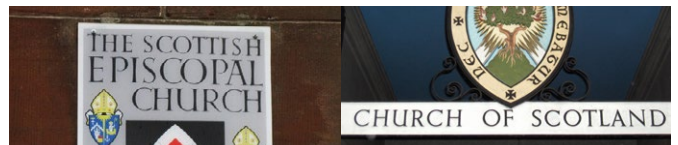
backed a report encouraging same-sex weddings.

The report, from its own Theological Forum, acknowledged that the Bible condemns same-sex acts, but claimed Scripture was framed by cultural context.

Revd Dale London, a Church of Scotland minister in Angus, said that homosexual acts were against the Word of God. He added: "We cannot call good what God has called evil."

However, Revd Prof Iain Torrance, Convener of the Theological Forum, said everyone in the Assembly was on "a spectrum of interpretation" and suggested that there was no theological reason not to allow ministers to conduct same-sex weddings.

The Kirk will now conduct legal research to determine how same-sex weddings in churches can be allowed. Marriage was redefined in Scottish law in 2014.



Government needs to “come clean” over Equality Oath

The Government is pressing forward with its plans for an Equality Oath according to news reports, prompting The Christian Institute to speak out on the issue once again.

Cabinet minister Sajid Javid had previously expressed support for an oath which would demand that doctors, teachers and other public office holders swear allegiance to a state-sanctioned view of ‘British values’.

In April, The Sun newspaper reported that the minister’s officials had been holding meetings with interested parties.

In response, Director of The Christian Institute Colin Hart said: “The Government needs to come clean. From what we are hearing the Government’s idea seems to be to get everyone to swear an allegiance to the Equalities Act.”

A Government spokesman declined to comment.

The idea of an Equality Oath was suggested by former integration tsar Dame Louise Casey. She has also called opposition to same-sex marriage ‘un-British and homophobic’.



◉ Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP

EDITORIAL

GE2017: Christians must continue to pray



By Colin Hart, Director

June’s General Election resulted in Theresa May forming a minority Government with support from the Democratic Unionist Party.

There has been much talk of the uncertainty that arises from what was, for many Westminster-watchers, an unexpected result. The Brexit process is expected to be long and arduous and the need to combat Islamist terror is a political priority.

At the present time, Christians need to be particularly watchful of plans to register and inspect church youth work and to force public office holders to swear an Equality Oath. They pose great danger to religious liberty and free speech.

We have seen in recent weeks only too clearly how holding biblical beliefs on marriage and abortion is sufficient grounds to be denounced as an ‘extremist’!

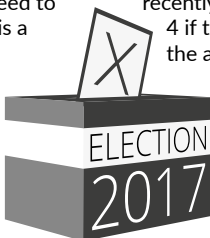
Please take every opportunity to make your MP aware of the pressing

need to ensure that our Christian freedom is protected. They may even be wholly unaware of these draconian proposals. Remind them that Christian citizens are good citizens and not the source of violent extremism, which the Government rightly wants to tackle.

Max Hill QC, the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, was recently asked by BBC Radio 4 if the authorities have all the anti-terror powers they need. His answer was unequivocal – yes they do.

But despite the current turmoil, Christians can remain confident that God is in control. He has not been taken unawares. It is also vital that political uncertainties do not distract us or deter us from doing what we are able to do to make a Christian difference in our nation.

Above all we must pray for “all those in authority” so that we may continue to be allowed the freedom to live godly lives and have liberty to share the Gospel.



Ofsted chief vows to ramp up 'British values' drive



The new head of Ofsted, Amanda Spielman, has promised to continue the Government's controversial 'British values' drive. The move is expected to encourage Ofsted inspectors to put pressure on or even fail schools based on their own subjective opinions.

Since its introduction in 2014, Ofsted inspectors have caused widespread problems for religious liberty in England. Teachers and pupils have faced aggressive questions over their beliefs on same-sex marriage and transsexualism.

Most women want lower abortion limit, poll finds

An overwhelming majority of women – 70 per cent – want the abortion limit lowered, a poll has found.

The poll was commissioned by the 'Where do they stand?' group, which encourages people to find out politicians' views on issues including abortion, assisted suicide and embryo research.

Almost 80 per cent of people



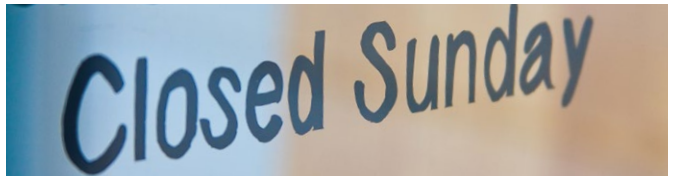
16-week-old baby kicking in the womb

support a five-day 'consideration period' before an abortion, as is the case in the Netherlands. Nearly nine in ten people believe sex-selective abortions should be

explicitly illegal.

In Great Britain, abortions generally can take place up to 24 weeks, or up to birth if it is thought that the child has a disability.

All-day Sunday trading plan rejected in Belfast



A proposed expansion of Sunday trading has been rejected by Belfast City Council, following campaigners' concerns that family life would suffer.

The proposal to designate Belfast as a 'holiday resort' and allow all-day opening on 18 days a year was voted down by twelve votes to three.

Small trader group Retail NI welcomed the vote, and added that it "puts down an important marker to the other ten Local Councils not to consider relaxing Sunday trading through the backdoor".

Nearly 2,500 individuals and

organisations responded to the consultation beforehand. Shop workers' union Usdaw attacked the plans saying its members were concerned about the effect all-day shopping would have on families.

A survey by the union found almost two-thirds of respondents said they have "already come under pressure to work on Sundays".

John Hannett, General Secretary of Usdaw, warned that the "number one reason" for shop workers' opposition is "the detrimental effect this would have on their family life".

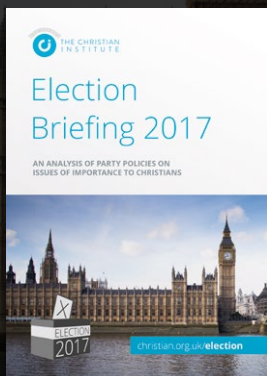
EQUIPPING CHRISTIANS: ELECTION BRIEFING 2017

42,170

Sent to supporters

22,191

Downloaded online



Ligonier Ministries' Reformation series

Dr Michael Reeves' 12-part video series on the English Reformation and the Puritans proved to be very popular with Institute supporters.

The series is available until December 2018 at: christian.org.uk/reformation



NHS psychiatrist: 'I've seen cannabis ruin lives, don't legalise it'

An NHS psychiatrist and newspaper columnist has warned against the legalisation of cannabis and insisted that the drug "wrecks lives". Dr Max Pemberton said that he had seen many people become psychotic using cannabis. His comments came after police were criticised for not enforcing the law on drugs possession at a pro-cannabis rally.



Scottish hate crime legislation: consultation now imminent

Scottish hate crime legislation is currently being reviewed and a public consultation could take place as early as July.

Lord Bracadale is leading the investigation, which will also consider the recent anti-sectarian and religious hatred law. Ahead of its introduction in 2012, the law was criticised for endangering religious liberty and free speech.

The review will also consider LGBT hate crimes, which have been highly contentious in recent years. Hate crime laws were used in 2009 in England to prosecute Christian hoteliers



Lord Bracadale

Ben and Sharon Vogelenzang after they engaged in a debate about Islam.

The couple, who were supported by The Christian Institute, were later found innocent.

Scottish Govt backs explicit LGBT teaching in schools

A controversial campaign calling for pro-LGBT education throughout Scottish schools has received official backing at Holyrood.

The Scottish Government has pledged to support the Time for Inclusive Education (TIE) campaign, which advocates compulsory teaching on sexuality, transsexualism and gender identity, as well as pro-LGBT sexual health education.

The Scottish Government's Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, Shirley-Anne Somerville, offered 'whole-hearted' Government support for TIE's aims during a debate at Holyrood.

Sixty-eight MSPs have signed a pledge supporting TIE, meaning any legislation put forward is likely to be passed.

But Revd David Robertson, founder of the Solas Centre for Public Christianity, has described the TIE campaign as



'Whole-hearted' support: Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP



a "Trojan horse to impose an ideological perspective on all pupils". He believes the campaign

is an attempt to "indoctrinate school pupils with one particular perspective on moral and sexual ethics and one which is contrary to mainstream Christianity".

Conscience win for Christian pharmacists



Official guidance has kept conscience provisions for pharmacists

Christian pharmacists will remain free to do their jobs in line with their consciences after intervention from The Christian Institute and Christian professionals.

Draft guidance from the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) could have forced Christians in Scotland, England and Wales to provide access to abortifacient drugs or hormone-blockers for changing sex.

In a marked shift in tone it now states: "Pharmacy professionals have the right to practise in line with their religion,

personal values or beliefs". This means they will retain the right to refer people to another pharmacist, provided care is not compromised. The changes were made after the Institute threatened the GPhC with legal action and hundreds of Christian professionals raised objections.

Our response to a public consultation on the proposed guidelines highlighted that freedom of conscience is protected by law, and therefore the GPhC has a responsibility to reasonably accommodate different beliefs.

Your legacy would 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.



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'Smacking ban would criminalise parents and waste resources'

A proposal to ban parents from smacking their children in Scotland has faced a slew of criticism, with warnings that such a ban would criminalise good parents and waste police time.

The criticism was in response to a Private Members' Bill by Scottish Green MSP John Finnie which would remove the legal protection allowing parents to smack their children.

Finnie acknowledges that parents will be criminalised, but claims it will not be in "significant numbers".

He is consulting the public on his proposals until 4 August.

In Scotland reasonable chastisement such as smacking is currently lawful. It is illegal to discipline by shaking, to use any implement, or direct any smack at the head.

The Scottish Government

has said it has "no plans to introduce legislation in the area" but does not support "physical punishment of children" and will consider Finnie's Bill.

In Wales First Minister Carwyn Jones intends to criminalise parents who smack their children.

The Christian Institute-backed 'Be Reasonable' campaign is urging Wales' residents to oppose such a move.



John Finnie MSP

