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Many challenges for prayer

Earlier this year, we asked our supporters to join us in a Week of Prayer. We were humbled by the response to that initiative and hope to run them more often. There is much for us to be praying about.

The full implications of the Supreme Court's ruling blocking the Named Person scheme still don't seem to have filtered through to many in public life. Deputy First Minister John Swinney continues to cling vainly to the policy despite

repeated disasters. And local authorities have been caught breaching parents' rights on data sharing.

Parental freedom is also on the line over the proposal to criminalise smacking.

Whatever your view, it is for parents to decide how to discipline their children, not the State. A ban would affect people we all know, including in our churches.

Please continue to pray for God's mercy on the nation.



Scottish Govt backtracks over trans guidance 'endorsement'

The Scottish Government has backtracked on its endorsement of shocking trans guidance for schools after The Christian Institute warned of possible legal action.

The guidance advises schools not to tell parents if their daughters would have to share a room overnight with a boy who identifies as a girl. It also tells staff and pupils to use a transgender pupil's preferred pronoun, regardless of their



personal views, or risk being regarded as 'transphobic bullies'.

The Scottish Government denied it ever 'formally endorsed' the error-strewn guidance - seven months after it was first published. This was despite the

document being funded by the Scottish Government and bearing its logo in a prominent position.

At Westminster, Theresa May has launched a consultation on removing safeguards to legally 'changing sex' in England and

Wales. Currently, it is necessary to have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria by two doctors, and to have lived as if a member of the opposite sex for two years.

The Scottish Government's own consultation closed in March. It clearly backed 'self-declaration' - where a man can legally change sex simply by declaring he is a woman, and vice versa.

In the UK fewer than 5,000 people have legally changed sex.

Local authorities caught out overriding parental consent

Local authorities in Scotland have been caught out instructing teachers who act as named persons to routinely ignore the wishes of parents and children.

In 2016 we won our Supreme Court case against the Scottish Government over its Named Person scheme. We successfully argued that its requirements on recording and sharing personal information about children and their parents breached human rights.

Our court victory means that the statutory, compulsory

scheme is dead in the water. A weakened scheme, planned by Education Secretary John Swinney, was recently dubbed “the ultimate zombie policy” as it continues to be beset by delays and legal problems.

But in late July a video tutorial came to light which tells teachers acting as *non-statutory* named persons how to use personal information collected on pupils. It says they must confirm consent has been given before sharing any details.

However, the audio guidance then says that



they should override consent “by default”, adding: “otherwise you’ll have to show you obtained parent and child consent”.

This is illegal and, after being exposed in the press, the video

was taken down from YouTube.

The tutorial was on how to use a database produced by the SEEMiS Group, which is owned and managed by Scotland’s 32 local authorities.

Supreme Court rejects attempt to ditch NI abortion protections

The Supreme Court has dismissed an attempt to overturn Northern Ireland’s pro-life protections.

Judges ruled against an appeal brought

by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC). The court said the NIHRC had no standing to bring its legal challenge.

Some judges took the view that the legal protections for the unborn in cases of rape, incest and severely life-limiting conditions are incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. However, they also acknowledged the court had no basis for making a ruling.

In response, pro-life group Both Lives Matter said: “It is not a moment to celebrate,

but rather to pause and be thankful for the lives this judgment will save.”

Currently in Northern Ireland abortion is legal only to preserve the life of the mother.

As recently as 2016, MLAs in Stormont backed the existing protections. However, pressure has been mounting at Westminster to impose more liberal laws on Northern Ireland.



👁 Baby at around 16 weeks of pregnancy

Parents' rights need protecting



By Ciarán Kelly,
Deputy Director
(Staff and Communications)

The State has the power to use force. It provides defence for the nation, and law and order. In a democracy the State uses force only sparingly, respecting the autonomy of individuals and of key institutions – including the family.

Overriding parental responsibility should be a last resort, such as when a parent is abusing a child.

Attempts to sideline parents come in many forms. The plans to ban

parental smacking in Wales and Scotland are obvious examples.

In England there are fears that a register of parents who homeschool their children could lead to a licensing scheme where State approval is required. But parents are responsible for the education of their children, not the State. Even where schooling is delivered by the State, it is on behalf of parents.

Infamously, the Scottish Government



endorsed an analogy of the named person as the 'Head Gardener', with parents just being gardeners. How glad we are that the Supreme Court backed our case requiring named persons to have only an advisory role.

Recently, we had to warn the Scottish Government of possible legal action again – this time for funding grossly

misleading guidance for schools on transsexualism.

The guidance makes numerous basic legal errors. These include seeking to prevent parents knowing vital information about their children.

The rights of parents throughout the UK are at stake. With your help, we will keep working to safeguard them.

Would you like us to visit your church?



We visit over 300 churches a year – including over 80 in Scotland – to talk about the work of The Christian Institute.

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

Thank you for praying

We are always grateful for your prayers for the staff and work of The Christian Institute. The commitment of our supporters to pray was particularly evident during our Week of Prayer. It is the first time we have done this but now hope to hold them twice a year.

Many of you have contacted us to say how helpful it has been to have concise, insightful items to pray for, whether alone, in families or in your churches. Thank you for joining with us



to uphold the nation and the Institute in prayer.

Don't forget that you can pray with us all year round by using the PrayerMate app 📲



Pray with us using the **PrayerMate** app.



Hate crime proposals threaten free speech

A review into 'hate crime' in Scotland has made recommendations to the Scottish Government which could severely threaten free speech.

The report by Lord Bracadale QC recommends expanding the law against 'stirring up hatred' on the grounds of race to cover other grounds, including religion, sexual orientation and transgender identity.

The Offensive Behaviour at Football Act made 'stirring up religious hatred' a crime in 2012. But pressure from The Christian Institute ensured a robust free speech clause was inserted to defend religious liberty. The Act was repealed in April.

'Stirring up hatred' is a broad term. Only one person need say they are 'offended' by something to trigger an investigation.

The Christian Institute responded to the report saying: "Disagreement does not mean hatred. The freedom to speak biblical truth on issues such as marriage and transsexualism would be at risk if these recommendations become law".



Lord Bracadale QC

Jews challenge Ofsted over threats to religious values

Girls at a Jewish school in London have complained after repeatedly being questioned about sex by inspectors, leaving them feeling extremely uncomfortable.

One young woman at the school said the process felt "like an attack", while a parent said their daughters "came home severely shaken".

In June, some 7,000 Orthodox Jews met in London



to challenge the 'British values' ideology used by English school inspectorate Ofsted to justify such questioning.

Rabbis, parents and teachers joined together in prayer

about the issue. Community leader Levi Schapiro said it was a "sad reality that in modern Britain we need to lobby Government to protect our traditional religious values".

Home Secretary rejects calls to legalise casual cannabis



Cannabis will not be legalised for recreational use, the UK Government says.

Former leader of the Conservatives William Hague and others are pushing to weaken current laws. But Home Secretary Sajid Javid pointed out that cannabis

"can harm people's mental and physical health, and damage communities".

Javid said changing the law on medicinal use of cannabis was "in no way a first step to the legalisation of cannabis for recreational use".

Institute Director

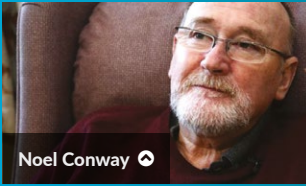
Colin Hart explained in the media that properly tested cannabis-based medicines are already available. This is a very different issue to recreational use of the Class B drug, but campaigners are trying to confuse the two things.

Latest attempt to legalise assisted suicide rejected

Assisted suicide will remain illegal in England and Wales following a ruling from the Court of Appeal in London.

Judges said the existing law achieves a fair balance between the interests of the wider community and the interests of people like Noel Conway, who brought the case.

The ruling upheld an earlier judgment that the current law is compatible with human rights legislation.



'Dead' boy wakes up as docs prepare to take organs

A US boy astounded doctors when he woke up just before his life support was to be turned off and his organs harvested.

Teenager Trenton McKinley had suffered seven skull fractures after an accident but is now home and walking with assistance. Speaking of his near-death experience, Trenton attributed his recovery to God.



Heterosexual civil partnerships supported by Supreme Court



The Supreme Court has given its support to 'marriage lite' by backing the case of a couple seeking to change the law on heterosexual civil partnerships.

Judges ruled in favour of the case brought by Rebecca Steinfeld and Charles Keidan, who argued that not allowing for heterosexual civil partnerships was incompatible with human rights law.

The Institute's Deputy

Director for Staff and Communications, Ciarán Kelly, called the ruling "another attack on marriage".

"The couple who brought this case objected to what they called the 'sexist trappings' of marriage. But that is to fundamentally misrepresent what marriage is about."

The Scottish Government said it will "carefully consider any implications of this judgment".

UK Government to crack down on addictive betting machines

The Government at Westminster is finally to take action against the "social blight" of fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs).

The Christian Institute, MPs, religious leaders and local councils have long called for decisive action on the highly addictive gambling machines.

In May the Government announced that FOBT stakes, which can be as high as £100 every 20

seconds, will be capped at £2.

However, media reports indicate that the change will not come into effect until 2020

following a Treasury 'deal'.

The delay has prompted criticism from local authorities and parliamentarians.



Judgment awaited in Ashers case

The Supreme Court heard the case of Ashers Baking Company in a two-day hearing in May. The Christian Institute continues to support the McArthur family. Ashers is being

sued by the taxpayer-funded Equality Commission for Northern Ireland because the McArthurs declined to make a cake with a pro-gay marriage campaign slogan.

Lawyers for the family reminded judges that the issue was the message on the cake, not the customer who ordered it. They also argued that if Christians have to ditch their faith

while at work they cannot be said to have any real freedom of religion.

Ahead of the hearing, Daniel McArthur – Ashers General Manager – spoke of how hard the four-year process has been for the family, but added that their Christian faith was sustaining them.

A result is not expected before the autumn. Supporters who have asked to receive our email updates will be among the first to receive news on the case.



▶ Daniel and Amy McArthur outside court

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.



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MSP: 'Smacking ban would infringe parental freedom'

Criminalising smacking in Scotland would remove parental rights and hand them to the state, an MSP has warned.

Gordon Lindhurst, who is also a lawyer, dismantled the Scottish Government's arguments for a ban in an article for Scottish Legal News.

He noted the longstanding principle "that parents, rather than the state, should have primary responsibility for their children and that intervention by the courts in family matters should be a last resort".

Mr Lindhurst's comments were welcomed by the Be Reasonable campaign, which opposes a smacking ban.



▶ Gordon Lindhurst MSP

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