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Defending Christian belief

It has been a very busy few months. The Institute has been heavily involved in laws and legal cases affecting marriage, abortion, education, gender ideology and religious liberty.

We have been helping a number of churches, organisations and individuals as they seek to live out the Christian faith in the public square. It is vital that we make use of the great freedoms we already have. And protect them when they are threatened.

We give thanks that an attempt to introduce abortion on demand in England and Wales failed. But other laws undermining God's good design for humanity were passed. No-fault divorce in England and Wales. The UK's most liberal abortion regime imposed on Northern Ireland. Worrying plans that risk criminalising disagreement as 'hate speech' are also underway in Scotland.

Thank you for your support as we work in such depth across this wide range of issues.

High Court: 'Ofsted wrong to demand fostering agency ditch evangelical ethos'

On 7 July, the High Court found that Ofsted was wrong to try to force an evangelical Christian fostering agency to work with non-evangelical carers.

Supported by The Christian Institute, Cornerstone took legal action against Ofsted over an inspection report that labelled its Christian ethos 'discriminatory' for only recruiting evangelical Christian carers. Ofsted is now required to amend that report.

The ruling removes a significant threat to the freedom of Christian organisations to provide activities in line with their statement of faith.

The judge, Mr Justice Julian Knowles, said Ofsted's claims were "wrong as a matter of law" and "erroneous".

But he also ruled that Cornerstone could not require its carers to abide by its



Christian beliefs on appropriate sexual conduct. He said the exception in the Equality Act 2010 permitting religious organisations to impose restrictions on grounds of sexual orientation does not apply to Cornerstone.

Crucially, this hinged on his view that Cornerstone recruits

its carers on behalf of, and under contract with, local authorities. Cornerstone's lawyers maintain that this part of the ruling – which contradicts a decision by the Charity Commission in 2011 – is incorrect.

The Institute continues to support Cornerstone as its lawyers consider an appeal.

Parents celebrate as controversial sex education policy is dropped

Parents in Warwickshire were celebrating after their County Council dropped an explicit and error-strewn sex education policy following a legal threat from The Christian Institute.

The 'All About Me' materials contained explicit images as part of a policy which also failed to apply equality, human rights and education law correctly. The Institute warned that it put schools at risk of breaching their legal obligations.

At the end of March, Council lawyers contacted the Institute to announce it had dropped the programme "with immediate effect". A month later it withdrew



the controversial 'Trans Toolkit for Schools'. This guidance promoted transgenderism and advised schools to allow transgender pupils to use the toilets, changing rooms and dormitories of their choice.

One mother complained that any girl expressing discomfort

about getting changed in front of a boy was "presented as transphobic and told to go and change somewhere else".

In the weeks that followed, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Kent, Barnsley, Doncaster and other councils dropped similar materials.

The Crown Prosecution Service also pulled its own guidance that wrongly claimed schools could face legal action if they did not allow boys to use girls' changing rooms. The decision came only after a 14-year-old girl threatened a judicial review of the guidance.

No apology from Belfast hotel over Christian minister's marriage event



A Belfast hotel is yet to offer any apology or refund to a Christian minister, ten months after its staff ordered him to halt a public meeting in support of traditional marriage.

Revd Harry Coulter had booked the Balmoral Hotel for his 'Marriage Matters' event in October last year. But the meeting, attended by more than 50

members of the public, was interrupted by hotel staff who told Revd Coulter to finish immediately.

The Christian Institute is helping him take legal action for unlawful discrimination and breach of contract. Solicitors acting for Revd Coulter are seeking an apology and a refund of his booking fees and legal costs.

Pro-abortion MPs fail in attempt to introduce abortion on demand

An attempt by MPs to introduce abortion on demand in England and Wales by hijacking the Government's Domestic Abuse Bill has failed.

The Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir Lindsay Hoyle, did not select Labour MP Diana Johnson's amendment to repeal Sections 58 and 59 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861. Another Johnson amendment to liberalise abortion law was withdrawn after opposition from MPs.

However, the Government also announced that abortion measures introduced because



of the coronavirus pandemic could become permanent.

Under emergency rules introduced in March, a woman can now take abortion pills at home for any reason up to ten weeks, following an online or phone consultation with a

doctor. At the time, the Government said the measure would last up to two years or until the pandemic was over, whichever came first. But Minister for Women Victoria Atkins MP has now said the Government will hold a consultation on the issue and consider

allowing the changes to remain.

In May it was revealed that there were at least nine cases of women taking the pills after the ten-week limit. One baby died after its mother took abortion pills while 28 weeks pregnant.

CI meetings near you



Development Officers
James McIntosh and
Josh Coghill

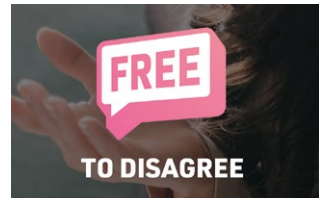
If you would like your church to hear more about the work of The Christian Institute please email us at: development@christian.org.uk

New campaign opposes Scots Hate Crime Bill's threat to free speech

The Christian Institute is backing a new free speech campaign in Scotland.

Free to Disagree challenges a new hate crime Bill that sets out to expand the law on 'hate crime' covering religion, sexual orientation and transgender identity. If it passes, words or behaviour perceived to be "abusive" and "likely" to stir up hatred would constitute a criminal offence.

There would be no need to show that stirring up hatred had been intended. The free speech clauses covering sexual orientation and religion are limited and there isn't one at all for transgender identity.



The Christian Institute's Deputy Director for Communications Ciarán Kelly called it "a deeply alarming proposal; more in keeping with a police state than a liberal democracy".

The campaign is also backed by the National Secular Society, former SNP Deputy Leader Jim Sillars and others.

Opt-out organ donation now in force

Adults in England are now automatically registered as organ donors unless they explicitly opt out, under a system that began in May.

Previously, people were required to record their desire to donate their organs after they died.

Ethics professor David Albert Jones warned that the new system undermines the concept of donation and could lead to a drop in transplant rates.



Tories scupper PM's Sunday trading plan

Over 50 Conservative MPs were reported to oppose Boris Johnson's plan to extend Sunday trading. He was told that lifting current restrictions would not boost the economy.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, MPs said: "Sunday represents an important common day of rest, where families and communities can spend time together."



CI backs Christian groups challenging meeting bans

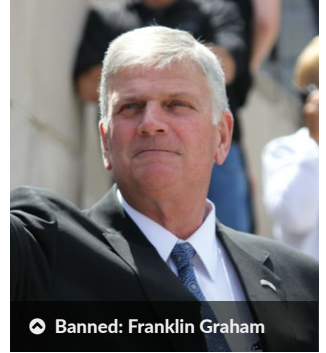
The Christian Institute has expressed its support for an Edinburgh church's legal action against the City Council for unlawful discrimination.

Destiny Church had invited US preacher Larry Stockstill to speak at a three-day conference in June. But prior to lockdown, the Council cancelled the event, claiming the preacher's views breached its diversity policy. Stockstill had said that homosexual behaviour is "not accepted by God".

The church is challenging the Council's decision in the courts.

The ban came just days after the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) had been banned from public venues around the UK on similar grounds.

Ciarán Kelly, the Institute's Deputy Director for Communications, said: "This is a



clear case of unlawful religious discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. It is a clear denial of free speech under the European Convention on Human Rights.

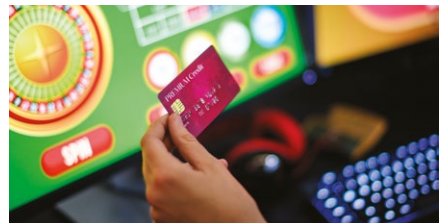
"If Destiny Church or the BGEA can be banned from hiring public venues today, the same could be true for other Christian groups tomorrow. We do not want that to happen."

Lockdown's online gambling surge prompts stricter regulation calls

The gambling industry has been told it must do more to protect gambling addicts, following a surge of online betting during the lockdown.

With most sporting events cancelled, gambling through virtual sports and online poker rose by 40 and 38 per cent respectively in March.

In response, the All Party



Parliamentary Group on Gambling Related Harm has called for a "complete overhaul of regulation" for online betting firms. It said the Government "must set out plans to ban

gambling advertising across all forms" and "ban cynical VIP inducements".

A ban on betting using credit cards came into force in Great Britain on 14 April.



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Universities watchdog defends free speech

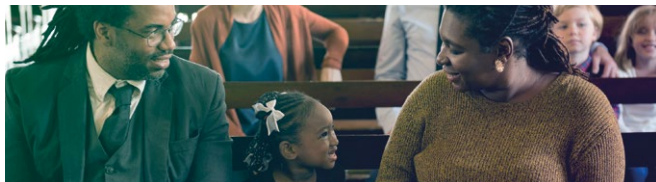
The Office for Students said that universities must uphold free speech after a professor was 'no-platformed' at Oxford University.

Selina Todd was banned from speaking at an event because of her views on gender recognition law.

The watchdog warned that it could intervene if universities do not adopt a broad enough definition of free speech.

COMMENT

Public worship is not just a 'nice-to-have'



**By Ciarán Kelly,
Deputy Director
(Staff and Communications)**

Throughout the coronavirus outbreak, the clear aim of the central and devolved governments has been to save lives. This is a great thing. God's common grace is at work.

Their position on the value of churches has been more mixed.

In Northern Ireland the Executive got their priorities right. The decision to let churches open before much of the leisure sector – albeit by just a few days – recognised that public worship has a significance far beyond the economic.

In England, indoor public worship only returned on 4 July – the same time as pubs

reopened. Churches in Wales followed on 13 July. Scotland delayed until 15 July – and then only after an outcry.

Before its U-turn, the Scottish Government had refused to allow church services to take place before 23 July at the very earliest. It then unjustly set a limit of 50 people in a place of worship "regardless of its size or capacity".

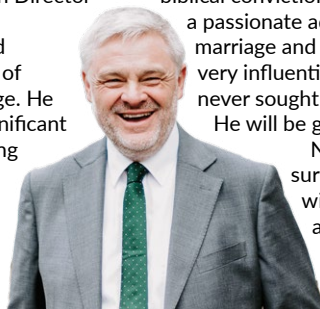
In our worship services we come humbly before God and celebrate our relationship with him. We are not just individuals but a community of believers, praising and worshipping God together.

That's why we've worked so hard to stop churches being pushed to the back of the reopening queue.

A tribute to Norman Wells

In April we heard the sad news that longstanding family campaigner Norman Wells died after contracting COVID-19.

Norman had been Director of Family Education Trust since 2004 and served as a Director of Coalition for Marriage. He authored several significant publications, including 'Too Much, Too Soon' and 'Waking Up to the Morning-After Pill'.



The Institute's Director, Colin Hart, said: "I knew Norman for over 20 years as a campaigner for the family, with clear biblical convictions. He was

a passionate advocate for marriage and the family, and very influential, though he never sought the limelight.

He will be greatly missed."

Norman is survived by his wife Nicola and their nine children.

UK Government may be set to scrap gender recognition plans

The Government could be set to scrap plans to make it easier to change legal sex.

It will respond to its 2018 consultation on changing the Gender Recognition Act this summer. But according to The Sunday Times, proposals to allow people to 'change sex' without a medical diagnosis will be shelved. However, a ban on 'conversion therapy' is being considered.

The news came less than two months after the Minister for Women and Equalities, Liz Truss, indicated that irreversible sex-change treatments for under-18s would be banned.



Elsewhere, a woman who claims to be 'non-gendered' failed in her attempt to force the Government to issue gender-neutral passports. And, in a separate court case, a woman who says she is male lost her

battle to be named 'father' on her child's birth certificate.

The Institute's Ciarán Kelly welcomed the rulings, saying: "Allowing someone to falsify a legal document would be a significant misstep".

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MPs approve no-fault divorce

Parliament has passed a law introducing no-fault divorce in England and Wales.

When it comes into effect, a person will be able to end years of marriage in just six months, without having to give a reason. This will drastically speed up around 40,000 divorces a year that are on the basis of two or five years' separation.

The Institute and its supporters



challenged the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill throughout its consideration by Parliament. But sadly, this hugely damaging legislation was passed in June by a large majority.

Even modest

amendments designed to improve the Bill were rejected.

Fiona Bruce, who put forward one such amendment, said: "This Bill is a bad Bill. It sends out the wrong message at the wrong time."

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