



## INSIDE

- ▶ Conversion therapy campaign demands LGBT blasphemy law
- ▶ Peers vote down twelfth bid to legalise assisted suicide
- ▶ 'No-fault' divorce comes into effect in England and Wales

## Standing for Christ

At the Institute, we continue to defend Christian truth from the double-whammy of the Online Safety Bill and a broad 'conversion therapy' ban. Censorship by 'Big Tech', and attempts by the LGBT lobby to criminalise Christian morality, put mainstream biblical teaching at risk – online, in churches, and even in the home.

We are also challenging the appalling 'choose your own sex' plans being railroaded through by the Scottish Government and

proposed changes to 'hate crime' legislation in Northern Ireland.

However, we thank God that in recent weeks two more attempts to legalise assisted suicide have failed. That is more than a dozen since 1997.

Sadly, we can expect those campaigners to try again. Some of the most vulnerable people in society remain at risk.

In all these areas, and more, it is vital that Christians stand for God's truth through prayer and action.

# Free speech jeopardised by Online Safety Bill censorship

Alarm is growing at the inadequate free speech protections in the Government's Online Safety Bill.

The Christian Institute has been warning that YouTube videos of sermons and expressing mainstream Christian views on Facebook and Twitter could be caught. MPs, Peers, journalists and legal experts also fear unbridled censorship by 'Big Tech'.

In a briefing to MPs in April, the Institute highlighted the Bill's lack of clarity as to what legal content will be considered 'harmful'.

It also warned that because tech companies



could receive massive fines if they fail to uphold their new duties, they are likely to censor far more than the law demands.

Parliamentarians across the political spectrum raised their concerns following the Bill's inclusion in May's Queen's Speech.

SNP MP Joanna

Cherry QC said the Government should not be "handing over the policing of speech to private companies

such as Twitter, whose records show that they cannot be trusted".

Lib Dem Jamie Stone noted that defining 'legal but harmful' only in secondary legislation meant it would receive little parliamentary scrutiny.

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath accused the Government of "legitimising the major tech companies to impose their values on us even more".

**WATCH** Online Safety Bill risks censoring Christian teaching:  
[the.ci/OSB-risks](https://the.ci/OSB-risks)



# Conversion therapy campaign demands LGBT blasphemy law

Westminster will press ahead with plans to ban so-called conversion therapy in the autumn after bowing to pressure from disgruntled LGBT activists.

Campaigners are seeking to outlaw prayer, preaching, pastoral care and parenting that seeks to help people live in accordance with the Bible.

A leaked internal memo revealed ministers had recognised that the law already protects people from physical harm. It also admitted that “the evidence base for further legislative measures on conversion therapy is weak”.

This triggered a furious backlash from activists, including journalists at ITV and the BBC. In a swift climbdown the Government agreed to continue with legislation covering sexual orientation, but not ‘gender identity’.



The Christian Institute's Let Us Pray campaign warned the Government that continuing to pander to the pro-ban lobby risked introducing an ‘LGBT blasphemy’ law.

In June, Equalities Minister Mike Freer said he hoped a Bill would be brought forward in “September or October”.

The proposal, which featured in the Queen's Speech, covers England and Wales, but other jurisdictions are considering introducing their own legislation.

The Scottish Government is pushing for an even more extreme law based on legislation in Australia. In the State of Victoria, prayer and pastoral conversations which do not affirm a person's chosen gender identity or sexuality are already a criminal offence.

Work is also under way for a ban in Northern Ireland.

The Christian Institute has threatened to take legal action if any of the proposals outlaw ‘the wrong kind of prayer’.

## Kirk gives same-sex weddings green light

The Church of Scotland has approved same-sex weddings in its churches after a majority of presbyteries voted in favour at May's

General Assembly.

Only twelve of the 41 presbyteries voted not to ditch the words “husband and wife” from the

Kirk's Recognition of Marriage Services Act. One presbytery stated: “what is being proposed is contrary to scriptural teaching”.

Ministers and deacons who do not wish to participate will be protected by a conscience clause in the legislation, meaning they will not be forced to conduct or be involved in the arrangements for same-sex weddings.

The Institute's Scotland Officer, Nigel Kenny, called it “a very

sad development” that the majority of presbyteries were “more interested in taking their cue from culture rather than Christ”.

Institute Trustee Revd Dr William Philip said the vote reflected the Church of Scotland's long-running decline as it shifts away from Scripture.

But he added that, in contrast, the growth of Bible-believing churches in Scotland painted a ‘very encouraging picture’.



## Finland: Bible quoting 'not hate speech'

Helsinki District Court has found no justification for the censoring of a Christian MP's right to free speech.

Dr Päivi Räsänen had been charged with 'hate crimes' for expressing her biblically based views on sexual ethics.

Following the court victory, Dr Räsänen said she hoped the ruling would prevent others from being silenced for sharing the Bible's teaching on homosexuality.



## Go-ahead for Down's abortion law challenge

Last year, the High Court rejected Heidi Crowter (below) and Máire Lea-Wilson's legal challenge to a law allowing babies with disabilities such as Down's syndrome to be aborted up to birth, saying it was a matter for Parliament.

But in March, the Court of Appeal agreed to hear the case. It is scheduled for 13 July.



## 'No-fault' divorce comes into effect in England and Wales

Westminster's new quickie divorce law came into effect in April and has been described as a "huge mistake".

Under the new law, couples can divorce in six months without having to give a reason and a spouse cannot contest the decision.

The Chairman of Coalition for Marriage, Colin Hart, accused the Government of ignoring all the data in its eagerness to speed up divorce.

"No-fault divorce will put up the divorce rate, minimise opportunities for couples in difficulty to reconcile and is wholly unjust towards the wronged spouse."

Veteran journalist Amanda Platell, herself a divorcee, said: "However much this law tries to redefine the dissolution of a marriage as 'quick' and 'no fault', the undeniable truth remains that divorce hurts. It hurts everyone involved."



## 'DIY' home abortions are now available throughout Britain

Women and girls believed to be less than ten weeks pregnant can continue to have unsupervised 'DIY' chemical abortions in Britain following just a phone or video consultation with a doctor.

In March, MPs at Westminster voted to make permanent the 'emergency' measures introduced in England during Covid. It came just weeks after the Government promised they would

end in August.

The Welsh Government had already announced that home abortions would be permitted indefinitely.

The Scottish Government followed suit in May, confirming that its 'temporary' measures allowing women under twelve weeks pregnant to take abortion pills

at home would also become ongoing standard practice.

The National Network of Designated Health Care Professionals, which represents medical professionals involved in children's safeguarding in England, recorded 47 cases of home abortions beyond the ten-week limit since March 2020.





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## CI: 'NI hate crime proposals risk sanctuary of the home'



The Institute has warned that Stormont's proposed changes to 'hate crime' legislation could profoundly affect religious liberty and free speech.

The plans include the removal of the legal 'dwelling defence'. Without it, police could investigate dinner table conversations in homes across the Province.

The worrying proposal reflects a recommendation from Judge Desmond Marrinan, after he was commissioned by the Executive to review hate crime legislation.

The second part of the

consultation, due for release later this year, is expected to include extra recommendations which set out new offences.

The Institute's Simon Calvert said: "The Marrinan report gave no specific cases of the dwelling defence getting in the way of a justifiable prosecution. This is offering a solution to a problem that does not exist.

"The home should be a sanctuary for discussions and debate without fear of police intervention. You can't have the police arbitrating on what can be talked about around the dinner table."

## Welsh Govt-funded survey asks 13-year-olds about sex habits

Children as young as 13 are being quizzed about their sexual experiences in a survey funded by the Welsh Government.

The Student Health and Wellbeing Survey is aimed at pupils aged 13-18, though schools are not required to circulate it.

The survey asks them

what age they were when they first had sexual intercourse, with answers beginning at "11-years-old or younger". Further questions include whether they used a condom, and

if they had ever sent a sexually explicit image of themselves.

The Institute's Gareth Edwards called the survey "intrusive and highly inappropriate".



# Peers vote down twelfth bid to legalise assisted suicide

Peers have rejected the latest attempt to legalise assisted suicide in England and Wales.

Lord Forsyth's amendment to the Health and Care Bill sought to allow terminally ill adults to get help from doctors to kill themselves. It was defeated in the House of Lords by 179 votes to 145.

CI supporters were among those contacting Peers ahead of the vote to express grave concerns.

It is the twelfth time since 1997 that proposals for assisted suicide-



related laws have not been passed by UK parliamentarians.

After the March vote, Baroness Campbell of Surbiton expressed her delight that the new assisted suicide push had failed, saying disabled people

"want support to live, not support to die".

Welcoming the result, the Institute said the vote had averted "a real threat to the lives of vulnerable people".

There was more good news at the end of April when Baroness

Meacher's assisted suicide Bill for England and Wales ran out of parliamentary time. However, in Scotland concerns remain with Holyrood politicians set to consider Liam McArthur's Bill early next year.

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## Westminster Govt rejects calls for Welsh-style smacking ban

Parents who give their child a mild smack now risk arrest and a criminal record in Wales.

The draconian smacking ban was introduced in March despite widespread public opposition. The new law means that a parent giving their child a light tap to teach them not to run into the road or touch a hot surface is now committing a criminal offence.

In England, Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi dismissed calls for a similar ban to be considered there.

His decision to "trust parents" on "being able to discipline their children" was supported by pro-parent



group Be Reasonable. The campaign, backed by The Christian Institute, called on Westminster to resist activists' calls to criminalise decent mums and dads.

A financial assessment of the Welsh scheme estimates it could cost almost £8 million to implement and run over a five-year period.

# Scottish Government blasted for 'choose your own sex' plan

The Scottish Government has been slammed for tabling legislation which would allow Scots as young as 16 to change their legal sex merely by self-declaration.

If passed, the Bill would reduce the waiting time for those wanting a 'sex swap' to just six months and ditch the requirement for two doctors to diagnose gender dysphoria.

The Christian Institute's Ciarán Kelly said the 'choose your own sex' plan "distorts God's design".

"It expands the legal fiction that it is possible for a man to become a woman or vice versa."



Frontline Feminists Scotland added: "You can't claim that you support single-sex spaces when men self-identifying as women are casually allowed to wander into women's changing rooms and when rapists are housed

alongside women prisoners and you do nothing about it".

Yet those with concerns were dismissed in an article cited by the Scottish Government that likened them to racial segregationists.

Professor Suzanne Eckes' work compared objections over having men in women's toilets to racists' complaints against white and black students sharing restrooms in 1950s America.

Co-leader of the Scottish Greens Lorna Slater also claimed that those who uphold the reality of biological sex should not be able to air their views, likening them to racists and anti-Semites.

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## PM defends biological sex

Senior MPs have clashed over what constitutes a woman, amid widespread concern over transgender ideology.

The Prime Minister defended the reality of biological sex saying "the basic facts of biology remain overwhelmingly important".

Boris Johnson later said teenagers should not be deemed able to consent to drugs with irreversible effects and that parents should be able to input into decision-making.

In contrast, Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer claimed his view that "trans women are women" was backed up by equality law. His remarks prompted SNP MP

Joanna Cherry QC to write that it was "simply unacceptable for a senior lawyer such as Keir Starmer to so misstate the law on women's rights".

Tory backbencher Miriam Cates, a former science teacher, said biological sex is "immutable", and cannot be changed by surgery or hormone treatments, while Sir Bernard Jenkin stated: "A woman is an adult female human."

But Shadow Ministers Anneliese Dodds and Yvette Cooper dodged the 'what is a woman' query multiple times in radio interviews.



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