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## Standing firm on Christian values

A change of Government can create uncertainty for many. We give thanks that God is always in control.

LGBT activists continue to try and exploit concerns over 'conversion therapy' to restrict preaching, prayer and pastoral care. Using unrepresentative research to call for a broad ban is another desperate attempt to justify criminalising Christians for teaching their beliefs, or praying for their friends. We remain ready to take legal action against any attempt to bring in such a law.

Others are keen to remove end-of-life protections from some

of the most vulnerable people in society. A proposed new law for euthanasia in the Republic of Ireland would have terrible implications for the Province. We must continue to pray that assisted suicide is not introduced anywhere in the British Isles.

But there is good news. The Court of Appeal has ruled that schools with a Christian ethos cannot be forced to water down Christian teaching. This is encouraging.

Please continue to pray for our political leaders, and urge them to pass laws which restrain evil and promote good.

## CI blasts 'useless' taxpayer-funded NI conversion practices research

An activist-led study documenting the allegations of just ten people was used by Northern Ireland MLAs to demand that the Executive ban "conversion practices in all forms".

The taxpayer-funded study was led by LGBT lobby group The Rainbow Project. Its researchers interviewed people who claimed they were offered or experienced conversion practices in the last decade.

The authors allege that seven participants encountered

conversion practices through "faith groups", and listed "prayer" as one of the "frameworks and techniques involved in conversion practices".

Ahead of the debate in Stormont, the Institute's Acting Director Ciarán Kelly called the study "useless", noting its own admission that it is unrepresentative of the public.

He said: "This is nothing more than the work of activists, branded with the campaign colours of a lobby group yet paid for by Northern Ireland's



hardworking taxpayers."

The Institute has warned the NI Executive it will take legal action if proposals for a new law interfere with the ordinary work of churches.

The motion passed by 41 votes to 25 but does not force the Communities Minister,

Gordon Lyons, to bring in new legislation.

Responding, Mr Lyons said: "While it is important that we have protections against coercive, abusive and unsafe practices, it is vital that rights, such as freedom of speech and freedom of religion, are protected."

# Columnist exposes 'chilling' views of assisted suicide campaigners

Readers of The Times have reacted in disbelief to claims by one of the paper's star columnists that it would be a "good thing" if the elderly and infirm were encouraged to believe their "time is up".

One warned that Matthew Parris's argument would have "untold costs for the most vulnerable in society". Another



that society is already pushing the view "that some people's lives are worth less than others".

The Christian Institute's Acting Director Ciarán Kelly described the column as "truly chilling", but warned that Parris was merely stating what proponents of assisted suicide really think but like to keep hidden.

In June, Republic of Ireland TD, Gino Kenny, tabled proposals to remove end-of-life protections for vulnerable people. Under his Bill, adults who have been resident on the island of Ireland for at least a year, and



are expected to die of a terminal illness within a "specified time-frame", would be eligible for death by lethal drugs.

It also allows those without a terminal diagnosis to request assisted suicide or euthanasia in cases deemed to be of "unbearable suffering that cannot

be alleviated to a level the person finds acceptable".

Legislation to permit assisted suicide is already being considered in Scotland and the Isle of Man. A celebrity-backed campaign to legalise the practice in England and Wales is also underway.

# MLAs call for complete overhaul of gambling law to protect public

A complete overhaul of existing legislation is required to tackle the widespread harm caused by gambling in Northern Ireland, a group of MLAs have said.

A report published in June by Stormont's All Party Group on Reducing Harm Related to Gambling makes 57 recommendations to better protect the public.

The group proposes that online gambling sites wishing to operate in Northern Ireland should be required by law "to have robust age verification checks to protect children".

It also recommended restricting gambling advertising, including a ban on TV adverts between 5.30am and 9pm and called for the creation of an independent regulator tasked with enforcing the law.

Gambling regulation is a devolved issue. The Assembly is part way through reforming The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (NI) Order 1985.



# Colin Hart remembered

On 13 June, a memorial service was held at All Souls, Langham Place to give thanks for the life of The Christian Institute's Founder and Director, Colin Hart, who died suddenly on 13 March 2024.



## Would you like us to visit your church?



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# Naomi Long axes plans for stand-alone hate crime Bill

In May, the Justice Minister announced she is abandoning plans for her stand-alone hate crime Bill, and intends to incorporate aspects of it into wider legislation.

Naomi Long had been expected to publish a Bill based on Judge Desmond Marrinan's recommendations from 2020. These include a call to remove the 'dwelling defence', protecting private conversations in the home from being criminalised.

The Minister says she remains committed to pushing changes through but claimed there is no time to deliver stand-alone legislation before the next Assembly elections, due in 2027.

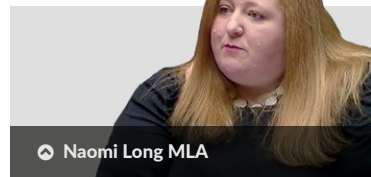
Long wants to prioritise creating 'aggravated offences' – allowing tougher sentences where crimes are deemed to be motivated by hostility towards a protected group – and wants

to 'recognise intersectionality'.

This is despite Scotland's new 'hate crime' law proving to be very unpopular. Nearly half of Scots want it to be ditched, according to recent polling.

Of the 1,080 people questioned by Savanta, 49 per cent said the Hate Crime and Public Order Act should be repealed. Only 36 per cent wanted to keep the law, with 15 per cent undecided.

Police Scotland was flooded with more than 10,000 hate crime allegations when the law came into force. It has already spent almost £500,000 implementing the controversial Act.



# Finnish MP back in court over her Christian beliefs

A Christian MP in Finland will be forced to appear before Finland's Supreme Court over her biblical beliefs.

Dr Päivi Räsänen has already been vindicated twice over allegations of "hate speech" for sharing the Bible's teaching on homosexuality. But the state prosecutor has now appealed two of

the three charges against her for expressing biblical sexual ethics in public.

Dr Räsänen has said she will continue to "defend free speech and freedom of religion before the Supreme Court, and if need be, also before the

European Court of Human Rights".

"This was not just about my opinions, but about everyone's freedom of expression. I hope that with the ruling of the Supreme Court, others would not have to undergo the same ordeal.



# Court of Appeal: 'Christian RE does not breach human rights'

Exclusively-Christian religious education in Northern Irish primary schools is legal, Belfast's Court of Appeal has confirmed.

Currently, RE lessons and daily collective worship such as assemblies must focus on Christianity.

Backed by activist law firm Phoenix Law, the non-religious parents of a child in Belfast claimed this breached their child's human rights.



In July 2022, a High Court judge ruled in their favour, but in April, the Court of Appeal said no such breach had occurred.

It noted the parents had an "unqualified statutory right"

to withdraw their children from both RE lessons and collective worship but had chosen not to exercise this right.

In response, The Christian Institute's Callum Webster said:

"It is so encouraging that common sense has prevailed.

"Those who disagree with the Christian faith do not have a right to force it out of schools with a Christian ethos."

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## Abortions under-reported by thousands since 2020

Northern Ireland has seen over 3,000 more abortions than previously reported since the law was liberalised in 2020.

New data from the Department of Health revealed that 2,168 abortions were performed in 2022/23, while also correcting figures for previous years.

In 2020/21 it originally reported 150 abortions, but now says the true figure is 1,574. The following year it reported 122 abortions. This has also been amended to 1,755 – amounting to 3,057 additional abortions.

Previously, the Department only reported abortions from hospital admissions. But as the majority of abortions since 2020 have involved women taking pills in an outpatient setting, the Department updated its methodology.

In 2019, Westminster voted to force a liberal abortion regime on Northern Ireland which became law the following year. In 2022, the Secretary of State commissioned an expansion of abortion services across the Province.

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