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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.

Westminster ignores Stormont to force through abortion regulations

In June it became clear that the fight to stop the UK's most liberal abortion regime being imposed on Northern Ireland had failed.

Earlier in the month, Stormont rejected the new regulations by 46 votes to 40, but its concerns were dismissed as Westminster politicians forced the changes through.

The Christian Institute's Northern Ireland Officer Callum Webster said MLAs had sent "a clear signal to Westminster" not to impose the far-reaching abortion measures on Northern Ireland and "should not have been ignored".

The changes go far beyond the law in the rest of the UK: no doctor has to be involved and no reason will be given for most abortions.

Abortion is also permitted up to birth if the baby is diagnosed



▶ Conservative Peer Lord Shinkwin and former NI Attorney General John Larkin raised ethical and legal problems with the regulations.

with a 'severe' life-limiting condition or disability, as in the rest of the UK. Conservative Peer, Lord Shinkwin, said it showed disability discrimination was now "officially Government policy".

MPs voted to impose the measures in July 2019. They officially came into effect at the end of March this year but

have not yet been fully put into practice. John Larkin QC, until recently Northern Ireland's Attorney General, has raised a number of legal issues with the regulations.

During the Government's consultation period, 79 per cent of 21,000 respondents opposed legislating abortion in Northern Ireland.

Ashers case shows how hate crime laws could threaten free speech

Strong warnings have been issued over a hate crime review and its implications for free speech.

The Department of Justice commissioned Judge Desmond Marrinan to examine the current law last June, and a public consultation closed in April.

The judge has publicly questioned the need for explicit legal protections for those who disagree with same-sex marriage.

Prominent free speech and human rights lawyer Ivan Hare QC attacked the proposals in a detailed legal opinion for The Christian Institute.

He argued that, especially in the absence of key freedom of expression provisions like those



⦿ Ashers' owners were taken to court for refusing to produce a cake with the campaign slogan "support gay marriage" on, because it conflicted with their deeply-held beliefs.

in England and Wales, there is "a very real risk that robust and uninhibited discussion of matters of great public importance will suffer a chilling effect".

Former MLA Nelson McCausland (pictured right) also warned that the plans had not received adequate public scrutiny.

He highlighted

the Ashers case as an "obvious example" of an 'assault on free speech in our society' and warned that "bad legislation flowing from inadequate consultation would exacerbate the problem".

In July, Justice Minister Naomi Long announced that, due to delays with the



Marrinan Review, any new hate crime legislation was likely to be delayed until at least May 2022.

COVID-19: Trade union warns against using crisis for more Sunday shopping



Trade union Usdaw has demanded "absolute assurance" from Belfast City Council that softening Sunday trading regulations due to coronavirus is not "a backdoor attempt" to extend opening hours in the long term.

The shopworkers' union accepted the Council's decision for a temporary relaxation of the rules but warned against

using the pandemic as an excuse for permanent change.

Councillors had previously rejected proposals to extend Sunday trading hours four times since 2017 – most recently in March.

A survey for Usdaw in January found 92 per cent of its NI members opposed extending Sunday trading hours.

Parents celebrate as sex ed policy 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 advised schools to allow transgender pupils to use the toilets, changing rooms and dormitories of their choice. Several other English councils have since followed suit.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), which operates

across England and Wales, also pulled its own LGBT hate crime guidance for schools following a threat of legal action. The document wrongly claimed schools could be breaking the law if they did not allow boys to use girls' changing rooms.

In Scotland last year, the Government

sidelined misleading transgender guidance for schools after The Christian Institute threatened legal action.

'Supporting Transgender Young People', produced by LGBT Youth Scotland, advised teachers to allow children to use the changing facilities and toilets of their choice.

CI meetings near you



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

BBC admits bias in coverage of MPs' NI abortion vote

The BBC has upheld a complaint that it only showed interviews with people who were pro-abortion when reporting on last year's House of Commons vote to impose abortion on Northern Ireland.

The Corporation claimed it had been unable to source an interview with an alternative viewpoint, but five pro-life charities later confirmed they were not



approached for comment.

The BBC's Executive Complaints Unit ruled that "due impartiality" was not achieved.

Liz Parsons, Director of

Advocacy for the charity Life, said: "As a public broadcaster in receipt of public funds, the BBC has a duty and obligation to be impartial in its reporting."

No-fault divorce for England and Wales

MPs have passed a no-fault divorce law for England and Wales. When it comes into effect a person will be able to divorce their spouse in just six months and without having to give a reason.

The Bill was passed by a large majority, and even modest amendments designed to improve the legislation were rejected.



BBC told to respect traditional marriage

Pro-marriage group Coalition for Marriage has told the BBC it has to do more to reflect the public's diversity of views on same-sex marriage.

It followed a YouGov survey of more than 5,000 Brits that showed 24 per cent of adults think same-sex marriage is wrong and 16 per cent aren't sure.



CI backs Christian groups challenging meeting bans

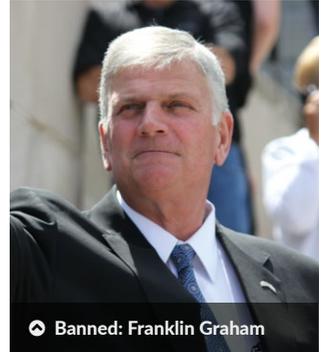
The Christian Institute has expressed its support for an Edinburgh church's legal action against the City Council for unlawful discrimination.

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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The CI Podcast



The Government has imposed a new abortion regime on Northern Ireland that goes far beyond the law in the rest of the UK.

In this CI Podcast we examine the radical change and what it means for the Province.



Listen now:
the.ci/podcasts

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.

Court rules Christian fostering agency can keep evangelical ethos

The High Court for England and Wales has found that a Government watchdog was wrong to demand that an evangelical Christian fostering agency work with non-evangelical carers.

Supported by The Christian Institute, Cornerstone took legal action against regulator Ofsted over an inspection report labelling its Christian ethos 'discriminatory'. Ofsted is now required to amend that report.

The 7 July ruling removes a significant threat to the freedom of Christian organisations to provide activities in line with their statement of faith.



The judge 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 a possible appeal.

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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✉ legacy@christian.org.uk
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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.

Rev'd 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 Rev'd Coulter to finish immediately.

The Christian Institute is helping him take legal action for unlawful discrimination and breach of contract.

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