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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.

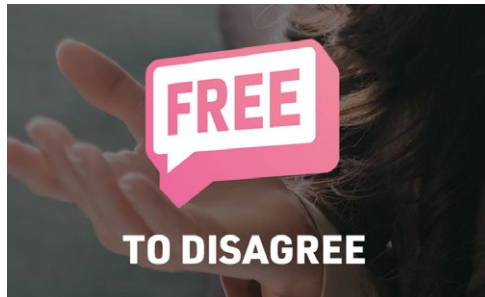
New campaign opposes Hate Crime Bill's free speech threat

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

Free to Disagree has been set up in response to the new Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill.

The Bill 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 said: "Under this Bill people may become criminals simply because they didn't realise how their honestly expressed views might be interpreted. It's 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 Deputy SNP Leader Jim Sillars and others.

In Northern Ireland new hate crime legislation has been delayed until at least May 2022.

Proposals there could see hate crime laws extended in a way that criminalises those who express disagreement on same-sex marriage or transgenderism.

➤ **More information:**
freetodisagree.scot

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 that labelled 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



Cornerstone
because foundations matter.

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.

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



◀ Revd Harry Coulter

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.

Parents celebrate as sex ed policy dropped

Parents in Warwickshire celebrated 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.

In Scotland, Renfrewshire Council apologised after one of its primary schools invited a drag queen to speak to children as young as four.

The Council said it was "sorry for the concern" it had caused, after parents objected.

Last year, the Scottish 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: scotland@christian.org.uk

Parental smacking ban to be enforced despite concerns

The Scottish Government is set to continue with plans to make parental smacking a criminal offence later this year, despite concerns over police time and resources.

A letter to the pro-parent Be Reasonable Scotland group from Children's Minister Maree Todd confirmed that legislation will come into force on 7 November.



Under the smacking ban, parents or carers who use reasonable chastisement with their children will be committing a criminal offence and could face prosecution.

Senior officers at Police Scotland have previously warned that the smacking ban will have a "significant impact" on its finances and require almost all of its officers to be retrained.

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.



Westminster forces abortion regulations on N Ireland



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, the Northern Ireland Assembly voted to reject the new regulations by 46 votes to 40. Its concerns were ignored as Westminster politicians forced the changes through.

The changes go far beyond the law in the rest of 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

with a 'severe' life-limiting condition or disability, as in the rest of the UK.

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.

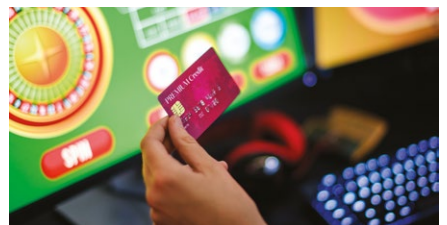
During the Government's consultation period, 79 per cent of 21,000 respondents expressed opposition to legalising abortion in Northern Ireland.

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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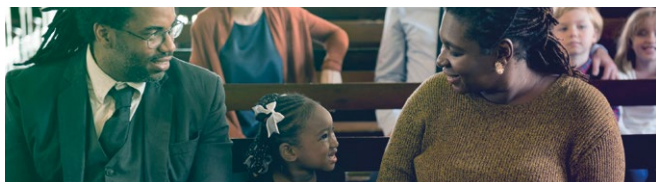
BBC admits bias in abortion coverage

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 in 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.

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".

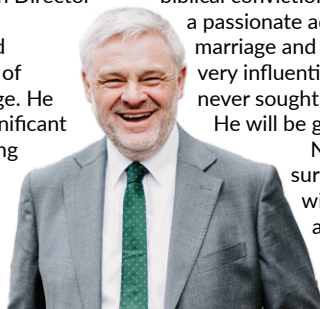
In our worship services we come humbly before God and celebrate our relationship with him. We are not just individuals but a community of believers, praising and worshipping God together.

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.

CI backs Destiny Church challenge against Edinburgh City Council

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 at Usher Hall in June. But prior to lockdown, the Council cancelled the event, claiming the preacher's views breached its diversity policy. Louisiana-based 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. Church leaders and

Christian groups in Scotland called it a "deeply regrettable" decision which was "antithetical to freedom of speech".

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."

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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FM warned over trans plans

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has been urged by members of her own party to abandon plans to make changing legal sex much easier.

Under current proposals people would be able to 'change sex' from as young as 16. The waiting time would also reduce from two years to just six months.

The move has already been put on hold because of the coronavirus outbreak, but former adviser Kevin Pringle said the plan should be delayed until after the 2021 Holyrood elections. The group SNP Women's Pledge says it is being 'threatened with violence' for



opposing the changes.

In England it has been reported that the Government is set to drop its plans to allow people to 'self-declare' as members of the opposite sex. An announcement is expected later in the summer.

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Registered office: The Christian Institute, Wilberforce House, 4 Park Road, Gosforth Business Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8DG
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