

INSIDE

- Ashers case likely to go to Supreme Court
- Institute fights to keep marriages together
- Welsh parents will face fear and confusion if smacking laws change
- Who will look after your children if you die?

Standing for Christ in the public square

The Institute has been handling a wide range of issues in recent weeks. As well as our high-profile legal cases on Ashers Baking Company and Scotland's Named Person scheme, we have also been speaking out on a number of other important issues for Christians.

We have been calling for equality law to make reasonable accommodation for Christian beliefs. We have also challenged

calls to weaken divorce laws and been opposing plans to ban parents in Wales from smacking their children. This is in addition to our stand against compulsory sex education for primary schools in England and proposals for Ofsted to inspect church youth work.

You'll find out more inside, where there is also a special feature on appointing guardians for your children in your will.

Scottish Govt ordered to pay Named Person legal costs

The UK Supreme Court has ordered the Scottish Government to pay The Christian Institute's legal costs, following the successful court action against the controversial Named Person scheme.

The Government could eventually face a bill of up to £500,000 for the case, which was heard first in Scotland's Court of Session and then by the Supreme Court. The cost will be met by the taxpayer.

The award will not cover the almost £150,000 spent on non-legal costs for the wider No to Named Persons



➤ Nicola Sturgeon and John Swinney MSP

Campaign (NO2NP), which is still ongoing.

This fresh blow to the Scottish Government came in November, as the Institute revealed that the matter need never have gone to court.

Before the Named Person legislation had completed its passage through Holyrood, the Institute wrote to the Scottish Government's chief legal adviser warning him that it could be unlawful.

Our Solicitor-Advocate Sam Webster told Frank Mulholland in February 2014 there was "considerable doubt" that the legislation was compatible with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

We urged him to ask the Supreme Court to decide if the law was within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament. Mr Mulholland refused, sparking a protracted legal battle which culminated in the historic victory at the Supreme Court.

Ashers case likely to go to Supreme Court

It now looks likely that, one way or another, the Ashers case will end up at the UK Supreme Court. This could happen either by the McArthur family appealing the decisions against them or through the intervention of Attorney General John Larkin QC.

Mr Larkin has a unique power to refer cases to the Supreme Court if they involve devolution matters. However, the case against Ashers involved several different laws and it is not clear if the Supreme Court judges will look at all aspects of the case.

In November, Northern Irish First Minister Arlene Foster called on the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland – which funded the case against Ashers – to remedy the impression that it is unwilling to help Christians.



COMMENT

Ashers proves reasonable accommodation must be written into equality law

Reasonable accommodation needs to be written into law. This is the inescapable conclusion of the disappointing rulings against Ashers Baking Company.

The case demonstrates that equality law is taking away vital freedoms. Since equality law is causing injustice and restricting freedom of speech, religion and conscience, clearly it should be changed.

In the tiny minority of cases where there is a clash of rights, courts should be obliged to go through a careful process of assessing and balancing the competing rights, to see whether reasonable accommodation can be made for both sides.

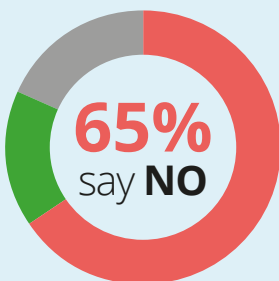
If this is done, cases like those of Ashers, Peter and Hazelmary Bull, and Lillian Ladele might sometimes result in a fairer outcome.

We are not alone in saying this. Influential think tank ResPublica published a report at the end of November arguing that freedom of religion is having to take second place to sexual orientation discrimination laws. It identified this as part of a wider trend towards the "relentless privatisation of religious beliefs".

POLL

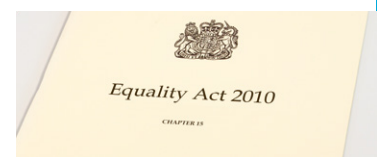


Should a bakery run by Christians which refuses to bake a cake with the words 'support gay marriage' on it be taken to court?



- Yes – 16%
- Don't know – 18%

Source: ComRes interviewed 2,000 GB adults online between the 4th – 6th November 2016. Data were weighted to be nationally representative of all Great British adults aged 18+ by age, gender, region and socio-economic grade.



Who will look after your children if you die?

If you are blessed with children, perhaps the most important consideration when making a will is deciding who would care for them if you die. If you do not nominate a guardian in your will, you may leave other family members in a difficult situation – having to argue in court about who you would have wanted to care for your children. It's important to nominate a guardian in your will while it's still up to you.



TIPS FOR CHOOSING GUARDIANS

Not knowing who to appoint to act as guardians for your children is one of the most common reasons for parents of young children failing to make a will. Here are some tips to help you to decide who to choose.

1. It's up to you! You should prayerfully make the decision that you feel will be best for your family.

2. Make a list of all the people you know and who you would trust to care for your children. This is likely to include family members but you can also consider close friends and others with whom you and your children have a special relationship.

3. It's not all about the money. Don't disregard anyone because you don't think they have adequate financial resources to care for your children. You can make financial provision for your children in your will and certain benefits may also be available to assist the guardians financially. What is most important are the values and philosophies of your intended guardians: do they share your Christian faith and beliefs on social, moral and educational values, and how to raise and discipline children?

4. Consider practicalities. Where do the prospective guardians live? This will affect your children's contact with other family and close friends. Do older candidates have the necessary health and stamina? Do they really want to be parents of a young child at their stage in life? And what about when they and the child are older still? If you are considering someone younger, are they prepared for a lifelong commitment to your children?

5. It's good to talk. If your children are old enough, get their input. You also need to sit down and talk to the prospective guardians to be certain that they are ready, willing and able to take on the responsibility. Talk to your family and any other people close to you too, to let them know who you have appointed to act as guardians for your children.

6. Trust your instincts. Most likely, no one on your list will seem perfect. You need to decide what factors are most important to you.

7. It's not set in stone. Review the terms of your will and your chosen guardians regularly.

8. Keep a note with your will setting out the reasons why you chose your selected guardians. This may help alleviate any concerns that family members may have about how you made up your mind.

i It is always recommended that you instruct a solicitor to make your will as they can advise on the most appropriate wording. This need not be complex or expensive.



For more information please read our new leaflet on guardianship

 **christian.org.uk/
guardianship**

Government has no plans to legalise cannabis



The Government has re-affirmed its opposition to the legalisation of cannabis, after renewed calls for a change in policy. Responding to a report by pro-cannabis groups, a Home Office spokesman said: "There is a substantial body of scientific and medical evidence to show that cannabis is a harmful drug".

Gamblers lose £14 billion in just one year



Gamblers lost £13.6 billion through betting between April 2015 and March 2016, according to the Gambling Commission. This represents a rise of nearly 21 per cent on 2014-15. The group reports that 'remote' gambling – usually via a phone or computer – is now the largest source of revenue for the industry.

Institute fights to keep marriages together

More than a hundred lawyers marched on Parliament on 30 November, calling for the Government to weaken the law on divorce. The group behind the march wants a 'no fault' clause added to the current law in England and Wales.

In response, The Christian Institute warned that liberalising divorce law further would

undermine marriage and lead to more family breakdown.

The Institute emphasised that we want to "fight to keep marriages together".

We added: "Changing the law to facilitate quick, no fault divorces would further weaken the institution of marriage – the most stable form of relationship for raising children".



Welsh parents will face fear and confusion if smacking laws change

Director of The Christian Institute Colin Hart has strongly opposed calls to ban smacking.

Mr Hart has spoken out as pressure increases in Wales for an all-out ban.

The most recent poll on the issue in Wales – in April 2014 – found that 69 per cent of adults do not think smacking should be banned.

However, the Welsh Government has already pledged to change the law.

There have been repeated calls by the Church of Scotland to do the same in Scotland.

But the Scottish Government said it had "no plans to bring forward legislation to repeal existing legal defences for parents in relation to physical punishment".

“Ending the existing freedom of parents to use smacking as one way to discipline their children would lead to large numbers of mothers and fathers being criminalised. It would also divert resources away from protecting children who are being abused.”



▶ Director Colin Hart

New Institute publication on guardians



Choosing a guardian for your children in the event of your death is a difficult decision. Our new leaflet ***Who will look after your children if you die?*** can help you through the process.

For free copies of this leaflet, and any other of our publications, email info@christian.org.uk or visit christian.org.uk/publications

'God has a purpose for every life'

Colin and EJ Harwood have given an exclusive interview to The Christian Institute about their decision to choose life for their daughter Shalome.

Doctors first diagnosed Shalome with a rare brain condition, which they said made her "incompatible with life", at a routine 20-week scan.

They later said that she "might survive" but if she did her parents would be 'looking at just minutes or hours' before she died. Medics repeatedly advised abortion. However, against all expectations, Shalome celebrated her first birthday in November.

Colin and EJ say she has

'enriched their lives' and that they count "every day a blessing".

"We believe that God has a purpose for everyone, even Shalome", they said.

"In the 11 months we've had her for, she's made a bigger difference in her life than what most people do in 70."

Giving advice to parents given a similar diagnosis, Colin encouraged them to reject abortion. He said: "just because a child is in the womb doesn't mean it's not a life".

Watch the full story online

christian.org.uk/chooselife



Parents Colin and EJ, with Shalome and Faith, tell their story

BBC could broadcast Muslim prayers

The BBC has committed to increasing its multi-faith coverage and may start broadcasting Muslim prayers.

It is reported that the Director General of the BBC, Lord Hall of Birkenhead, will invite religious leaders for discussions on plans to

begin more coverage of other religions.

The Muslim Council of Britain has called on the BBC

to broadcast Friday prayers from a mosque and show children attending Koranic lessons.

The new policy is being introduced

after a BBC report released earlier this year said that the publicly-funded broadcaster's output is 'too Christian'.

The Institute's Deputy Director for Public Affairs, Simon Calvert, described this conclusion as "an absolute joke".



PM says Christians should feel free to speak about faith at work



Prime Minister Theresa May

At the end of November, the Prime Minister said Christians should be able to speak about their faith in the workplace.

Responding to a question in Parliament, Theresa May said the UK has a “very strong tradition” of “religious tolerance and freedom of speech”. She added that our “Christian heritage is something we can all be proud of”.

Mrs May’s response followed a report from the Equality and Human Rights Commission that criticised bodies which suppress Christianity because they fear causing offence.

The report referenced several cases where believers were treated unjustly, including that of Institute client Adrian Smith. However, it rejected calls for a change to equality law.

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 would enable us to continue working to preserve Christian freedoms for future generations.



☎ 0191 281 5664
✉ legacy@christian.org.uk
🌐 christian.org.uk/support

Archbishop and ex-cabinet member criticise Government extremism plans

The Government’s controversial counter-extremism strategy has continued to attract serious criticism from high-profile figures.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, recently warned that the Government has a seriously flawed view of extremism that places Christians alongside extreme Muslim groups.

Criticising ministers and civil servants for “religious illiteracy”, he said many assume conservative Christian believers are “a bit bonkers”.

The Archbishop’s warning was echoed by former Chief Secretary to the Treasury Liam Byrne. Speaking to BBC Radio 4,



Archbishop Justin Welby

the Labour MP said “we need a reset of extremism policy”, adding that the “notion there’s a conveyor belt between religious piety and violent extremism” has to be dropped.



CHRISTIANINSTITUTE



@CHRISTIANORGUK



CHRISTIANORGUK



CHRISTIANORGUK

Registered office: The Christian Institute, Wilberforce House, 4 Park Road, Gosforth Business Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8DG
Tel: 0191 281 5664 Fax: 0191 281 4272 Email: info@christian.org.uk Website: www.christian.org.uk
Registered in England as a charity Charity No. 100 4774 Company No. 263 4440. A charity registered in Scotland Charity No. SC039220

16N105