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Let children be children

We are thankful that in recent months there have been moves to protect children from sexualisation and radical transgender ideology.

The long-awaited Online Safety Bill will help protect children from pornography and content promoting self-harm and suicide. This is great news, especially so because the Government has also backed down on censoring legal content deemed 'harmful' to adults.

NHS England has finally admitted that gender confusion is only a phase in the majority of cases. The controversial Tavistock

gender clinic, responsible for placing so many children on a conveyor belt to transition, is set to close early next year.

The Prime Minister wants to ensure that youngsters are not exposed to inappropriate sex education materials, and Mermaids, which has promoted puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones to children for years, is being formally investigated by the Charity Commission.

As we head in to a new year, let us pray that God's good design for humanity, especially children, would be honoured and upheld.

Institute welcomes Govt climb down on online censorship

The Government has dropped provisions censoring content deemed 'legal but harmful' from its controversial Online Safety Bill following pressure from Christian Institute supporters and others.

Culture Secretary Michelle Donelan announced the climb down at the end of November. She noted that concerns had been raised by "stakeholders and members of the public on a number of issues, including a desire to go further on child protections, wanting better protections for



legal speech and a concern that too much power over what we see and engage with online rests with tech giants themselves".

It means social media companies and big search engines will not be required to decide which opinions adults are allowed to hear and read online. The amended Bill will also ditch the

subjective 'harmful communications' offence – as called for by the CI – and expand and strengthen some protections for children from pornography, suicide and self-harm content.

The Institute's Simon Calvert welcomed the changes, describing them as a "good faith attempt" to respond to free speech concerns.

But in a meeting with the Secretary of State he asked her to ensure that content expressing mainstream Christian views on marriage, sexual ethics and gender would not be filtered out by 'Big Tech'.

The Institute will continue to closely monitor the changes to the Bill as it passes through Parliament.

NHS England admits: Gender confusion in kids 'a phase'

NHS England has admitted that gender confusion in children is a “transient phase”, which in most cases “does not persist into adolescence”.

Studies show that up to 90 per cent abandon their desire to ‘change sex’ if left to go through puberty naturally.

In proposals for a service to replace the Tavistock Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS), it noted “scarce and inconclusive evidence” for making decisions which may have “life-long consequences”.

GIDS will close by next spring after the independent Cass Review’s report found it was not a “safe or viable long-term option”. Of the more than 3,500 referrals to the clinic in 2021-22, half were for children aged 15



and under, while at least 15 were four and under.

Following the increasing recognition of the long-term effects of ‘transitioning’, public opposition to allowing those who claim to be the opposite sex to change their sex on their birth certificate has grown.

The 2021 British Social Attitudes survey found that

opposition had risen from 24 per cent in 2019 to 39 per cent in 2021, and support fell from 53 to 32 per cent.

In Scotland, the gender self-ID Bill passed its second stage in November and is expected to become law shortly before Christmas. The law will allow 16-year-olds to change legal sex in just six months.

Christian Lib Dem candidate faces axe

An award-winning former BBC journalist is considering legal action as he faces being removed as a Liberal Democrat candidate over his Christian beliefs.

David Campanale was appointed as the candidate for Sutton and Cheam constituency by an “overwhelming” majority in January.

He told the Institute he intended to vote according to his conscience on non-whipped parliamentary matters such as pro-life issues, but was warned by local party members “we do not recognise



your right to have a conscience”.

Mr Campanale explained that claims he had ‘hidden’ his Christian faith during the candidate selection process could have been tested by “a quick online search”, and said the accusations, first raised earlier this

year, were shown to be unfounded.

He highlighted the “direct harassment and hostility” he received from LGBT activists, and warned that if the attempt to deselect him succeeds it “will be damaging for public institutions” and he will appeal.

WATCH

David Campanale speaks to the CI.



MPs: 'Don't deprive young people of RE'

MPs have backed a push to ensure state schools in England uphold the legal requirement to teach Religious Education.

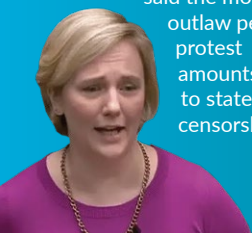
A recent debate highlighted that one in five schools did not teach RE at all in year 11, despite being required by law to do so.



MPs back abortion 'censorship zones'

England and Wales could see censorship zones around abortion clinics after MPs backed a proposal by Stella Creasy MP.

Anyone found guilty of praying or offering help to women in these zones could face six months in prison. Creasy claimed it would not limit free speech, but in the House of Lords Peers have said the move to outlaw peaceful protest amounts to state censorship.



Divorce applications hit 10-year high under 'no-fault' law



Divorce applications have reached the highest number in a decade, after no-fault divorce came into effect in England and Wales in April.

Under the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020, couples can divorce in six months without providing a reason and a spouse cannot contest the decision.

According to figures released in late September, there were

33,566 applications for divorce, including the dissolution of civil partnerships, between April and June 2022. This was 22 percent up on last year, and the highest number since 2012.

The Institute's Ciarán Kelly told BBC radio that changing the law makes "divorce more likely" and "doesn't remove the acrimony that's caused by the disputes over assets and children".

'Shameful': Westminster pushes abortion services across NI

The UK Government has been slammed for overriding the Northern Ireland Executive by increasing abortion services around the country.

In March 2020, politicians imposed a radical abortion law on the Province, and in July last year demanded the expansion of abortion capacity by the end of March 2022.

At the start of December,



Northern Ireland Secretary Chris Heaton-Harris formally commissioned further abortion services nationwide. He used powers granted to his predecessor Brandon Lewis

which do not require the approval of Stormont.

DUP MP Carla Lockhart previously called the decision "shameful", saying: "Northern Ireland does not support abortion, it never has. It still doesn't."

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Uncertainty over Bill of Rights

The UK Government is reviewing plans to replace the Human Rights Act 1998 with a Bill of Rights.

The Bill was shelved by Liz Truss but Justice Secretary Dominic Raab wants to bring a version of the problematic proposals back to Westminster.

The Christian Institute has warned it risks compromising religious liberty safeguards.

Oxford Evangelicals decry Bishop's push for same-sex marriage

Evangelical Anglicans in Oxford have expressed their grief at the Bishop of Oxford's call for the Church of England to allow its clergy to marry a person of the same sex and conduct same-sex weddings.

The Oxford Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship said that Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft's views, published in a 50-page booklet 'Together in Love and Faith', depart "from the clear teaching of the Bible in relation to sex and marriage".

Vaughan Roberts, Rector of St Ebbe's Church in

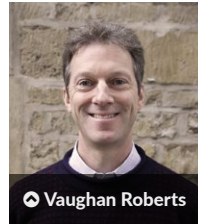


Bishop of Oxford, Steven Croft

Oxford, warned: "If we are to feel free to make changes in relation to same-sex unions, on what basis can we resist the calls, which will

inevitably come, for further boundary changes"?

Currently the law prevents Church of England churches from performing same-sex weddings due to the protections under the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013. But its General Synod will meet in February to decide if it will alter its stance.



Vaughan Roberts

End-of-life legal protections under assault in British Isles

Scotland is a step closer to removing safeguards which protect vulnerable people from assisted suicide after Liam McArthur MSP gained sufficient support to introduce his Bill to Holyrood.

McArthur's plan would allow anyone aged 16 or over who is deemed to be terminally ill and has been resident in Scotland for 12 months to receive help to take their own lives. Draft legislation is

expected to be presented to Holyrood early next year.

Under proposals open to public consultation in Jersey, residents aged 18 or over would be able to request to be killed in cases of terminal illness or "incurable" physical conditions resulting in unbearable suffering.



Liam McArthur MSP

Charity Commission launches formal inquiry into Mermaids

The Charity Commission has opened a statutory inquiry into controversial trans-activist group Mermaids following serious concerns about its operations.

The December announcement came just days after the scandal-hit charity's CEO, Susie Green, stood down.

The Commission opens a statutory inquiry where it has "regulatory concerns that there is, has been, or that there is the potential for misconduct and/or mismanagement in



the administration of a charity".

It comes amid a barrage of shocking disclosures about Mermaids, including that it had been sending chest binders to girls as young as 13 without their parents' knowledge.

A trustee also resigned in disgrace over revelations that

he had promoted paedophilia, and it was revealed an employee had been posting highly sexualised photos of himself online.

LGBT activist Peter Tatchell attempted to defend the charity on GB News, claiming its work made kids "happier, and better, and more fulfilled", and

most interventions the group endorsed were "not irreversible".

But the Institute's Simon Calvert said the claims were "demonstrably untrue".

"We need to hear from the voices of detransitioners, the people who have followed the Mermaids type line and deeply, deeply regret it, and can't go back.

"They've had the hormones, they've had the surgery, and they can't undo it, and anyone who's heard those stories will know that it breaks your heart."

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Home Secretary seeks end of woke policing

In a letter sent to senior policing figures across England and Wales in September, Suella Braverman KC MP said officers should prioritise crime fighting over 'wokery'.

She soon followed up this intervention by telling West Sussex Police it was wrong to brand as "hateful" social media comments which referred to a transgender paedophile as a man.

Members of the public had complained online after the force called a convicted paedophile 'a woman', even though he is biologically male and committed the crimes prior to 'transitioning'.

A few weeks later Braverman found herself having to correct another force, this time Leicestershire Police, for misrepresenting the law on 'hate crime'. She criticised a tweet it sent advising trans people to report the deliberate use of their 'pre-transition' name.



Billy Graham group awarded almost £100k over axed event

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) has been awarded £97,325.32 in damages after a Glasgow venue shut down its evangelistic rally. Further cases are still to be resolved.

The BGEA took legal action against Scottish Event Campus Ltd (SEC), the firm which operates the OVO Hydro. It had cancelled the Association's gospel event in 2020 because of Franklin Graham's mainstream Christian beliefs on marriage and sexual ethics.

A Glasgow Sheriff Court found the SEC directly discriminated against the BGEA by treating it "less favourably than it would

have treated others because of a protected characteristic, namely, the religious or philosophical beliefs of the [BGEA] and Franklin Graham".

Sheriff John McCormick did not accept that BGEA's contract was principally terminated because of safety concerns over possible protests, and said the SEC "acted under pressure" from Glasgow City Council to cancel the event.

He ruled: "The law cannot endorse an outcome whereby a mainstream Christian religious gathering cannot be held

because some members of the community, however vehemently, disagree with religiously based beliefs to which they take objection."

BILLY GRAHAM
Evangelistic Association

The Institute's Simon Calvert commented: "Any venue which cancels bookings

by Christian groups over their beliefs can expect to lose in court. This is bad news for cancel culture but good news for the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Last year, the BGEA settled legal claims with three other venues that had also attempted to block its evangelistic rallies.

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PM keen to protect kids from inappropriate sex education

The Prime Minister wants to strengthen guidance on Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) to ensure that schoolchildren in England are not exposed to inappropriate materials.

Statutory guidance already states: "Schools should ensure that parents know what will be taught and when, and clearly communicate the fact that parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE".

But Rishi Sunak reportedly plans to clarify that parents may view RSE content, including resources provided by outside organisations.

The Prime Minister is also considering a review of the UK-wide Equality Act 2010 to emphasise that the protected characteristic of sex refers to biological sex, rather than gender.

This would clarify that single-sex spaces can be protected and that men cannot compete in women's sports.



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