



INSIDE

- Online Safety Bill becomes law
- New extremism definition could pose threat to religious freedom
- Assisted suicide law would open uncontrollable 'Pandora's box'

Standing firm in the faith

The Bible says lawmakers have a duty to restrain evil and promote good. It's a difficult job. We should pray for them. Sadly, across the political spectrum they can be more eager to create new laws than to ensure the ones already on the statute book are properly enforced.

The long-running debates over a new 'conversion therapy' law and the latest plans to tackle extremism are good examples. Laws already exist to protect LGBT people from coercion and abuse, and to deal with violent extremism. In both cases, new

vaguely worded proposals pose a grave threat to gospel freedom.

Society has seen rapid and radical change in recent years. Marriage and the family, biological reality, and the sanctity of human life have all been attacked. But the wonderful truths revealed in the Bible do not change and we must be ready to defend our freedom to make them known.

If we remain silent, we embolden those opposed to a biblical worldview to go even further in challenging God's good design for everyone.

Court of Session rejects Yousaf challenge to 'sex-swap' Bill veto

Scotland's Outer House of the Court of Session has ruled that the UK Government's decision to veto Holyrood's gender self-ID Bill was 'reasonable and lawful'.

In January 2023, Scottish Secretary Alister Jack exercised powers under Section 35 of the Scotland Act 1998 to prevent the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill being submitted for Royal Assent.

The proposals sought to allow 16-year-olds to change their legal sex by self-declaration without a medical diagnosis, and reduce the waiting



time for adults from two years to just three months.

First Minister Humza Yousaf branded the veto a "power grab" and lodged a petition for judicial review.

But in December, Judge Lady Haldane ruled that Mr Jack had acted within the law

when he blocked the Holyrood-backed Bill in order to protect the integrity of UK-wide equalities legislation.

The Scottish Government can appeal the ruling, but has reportedly already spent almost £230,000 of taxpayers' money on its legal challenge.

"It follows from all of the foregoing analysis that the challenge to the Order pronounced under section 35 of the 1998 Act, laid on 17 January 2023, fails."

Judge Lady Haldane

A poll published in February 2023 revealed that only one in three of 1,004 Scottish adults surveyed thought the SNP-Green coalition should challenge the UK Government's decision to block the Bill.

Online Safety Bill becomes law

The Online Safety Bill has passed into law.

Ofcom intends to implement the Act's measures gradually, but it is already consulting on how to tackle illegal online content.

The Act requires social media and pornography websites to implement age-verification measures that are "highly effective at correctly determining whether or not a particular user is a child".

Following a lengthy campaign by The Christian Institute and others, the UK Government had already dropped the Bill's dangerous 'legal but harmful' clause, which threatened to restrict Christians' freedom of speech online.



“time to focus on making the law bite” Ciarán Kelly



Welcoming the Act's measures for protecting children, the Institute's Ciarán Kelly said "it is now time to focus on making the law bite".

"Effective enforcement will be crucial. Ofcom has a lot of ground to cover and

its track record on using existing powers has been poor.

"With so much at stake, especially for vulnerable young people, it's time for it to step up and ensure that tech firms do what the law requires them to do – protect children, and

protect free speech."

Ofcom's Chief Executive Dame Melanie Dawes claimed the watchdog would balance safety and free speech. She said: "We will set new standards online, making sure sites and apps are safer by design. Importantly, we'll also take full account of people's rights to privacy and freedom of expression."

Lord Advocate Bain recommends turning blind eye to illegal drug use

Scotland's most senior law officer wants heroin addicts who inject in 'approved' shooting galleries to avoid prosecution.

Dorothy Bain KC has indicated her readiness to effectively decriminalise the use of hard drugs in so-called safe consumption facilities that have been sanctioned by the Scottish Government.

She denied her proposal amounted "to an exclusion zone" where "criminality is tolerated".

First Minister Humza Yousaf hailed Bain's intervention as "very significant".

While drugs legislation is

handled by Westminster, the Scottish Government has control over its approach to tackling the scourge of illegal drugs.

Following the Lord Advocate's statement, Scotland Secretary Alister Jack said that, while there is "no safe way to take illegal drugs", Westminster would not stop the Scottish Government trialling a drug shooting gallery scheme.

In 2022, drug-related deaths in Scotland exceeded a thousand in a row.



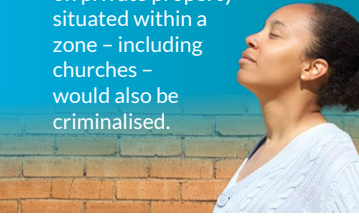
👤 Dorothy Bain KC

Abortion censorship zones Bill introduced

An attempt to ban peaceful protests, including silent prayer, outside hospitals and abortion centres in Scotland is underway.

The legislation would create 200-metre censorship zones outside facilities where abortions take place. The Government would also be able to extend a zone to any size, and those infringing it can face an unlimited fine.

Some pro-life activity on private property situated within a zone – including churches – would also be criminalised.



Edinburgh Council 'hostile to public faith'

Church leaders have accused Edinburgh Council of pursuing an anti-faith agenda after it decided to strip religious representatives of their vote on its education committee.

Edinburgh became the fifth Scottish council in 2023 – along with Orkney, Highland, Fife and Stirling – to back the removal of the historic voting rights of religious bodies on matters of education.

New extremism definition threatens gospel freedom



Following widespread anti-Semitic protests, Westminster's Department for Communities is said to be working on a new definition of the term 'extremism', and renewing its focus on 'British values'.

Reports suggest the new definition could include groups and individuals whose behaviour helps 'create a

climate conducive to hate crime', as well as terrorism.

Institute Director Colin Hart said, "Such sloppy wording is profoundly concerning" and new laws on extremism, "must not inhibit freedom to declare the Gospel, which people also call 'hateful'".

Mr Hart's comments were echoed by the

Government's Independent Review of Terrorism Legislation, who warned of a "severe and unjustifiable intrusion on free expression".

Previous misguided attempts to target extremism prompted lengthy campaigns by the Institute to defend free speech from State censorship.

Cameron: 'Being a Christian wasn't welcome in the SNP'

SNP defector Dr Lisa Cameron has shared how former party colleagues opposed her selection because of her Christian views. She said she felt pressured to vote contrary to her beliefs.

Speaking to BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour, the now Conservative MP said she experienced similar issues to fellow Free Church of Scotland member Kate Forbes MSP. During the 2023 SNP leadership contest, Forbes was attacked for upholding biblical sexual ethics.

Dr Cameron voted against

imposing a liberal abortion regime on Northern Ireland and legalising assisted suicide in England and Wales.

She said "being a Christian was something that was not welcome in the SNP".



👤 Lisa Cameron MP



5 studies about God's calling for his people in the world

Living Christianity is a series of five studies examining the implications of what it means to live as a Christian in today's world.

ON SALE NOW

livingchristianity.org.uk/buy

The WORLD We Live In

The World We Live In is a radio series made by The Christian Institute for TWR-UK examining what it is like to be a Christian in today's world, and why we as believers should engage with it.



Listen now:
the.ci/worldwelivein

'Christians are protected from discrimination too'



▶ Kate Forbes MSP

Former SNP leadership candidate Kate Forbes has emphasised that the Equality Act 2010 must protect everyone, including Christians.

In an interview with journalist Kevin McKenna, the MSP for Skye, Lochaber and

Badenoch said she received "literally thousands of letters and emails" of support, after being publicly attacked for upholding biblical sexual ethics during the SNP leadership contest.

She stated: "If the Equality Act exists it must exist for every role in

society. It doesn't just exist for the cleaner or the teacher. Surely it also exists for the First Minister of Scotland or for those who aspire to be.

"Religious faith, as with other characteristics in the Equality Act, is protected."

Secularists rattled over Labour's firm support for faith schools

A Labour commitment to support faith schools has upset secular activists.

After Sir Keir Starmer commended faith schools and pledged that a Labour government "wouldn't tinker" with how they were run, the National Secular Society (NSS) launched a campaign urging its supporters to try and pressure him to "think again".

Speaking to Jewish News, Sir Keir claimed his party would "be even more supportive of faith schools" than the Conservative Government.



Following his widely reported remarks, the NSS issued a 'campaign alert' claiming faith schools were 'discriminatory'.



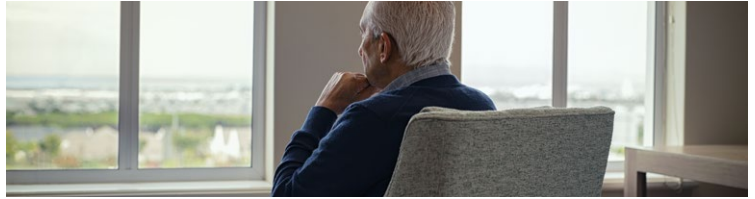
Assisted suicide law would open 'uncontrollable Pandora's box'

A disability campaigner has warned MSPs that an assisted suicide law would open an 'uncontrollable Pandora's Box'.

Holyrood is set to consider a Bill from Lib Dem MSP Liam McArthur in the coming months. It is expected to enable residents aged 16 or over deemed terminally ill to be prescribed lethal drugs to kill themselves.

But disability policy advisor Dr Miro Griffiths is warning that assisted suicide is "inherently unsafe".

He said: "Supporters



of 'assisted dying' describe their desire for a narrow, safe law but the truth is they cannot guarantee this – no matter how the law is drafted. Safeguards fail, are eroded, and are dispensed with. Laws expand."

Canada legalised assisted suicide and euthanasia in 2016 for those with terminal

illnesses, but has already scrapped that requirement and has voted to extend it to those with mental illness.

Often held up as a model for assisted suicide, doctors in Canada directly killed 13,200 people last year – up nearly a third on the year before.

On the Isle of Man,

politicians have backed plans to introduce assisted suicide and euthanasia.

The island's Bill would enable residents over the age of 18 who have mental capacity and are not expected to live beyond six months to "be lawfully provided with assistance to end their life".

Would you like us to visit your church?



We have over 60,000 supporters and visit over 300 churches a year to talk about our work.

If you would like your church to be one of them, email us at: scotland@christian.org.uk

'Biological sex is simply common sense' says Rishi

The Prime Minister has emphasised that biological sex is "common sense", as he pledged to stop Britons being "bullied into believing that people can be any sex they want".

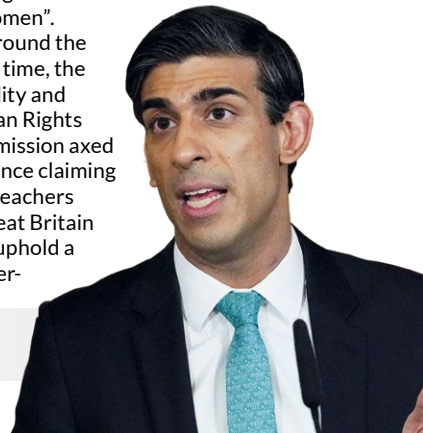
Rishi Sunak spoke out in October after the NHS announced that men who claim to be women will no longer

be admitted to female-only wards. He said patients should know when "hospitals are talking about men or women".

Around the same time, the Equality and Human Rights Commission axed guidance claiming that teachers in Great Britain who uphold a gender-

confused pupil's biological sex and name are automatically breaking the law.

biological sex is "common sense"



'Conversion therapy' law not a priority for 95% of voters

The Scottish public have little appetite for banning so-called conversion therapy, a Christian Institute poll has found.

In the survey conducted by Whitestone Insight, just five per cent of voters in Scotland saw the controversial proposal as a priority, ranking it least important of 16 possible options.

The Institute's Simon Calvert observed: "Despite

years of campaigning by activists, the public are not at all convinced of the need for an expansive conversion therapy law."

He added: "The kind of ban being called for would be a radical and unwelcome new departure in Scottish law, allowing bureaucrats to tell Christians exactly how to pray."

The Scottish Government has delayed its plans for a

Bill, but is expected to launch a consultation imminently.

At Westminster, a draft Bill was not announced in the King's Speech, but UK Ministers say they remain committed to bringing forward plans for a new law.

Private Members' Bills have also been tabled in both Houses of Parliament.

Such Bills rarely become law, but could be used to influence



the Government's own plans for a draft Bill.

LGBT activists have been calling for a broad law, but leading human rights lawyer Aidan O' Neill KC says this is likely to violate free speech, religious freedom and the rights of parents.

How to give to the work of the CI

None of our work would be possible without the generosity of our supporters.

Give regularly
 the.ci/donate

Leave a legacy
 the.ci/legacy

Or call
 0191 281 5664



Tom Ellis Snr (1955-2023) A man of courage and conviction

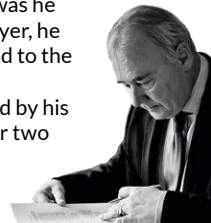
It was with deep sadness that we marked the passing of solicitor Tom Ellis in October.

Tom was a long-time friend of the Institute who worked with us on many of our most significant religious liberty cases. Street preachers, B&B owners and Christian organisations are among those who benefitted from his legal skills. He was also involved in our case against Google, which resulted in the tech giant agreeing to change its advertising policy on abortion worldwide.

The Institute's Solicitor Advocate Sam Webster, who worked very closely with Tom over a 15-year period, paid tribute to him as a man of "courage and conviction".

"Tom was humble and generous, he always put the cause of Christ first in his work. Not only was he an excellent lawyer, he was a good friend to the Institute."

He is survived by his wife Norah, their two children and six grandchildren.



THE LATEST NEWS AND RESOURCES: CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK



CHRISTIANINSTITUTE



CHRISTIANORGUK

Registered office: The Christian Institute, Wilberforce House, 4 Park Road, Gosforth Business Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8DG
Tel: 0191 281 5664 | Email: info@christian.org.uk | Web: christian.org.uk | Published in December 2023
Registered in England as a charity Charity No. 100 4774 Company No. 263 4440. A charity registered in Scotland Charity No. SC039220