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## Defending gospel freedom

We enjoy freedom to worship, to share the Gospel and to live out a faithful Christian life in public.

But this rich heritage of freedom was hard won by believers down the ages and many Christians elsewhere in the world do not share these blessings. For the sake of future generations we must guard our freedoms well.

An expansion of 'hate crime' laws could greatly restrict gospel freedom. So too could attempts to brand prayer, pastoral care and

preaching as 'conversion therapy'. The freedom to speak the truth on matters of sin, repentance, salvation and righteous living is at risk.

So we will continue to speak up for churches that resist pressure to abandon the Bible's teaching. We will continue to support Christians like Kenneth Ferguson whose careers have been damaged because of their beliefs. We must do all we can to defend gospel freedom. If Christians do not, no one else will.

## CI helps church sue multimillion pound trust for discrimination

The Christian Institute is helping a church take legal action against a multimillion pound charitable trust for religious discrimination.

The Robertson Trust gave Stirling Free Church notice to quit shortly after Chairwoman Shonaig Macpherson discovered it was renting premises owned by the Trust.

She was said to be "incandescent with anger" and reportedly exclaimed "definitely not the Free Church, anyone but the Free Church, they don't believe in same-sex marriage".



**Stirling**  
Free Church

Within days, the church was kicked out of the building, being told their use of it did "not comply with Trust policy".

The Trust is claiming the policy prevents rentals for activities promoting religion, but lawyers for the church have discovered no such policy exists.

Kenneth Ferguson, the Trust's former CEO and an elder at the church, was subsequently sacked. With the Institute's support, he is also taking legal action for discrimination and unfair dismissal.

Mr Ferguson was blamed, despite having declared his

involvement in the church on the Trust's register of interests and recusing himself from all negotiations about the rental.

Before being dismissed for vague 'performance issues', Mr Ferguson had received glowing appraisals, with the Trust growing substantially under his leadership.

The Institute's Deputy Director for Public Affairs, Simon Calvert, said The Robertson Trust's actions suggested "somebody there has a problem with people who have orthodox religious beliefs".

# Open churches are a cause for thanksgiving but limits are unfair

By Ciarán Kelly,  
Deputy Director  
(Staff and  
Communications)

In November, The Christian Institute joined with millions of others in giving thanks at the news that church buildings in England and Wales could reopen for public worship.

Sadly, around the same time, the Scottish Government placed more than two million Scots into the highest Covid tier.

Churches in the eleven Tier 4 council areas were advised to limit their congregations to just 20 people, regardless of their building's capacity.



The fact that churches were able to remain open in even the most restricted areas is welcome. So too the December announcement downgrading them to Tier 3. But there are still churches that can comfortably hold 200 socially distanced congregants. Limitations

of 20 or 50 worshippers make no sense.

Churches in Scotland have not been linked to outbreaks of the virus. Senior Westminster scientists Sir Patrick Vallance and Professor Chris Whitty admitted that data supporting additional restrictions on churches is "very weak". That is as true

for Scotland as England.

Church worship should not be treated as an optional leisure activity. Christians should be able to gather for worship – observing rigorous hygiene and social distancing measures, and after proper risk assessment – but without further restrictions.

## Institute defends churches who uphold biblical teaching on sexual relationships

The Christian Institute is working to protect churches who continue to faithfully teach biblical sexual ethics in the face of pressure from LGBT activists.

The Institute's Ciarán Kelly said, "The Bible is clear that all sexual acts outside of heterosexual marriage are sinful", and that upholding this truth is "to be commended".

Mr Kelly was responding to comments from Church of England General Synod member Jayne Ozanne (pictured right).

The LGBT activist accused the Oxford University Christian Union and local churches of 'homophobia' for affirming the Bible's teaching on sexual morality.

She said: "we can't allow this harmful practice of telling LGBT people who are in relationships that they are 'sinful' to continue".

Ozanne later compared "conservative communities of faith" to 'Holocaust deniers' and 'rapists'.

The Westminster Government is expected to consult soon on banning practices in Britain that seek to change someone's sexual orientation – so-called conversion therapy.

Ozanne and fellow LGBT activist Steve Chalke want the Government to act against any prayer, private conversation and preaching which does not affirm homosexual or transgender lifestyles.



# Scots Civil Service pushing Stonewall's controversial transgender ideology

A Freedom of Information (FOI) response has revealed that the Scottish Civil Service has implemented a series of controversial Stonewall policies in the last few years. The changes coincide with the Service's application for a place on the LGBT lobby group's 'Diversity Champions Index'.

Civil servants have introduced a compulsory "Diversity Objective" for all staff with training on "intersectionality", "unconscious bias", and the use of gender-

neutral language.

The Service said that most of its policies "were updated to increase inclusion of gender identities and same-sex couples".

Commenting on the findings, The Christian Institute's Simon Calvert warned:

"The extent of Stonewall's influence on the Civil Service is alarming, particularly given the controversial nature of some of its political aims.

"Stonewall's stance on trans issues is strongly opposed by women's organisations, medics



and faith groups. Yet, the Civil Service appears to endorse it wholesale. How does this fit with the Service's duty to remain politically impartial?"

An earlier FOI request revealed that the Scottish

Government is among hundreds of public bodies paying thousands of pounds each to join Stonewall's 'Diversity Champions' programme. In 2019 it paid £9,144, including £7,200 for membership.

## How to give to the work of the CI

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

Giving regularly to The Christian Institute will help us to continue working to preserve Christian freedoms for future generations.

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## Assisted suicide activists to push for third attempt to change law

Assisted suicide activists are preparing to push for another vote on the issue in the Scottish Parliament. This is despite two Bills to change the law being heavily defeated in the last ten years.

In October, Dignity in Dying - formerly known as the Voluntary Euthanasia Society - said that it expects a fresh parliamentary vote following the Holyrood election in May 2021.

But Dr Gordon Macdonald, CEO of the coalition Care Not Killing, responded: "It is disappointing that ideological pro-killing campaigners


continue to push this narrow and dangerous agenda during a global pandemic".

He added: "Changing the law would remove universal protections and send out a message that the lives of the terminally ill and disabled people are less worthy of protection than others."

Last year, the Scottish Government stated that it "respects the will of the

Scottish Parliament on assisted dying". Holyrood voted against pro-assisted suicide legislation in both 2010 and 2015.



 Pushing back: Gordon Macdonald of Care Not Killing

## Court ruling helps protect children from trans drugs



Children in England will be protected from being given puberty blocking drugs following a major ruling at the High Court in London.

In December, three senior judges said it was “highly unlikely” children aged 13 and under could ever genuinely consent to hormone blockers, and “very doubtful” 14 and 15-year-olds could do so.

Given the “long-term consequences” and “experimental” nature of trans drugs, they added that clinicians may also wish to seek court authorisation before giving them to children aged 16 and over.

In response, NHS England announced that it had “immediately suspended new referrals for puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones for the under-16s”.

Detransitioner Keira Bell (pictured above), 23, brought the case against the London-based NHS Gender Identity Development Service after she was given hormone blockers and cross-sex hormones as a teenager.

The Scottish Government has proposed allowing 16-year-olds to change legal sex by ‘self-declaration’.

## Smacking ban now in force



Parents who lightly smack their children in Scotland will now be committing a criminal offence, after the Scottish Government’s controversial ban came into force on 7 November.

The new law means parents will no longer be able to physically chastise their child without fear of investigation by the police.

The Christian Institute was among those opposing the ban through the Be Reasonable campaign.

Sociologist Dr Ashley Frawley, an ally of the group, has warned that the law will prove to cause more issues than even the failed Named Person scheme.

Holyrood ministers also came

under fire for how little effort has gone into raising public awareness. Instead, the Scottish Government published leaflets encouraging primary-aged children to report their parents to the police for smacking. Guidelines direct those who witness a smack to “call 999 to report a crime in progress”.

## Councillors hounded over stand against LGBT ideology

Two council officials who refused to endorse LGBT ideology have been hounded by opponents.

Christian councillor Mary Douglas (pictured) was forced to step down from her role at Wiltshire Council after she opposed the use of public funds to promote a ‘gay pride’ event.

Cllr Douglas was supported by the Christian Legal Centre. The council subsequently admitted that it was wrong to discipline her for expressing her views.

Cambridge City councillor Kevin Price chose to resign



rather than vote for a motion that stated: “Trans women are women. Trans men are men. Non-binary individuals are non-binary.” Students subsequently called for him to be dismissed from his job as a college porter.



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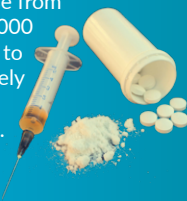


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## Hospital admissions from drug use at record high

Drug-related hospital stays have increased by over 350 per cent in the past two decades, official figures have revealed.

According to statistics from Public Health Scotland, the number of drug users admitted to hospital rose from just over 4,000 in 1996-97 to approximately 14,000 in 2018-2019.



## Down's abortion law to be challenged at High Court

A woman with Down's syndrome has been given permission to challenge the current law on abortion at the High Court in London.

Heidi Crowter and fellow campaigner Máire Lea-Wilson say the law discriminates against unborn babies with the condition.

In the UK, abortion is permitted up to 24 weeks for most reasons, or up to birth if the child is deemed to have a disability such as Down's syndrome.

One mum



📍 Campaigner Heidi Crowter

recently revealed she was offered an abortion 15 times after her child was diagnosed with the condition.

The UK's Minister for Care Helen Whately has said medics should not show "any bias towards abortion" if they suspect there may be a problem

with a pregnancy.

The issue gained further coverage after it was revealed ITV would air a Down's syndrome abortion storyline on popular soap Emmerdale.

A petition to remove the storyline has received more than 31,500 signatures.

## Scot Govt attempt to redefine 'woman' challenged in court



Feminist campaigners have been granted a judicial review over a Scottish Government move to redefine the meaning of "woman" to include men.

For Women Scotland said the definition was altered in an Act designed to address the number of women on public boards following pressure from the Scottish Trans Alliance.

The women's group

argues that the redefinition undermines UK equality law. A spokeswoman said: "We object to the wholesale redefinition of women, which was done at the request of a lobby group, and without public consultation or Parliamentary scrutiny."

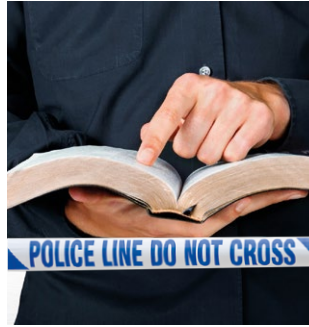
In April, plans to introduce legal sex changes by 'self-declaration' were put on hold due to the coronavirus outbreak.

# Institute warns of religious liberty threat from Scots hate crime Bill

The Christian Institute has warned that the Bible could be considered “inflammatory”, and seized and destroyed under the current wording of the Scottish hate crime Bill.

The Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill is set to criminalise words or behaviour perceived as “abusive” against particular groups but lacks sufficient protections for free speech.

The Institute’s Ciarán Kelly warned that the lack of clarity created “a real risk of malicious reports from activists who wish to stop Christians expressing their beliefs.



“Provisions on ‘inflammatory material’ could be used against Christian books, sermons by church ministers – even the Bible itself. The potential reach

of the offences is enormous, affecting religious practice in public and in private.”

Scotland’s Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf has said he even intends to clamp down on hate speech inside the home by refusing to provide a ‘dwelling defence’, which exists in other UK hate crime legislation.

In three separate letters sent to The Times, QCs Anthony Hudson, Kevin Drummond, and Lord Menzies Campbell, former Lib Dem leader, all strongly criticised the way the Bill is worded, and shared their concerns over the legal implications it carries if passed.

## Hear from the CI



**Nigel Kenny,**  
Scotland Officer

If you would like your church to hear more about our work **online** or **in person**\* contact: [scotland@christian.org.uk](mailto:scotland@christian.org.uk)

*\*Subject to Covid restrictions*

## Billy Graham group sues UK venues over cancellations

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) has launched legal proceedings against venues in Glasgow, Birmingham, Sheffield, Liverpool and Newcastle for discrimination and breach of contract.

BGEA acted after the venues cancelled its gospel events because they oppose the organisation’s stance on sexual ethics.

Franklin Graham said it was because “we preach a message of God’s love, stand uncompromisingly on traditional biblical beliefs about human sexuality, and share

with all people that Jesus Christ is the only way they can be forgiven of sin and have a right relationship with God.”

But he vowed: “I will never sit back quietly and let the government—or any other power—silence the church and prevent the preaching of God’s Word”.



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