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Christian Concern's birthday - UK Christian 'reactionaries' mark 10 years of lobbying against women's and LGBT rights

Sunday 11 November 2018, by [BYCHAWSKI Adam](#) (Date first published: 25 October 2018).

At Christian Concern's birthday party in London, lobbyists talked about their expansion plans and work to recruit young people.



Religious fruitcake: Christian Concern celebrated their tenth anniversary over the weekend. Image: Adam Bychawski

The scene at the tenth-anniversary celebration of anti-abortion, anti-LGBT lobbyists Christian Concern was a far cry from a typical religious service.

The evangelical organisation, one of the largest in the UK, hired a Grade II listed building a stone's throw away from Parliament Square in London for the occasion last Saturday. At a drink's reception in the building's marble foyer, prosecco and canapés were served by waiters to hundreds of guests – including a MP and a member of the House of Lords – under the watchful eye of security guards.

The celebratory atmosphere reflected the group's growth over the last decade. In 2008, Christian Concern comprised a handful of religious conservatives and, as its chief executive Andrea Williams admitted in a video posted online [\[1\]](#), it was struggling to pay its staff. Promotional material at the event listed its total expenditure as £1.9m last year.

Over the weekend, it marked a decade of public campaigning and legal support for conservative Christian beliefs in the UK, lobbying against reforms including liberalised abortion laws, LGBT anti-discrimination legislation, more inclusive sex education, same-sex marriage and an easier gender recognition process for trans people.

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In her keynote speech, Williams said Christian Concern, which boasts an 80,000-strong mailing list, was recently asked by an unnamed MP for help in campaigning against a bill proposing to decriminalise abortion [\[2\]](#) which would in particular overturn the current regime in Northern Ireland, where abortion is illegal in almost all circumstances.

In a promotional video for the celebration [3], Williams states that Christian Concern has grown to around 25 employees. Outlining her vision for the organisation's future Williams said: "I want to double because that's what's needed in the time to come."

Between speeches from Christian Concern's senior figures, attendees were shown short films. One illustrated the "social revolution" that has swept the nation through clips of news reports about proposals for civil partnerships, compulsory sex education, no-fault divorce bills, and an interview with a trans teenager and her mother.

The Conservative Party was specifically singled out with clips of David Cameron backing gay marriage and Theresa May denouncing gay conversion therapy as "an abhorrent practice". Christian Concern call attempts to ban such therapy "pernicious" [4].

Among the attendees were DUP MP Jeffrey Donaldson and House of Lords life peer Baroness Caroline Cox, both of whom have consistently voted against LGBT rights and same-sex marriage legislation. Michael Nazir-Ali, a former Anglican Bishop with a track record of offensive remarks about homosexuality and Muslims, was also there.

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Nazir-Ali told attendees in a speech that gay marriage will lead to "legalising incest". He also said: "Someone once said to me that Christian Concern is reactionary, well we do have to react if lies are being told in our streets and in our newspapers, we do have to react. If that means being reactionary, so be it."

The subject of trans rights was mentioned several times, prompting the shaking of heads in the audience. Christian Concern is one of several UK Christian conservative organisations that have recently filed submissions opposing proposed reforms to the Gender Recognition Act to make it easier for trans people to change their legal gender.

Carys Moseley, a former university theology lecturer, and now policy researcher for Christian Concern, has written that being transgender is a "psychiatric disorder" and implied that transgender women are sex offenders [5].

She also contributed to a collection of essays published by a division of Christian Concern titled The New Normal: The Transgender Agenda. Other contributors include an American college teacher who calls same-sex parenting "child abuse" and American conservative spokesperson Robert Oscar Lopez who describes himself as "anti-gay" and has previously written that the LGBT rights movement is a "world-historical evil" [6].

'Thousands of people come through our offices'.

Aside from public campaigning, Christian Concern's sister organisation, the Christian Legal Centre, have offered legal support in a number of court cases challenging anti-discrimination and equality laws.

Williams told attendees "thousands of people come through our offices". A promotional pamphlet said the group spent almost half a million pounds on legal cases in 2017.

A short film highlighting a few of these cases included Mike Davidson, who approached Christian Concern for help after the British Psychodrama Association revoked his membership for providing therapy for "unwanted same-sex attraction."

Another featured case was that of Ian Sleeper, a street preacher who was arrested for displaying a placard with the message "Love Muslims, Hate Islam". In a Christian Concern press release [7], Sleeper said "My hope is for the world to rid itself of Islam".

A running theme in the evening's speeches was concern at the lack of young people in the Church of England. Indeed, a 2017 British Social Attitudes survey revealed a growing lack of religiosity among the young [8], with 70% of those aged 18-24 now saying they have no religion - a 56% increase from 2002. Only 2% identified as Anglican.

The congregation at the event appeared to be mostly middle-aged aside from a number of young volunteers and families with infants.

An urgent need 'to build the next generation'.

Williams spoke of the urgent need "to build the next generation" and said that 500 young people have attended its week-long training camp, Wilberforce Academy, where speakers have included Sam Soloman, a former Muslim who converted to Christianity, who also spoke at this weekend's event and is the group's "Islamic affairs advisor".

Soloman previously drafted UKIP's "charter of Muslim understanding" in 2014 [9] - which was also shared online by Christian Concern. It proposed that Muslims should sign a special code of conduct rejecting violence.

A previous Wilberforce Academy attendee told me that Soloman once led a session on Islam in which students were taught that Muslims were "breeding" ten times as fast as the rest of the population and that much of the UK is following Sharia law.

Students were also given lectures by Canadian pastor Joe Boot who taught them that the impact of climate change is overstated and effects to reduce carbon emissions will simply lead to more poverty. Boot has called catastrophic climate change "a myth" and environmentalism "indoctrination in service of a wider political and religious agenda" [10].

The evening's speeches were rounded off with a video that painted a clear picture of the growing reach and international coordination of the Christian right.

It featured senior figures from South Africa's Freedom of Religion who said they "would probably not exist but for the help and support we've had from [Christian Concern]" as well as Family Voice Australia, the Bread of Life Ethiopian Church and the South Korean Esther Prayer Movement, which has links to the International House of Prayer.

In her closing remarks about what lies ahead for Christian Concern, Williams said: "We need to build a visible church, a church that is vocal and visible in the public space that the authorities will take care of. We are going nowhere".

Adam Bychawski

P.S.

• Open Democracy. 25 October 2018:

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/adam-bychawski/christian-concern-reactionaries-10-years-lobbying-women-and-lgbt-rights?utm>

Footnotes

[1] <https://www.christianconcern.com/media/andrea-invites-you-to-celebrate-10-years-of-christian-concern>

[2] <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-45955492>

[3] <https://www.christianconcern.com/media/andrea-invites-you-to-celebrate-10-years-of-christian-concern>

[4] <https://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/sexual-orientation/why-the-bill-to-ban-gay-conversion-therapy-is-pernicious-and-a-threat>

[5] <https://www.christianconcern.com/our-issues/church-and-state/why-it-is-so-important-that-the-uk-government-has-admitted-that-trans-id>

[6] https://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2014/04/stop_crying_over_mozilla_and_start_fighting_back.html

[7] <https://www.christianconcern.com/press-release/victory-for-street-preacher-held-in-cell-for-13-hours-for-sharing-love-for-muslims-and>

[8] <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/news-media/press-releases/2018/september/church-of-england-numbers-at-record-low/>

[9] <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/feb/04/ukip-mep-gerard-batten-muslims-sign-charter-rejecting-violence>

[10] <https://docplayer.net/90296099-Spring-2014-law-of-life-of-death-joe-boot-nazi-environmental-ethics-mark-musser-is-man-the-cause-of-global-warming-michael-j.html>