

SOCIAL & ETHICAL ISSUES GROUP

MEDIA MATTERS

Some of us – many of us! – are old enough to remember when there was only one TV channel and the national anthem was played at the end of each evening's broadcast.

Not only that, but there were times in the day when broadcasting was closed down and we had to find something to do until it resumed: probably have our tea round the table rather than eating it off our lap while still viewing, which is perhaps the norm today.

It is a truism to say that the broadcast and written media have been transformed in recent years. There seems to be a TV channel for every interest and the printed media have had to adapt, with newspapers placing as much emphasis on their digital editions as they do on the printed versions.

Unregulated media

Despite the UK Government's attempts to have some control and impose restrictions over the broadcast media through its agency Ofcom, to all intents and purposes the media now is unregulated. Modern television sets allow us to access channels from all over the world and with little restriction on what we view.

It is a sign of the times that MediaWatch, the organisation which was the successor to Mary Whitehouse's National Viewers and Listeners Association, closed down a few months ago. Not too long ago lobbying the UK Government, which the NVLA and MediaWatch did, was an effective way to seek to influence what was shown on television. In our present media climate with unrestricted access to hundreds of television channels and a virtually uncensored YouTube, national governments are essentially powerless over media policy. Mediawatch has been a casualty of this transformation in broadcast media.

There are a number of dedicated Christian television channels – Premier and TBN two of the best known – which broadcast programmes of a high quality and we must give thanks for these tiny voices in the midst of the plethora of secular channels. Equally there are Christians working in the media who will be seeking to act with integrity and to live out their faith in what can be an intimidating and combative environment for a Christian.

Christians in Media is a group which supports and encourages Christians involved in any aspect of the media. These roles can take on various functions - producers, journalists, photographers, editors, content creators, social media managers, press officers, war correspondents.



Christians in Media are encouraging us to pray specifically for the media, and for our Christian brothers and sisters who work in the media and the role they play in it. Sunday November 1st has been suggested as a day when individuals and church congregations could devote prayer specifically on this topic. Guidance and resources for a day of prayer can be found on the Christians in Media web site - www.christiansinmedia.co.uk/.

The vision of Christians in Media is 'to see Christians in the industry flourish and become key influencers, to see churches engaging positively with the media, and to see the life-affirming Gospel message of faith, hope and love increasingly reflected in the UK media'. It's a brave and ambitious vision, but we must be grateful that there are at least a small number of individuals with an aspiration to use the media for God's glory.

However we shouldn't just see 'the media' as something distant from us. If any of us use Twitter, Facebook or Instagram we too are part of the media world – producers as well as consumers - which brings with it the responsibility to *'Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be full of grace...'* Colossians 4.5.

DIY Home Abortions

With normal medical services having been restricted during the Covid pandemic, governments in the UK have made changes to the process of supervising abortion procedures. These changes have centred on allowing women to access abortion pills without a face-to-face consultation with a medical professional. The pills can be prescribed on the basis of a telephone conversation between the woman and a doctor without any medical examination. The medication is then sent out by post and women perform their own abortion at home without any medical supervision or support.



There is evidence from clinical studies that home abortions result in an increase in complications even when the 2-stage pills are taken as advised. Because no physical examination takes place before the pills are prescribed, vital signs relating to the woman's condition may be missed, for example that she has been pregnant for a longer period than she believes in which case taking the abortion pills could be harmful, that there are issues around domestic abuse, or the possibility of an ectopic pregnancy.

These temporary changes to procedure are being justified because of the demands on the health service over the past few months. However the Scottish Government would now like to make these changes permanent and is running a consultation to sound out public opinion.

The Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) is crucially concerned that not only will adopting these procedures trivialise abortion even further, but that the result will be an increase in the number of women suffering post-abortion complications.

SPUC are eager for anyone concerned about these proposed changes to abortion practice to respond to the consultation. You do not need to have medical knowledge to make a response and SPUC have provided guidance, along with additional information leaflets, which you can read [here](#). The consultation runs until 5 January 2021.

One of the most controversial issues recently in the Scottish Parliament has been the proposed **Hate Crime Bill** which we flagged up in the last newsletter. There are concerns from many perspectives that implementing this bill would greatly reduce freedom of speech, not least that it could have the result of preventing Christian preachers from publicly proclaiming Biblical principles. SBC made a submission to the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee about the proposed bill, and you can read that [here](#). The consultation attracted a larger than normal response from both organisations and individuals.

The Scottish Government has indicated over recent days that it is willing to reassess some of the components of the bill which have created greatest concern among respondents.

The Scottish Government's legislation to criminalise the **smacking of children** comes into force soon. You can hear a radio conversation contesting for and against positions [here](#).

Webinars



With the Covid pandemic having eliminated the possibilities of conferences and public meetings, there has been an explosion of 'webinar' meetings broadcast either on Youtube or Zoom.

Two which might be of some interest to readers are:

Home for Good, the organisation encouraging Christians to be involved in adoption and fostering, are holding their Summit in the week beginning 22 November. Click [here](#) for more information.

Justice and Peace Scotland: Conversation on Migration, Tuesday 27 October. More information [here](#).