

Why Christians must oppose assisted suicide

Briefing for church leaders – 11 October 2024

Introduction

This briefing is intended to accompany [PowerPoint slides](#) that Christian Concern has made available to Christians for use in churches and small groups.

It covers the same information with extra detail and references. Please feel free to use whichever slides and information serves the need of your church or small group.

Please use this, along with the other resources available at christianconcern.com/stop-assisted-suicide – including videos and printable resources to help your church stand for life by opposing assisted suicide.

What is happening?

- Labour MP Kim Leadbeater is introducing a bill to legalise ‘assisted dying’
- This would make it legal to help someone take their own life (assisted suicide)
- This kind of law has been rejected by parliament several times in recent years, but this bill has very powerful support
- If the bill passes, many lives will be taken
- It will be even more difficult to overturn this decision in the future than to stop it now

What to expect

- The expected proposal is to legalise assisted suicide for people expected to live six months or less
- This is intended as a ‘safeguard’ to limit the possibility of abuses
- However, campaigners, including Humanists UK, are already trying to remove this ‘safeguard’
- In other countries where assisted suicide or euthanasia has been introduced, similar safeguards have been challenged, leading to more liberalisation, fewer safeguards and more abuses
- If legalised, assisted suicide will be expanded to many more groups and safeguards will not work. Vulnerable people will feel the pressure to die in this way. We must not cross this line

What has happened elsewhere?

- The Netherlands:
 - 5.4% of all deaths are by euthanasia¹
 - 1 in 5 deaths by euthanasia are not reported²
- Belgium
 - 47% of assisted deaths are not reported³
 - Euthanasia figures rise every year⁴
- Canada
 - 4% of all deaths are by assisted suicide or euthanasia⁵
 - There are many tragic examples of how the law has been used (see below)
- Oregon
 - 54% of people who have died in Oregon felt they were a burden⁶
 - Diabetes could be considered a terminal illness and reason for suicide⁷

Assisted suicide and euthanasia in Canada

- Paralympian army veteran Christine Gauthier was offered ‘medically-assisted dying’ when she asked for a wheelchair lift to be installed in her home⁸
- After being denied requests for affordable housing that would ease her chronic health condition, a 51-year-old woman ended her life through assisted suicide⁹
- Alan Nichols, 61, was killed with only ‘hearing loss’ being listed as the reason for his request to die¹⁰
- A 27-year-old woman with autism was approved for ‘assisted dying’ despite father’s pleas and with no other publicly known conditions¹¹

¹ <https://english.euthanasiecommissie.nl/the-committees/documents/publications/annual-reports/2002/annual-reports/annual-reports>

² <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMsa071143>

³ <https://www.bmj.com/content/341/bmj.c5174.short>

⁴ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1098051/number-of-euthanasia-instances-registered-in-belgium/>

⁵ <https://www.cardus.ca/research/health/reports/from-exceptional-to-routine/>

⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9899026/>

⁷ <https://www.carenokilling.org.uk/articles/six-months-redefined/>

⁸ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/christine-gauthier-paralympian-euthanasia-canada-b2238319.html>

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/11/canada-cases-right-to-die-laws>

¹⁰ <https://apnews.com/article/covid-science-health-toronto-7c631558a457188d2bd2b5cfd360a867>

¹¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/calgary-maid-father-daughter-court-injunction-judicial-review-decision-1.7154794>

Assisted suicide without family's knowledge

In 2023, 47-year-old UK teacher Alastair Hamilton travelled to Switzerland and paid £10,000 to be killed at a clinic¹².

He had no diagnosed illness and his family, including his mother, were not even informed – they believed he was going to Paris to meet a friend.

This is an example of how irresponsible some 'clinics' are and how tragic the consequences can be for the victim and their family.

Why should Christians care?

- Life is not ours to take
 - We are made in God's image, with value and dignity (Gen 1:27)
 - Deliberately taking human life is condemned because we are God's image bearers (Gen 9:5-6)
 - Although the law given to Moses includes mitigations for accidental killing and self-defence (Exodus 21:12-14; 22:2-3), no such exception is made for 'mercy killing'
- Assisted suicide is not compassionate
 - Proponents of assisted suicide claim that it is compassionate
 - However, for Christians, suicide is wrong and is never condoned in the Bible (see below)
 - For non-Christians, suicide or euthanasia means an eternity without Christ
- We are to protect the vulnerable
 - A law would inevitably lead to pressure on vulnerable people to take their lives
 - It also sends the message: some lives are not worth living
 - Christians who love their neighbour must oppose assisted suicide

Example from scripture: King Saul and Abimelech

- King Saul asked his armour bearer to kill him, who refused "for he feared greatly" (1 Samuel 31:4)
- A young man told King David that he had complied with King Saul's request to be killed. David criticised him and called for his execution (2 Samuel 1:1-16)

¹² <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12987315/teacher-illness-switzerland-assisted-suicide-lethal-injection.html>

- Abimelech also asked to be killed after having his head crushed by a millstone (Judges 9:53-54)
- His armour bearer complies
- In the flow of the narrative, his death by his armour bearer is the contemptible end of an evil character. His request of euthanasia is just the climax of a life of wickedness and his request for euthanasia is not endorsed

Examples from Scripture: Jonah and Job

Jonah 4:3-4 (ESV) says:

When Jonah despaired of life he said:

“Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

And the Lord said, “Do you do well to be angry?”

Jonah didn’t contemplate committing suicide but asked the Lord to end his life. Nevertheless, the Lord criticised his attitude.

Others in Scripture, like Job, experienced intense suffering but are commended for perseverance (James 5:11).

What can Christians do?

Please encourage your church to speak to your MP directly.

You can contact them using [details on the parliamentary website](#), attending a surgery or requesting a meeting.

This may be daunting, but it is more important than any other step you could take. If you are a church leader and can arrange a meeting with other church leaders to share your concerns about assisted suicide, this could be even more fruitful.

You can find many resources to help with this at christianconcern.com/stop-assisted-suicide