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Latest: More Than 1,300 Church Leaders Warn Conversion Practices Bill Will Criminalise Christian Teaching

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Represents a grave threat to Christian churches and their ministry, and to Christian families"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

More than 1,300 church leaders have signed an open letter to Equalities Minister Bridget Phillipson warning that the draft Conversion Practices Bill would criminalise mainstream Christian teaching. The letter says the bill "represents a grave threat to Christian churches and their ministry, and to Christian families" and that its vague language "would make the teaching of normal, historic Christian doctrine and ethics on marriage, family, sex and morality a criminal offence".

The letter was organised by "Greater Love", a new group of conservative Christian leaders campaigning for "the historic, universal Christian understanding of marriage, human nature and sexual ethics". Its own site now counts 1,618 ministers and 2,100 supporters signed - the group's own figure, higher than the 1,300-plus reported in the press.

Pastor Graham Nicholls of Christ Church Haywards Heath, speaking for his fellow ministers, put the stakes in a single sentence: "We will not cease to fulfil our duty to God to teach his ways faithfully, even if an unjust law should make us criminals for doing so." It is the kind of line that ends up quoted for years, because it draws a line no pastor wants to draw - and says he will not cross it.

The draft bill, published in June 2026, would create a criminal offence of "conversion practices" - conduct intended to make a person have or cease to have a particular sexual orientation or transgender identity - carrying up to five years in prison and unlimited fines. A parliamentary call for evidence closed at 5 p.M. On Monday 16 November.

Greater Love Letter: 1,300 Church Leaders Against Conversion Practices Bill

The Greater Love writing group spans the churches: Revd Dr Thomas Brand of the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, Revd Ray Brown, a Baptist, Revd Clare Hendry of the Church of England, Revd Dr Ian Paul, Revd Tim Vasby-Burnie and Dr Julie Maxwell. Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Presbyterian and Pentecostal - a breadth that makes the letter hard to dismiss as the voice of one corner of the Church.

The letter's argument turns on vagueness. The bill's defenders say it targets coercive practices. The signatories say its language is so wide that ordinary preaching and pastoral care would fall inside it. A sermon on marriage. A prayer with a young person. A conversation in a pastor's study. The letter's authors say the bill's backers "have been clear that they want the normal views of mainstream Christian churches to be criminalised".

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment a complaint withdrawn under threat -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

READ THE FULL STORY

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