



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on February 6, 2024

## Pastor Convicted for Displaying Bible Verse Outside London Abortion Clinic

A pastor who held a sign with a Bible verse outside a London abortion clinic was fined \$3,000 for violating a “buffer zone” around the clinic.

On Friday, a judge ruled that Stephen Green, 72, of South Wales had broken a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) issued by the Ealing Council. The order prohibits “protesting, namely engaging in an act of approval/disapproval, with respect to issues related to abortion services” within a designated radius of an abortion clinic.

According to the London-based [Christian Concern](#), whose legal arm, the Christian Legal Centre, is representing Green, Green’s conviction stems from a February 2023 occurrence in which he, along with other pro-lifers, stood outside a West London abortion clinic holding signs reading: “Psalm 139:13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb.”

That, in a country whose official religion is Christianity and whose former monarch was responsible for the quoted Bible translation, was enough to bring the cops to the clinic. A clinic staffer reported to the police that the “suspects” in the roughly hourlong “incident” included one who was “holding a Bible in his hand, which he appeared to be reading aloud from.” The same person said the police had responded via text, “saying they were treating it as an emergency.”

Green, director of the activist organization Christian Voice, had departed by the time the police arrived. Seven months later, he received a prosecution notice from the Ealing Council stating that he “did something [he] was prohibited from doing in an area which is within the” buffer zone established by the PSPO. Specifically, he “protested by engaging in an act of disapproval ... with respect to issues related to abortion services” and “had text displayed on a large sign ... relating directly or indirectly to the termination of pregnancy.”

Green’s case was heard in October.

Christian Concern reported Friday:

Handing down judgment today at Uxbridge Magistrates’ Court in West London, District Judge Kathryn Verghis said: “The extract of the Psalm mentioning ‘my mother’s womb’ ... was an act of protest of abortion. There were less controversial verses you could have



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chosen to display. I can come to no other conclusion [than] that [the verse] was an act of disapproval [of abortion services] ... an act prohibited [by the PSPO].

Whilst admitting that the PSPO was “a significant interference” of Mr. Green’s rights under articles 9 and 10 of the European Convention, she said those rights had to be weighed against individuals accessing abortion services.

She concluded that Mr. Green’s “protest was peaceful ... but your actions were not proportionate.... I find you guilty as summoned.”

Verghis sentenced Green to pay a “victim surcharge” and costs totaling approximately \$3,000.

Green announced that he would appeal Verghis’ decision to the Crown Court.

“As a Christian I should be able to preach freely all over the land,” he said. “Psalm 139 is about how we all belong to God from conception.”

“Buffer zones and this conviction is [sic] a direct attack on the Bible and free speech, which is being licensed by the state,” he continued. “I have no choice but to continue to defend myself and fight for justice.”

Green said he would not abide by Verghis’ decision. “I have been ordered to pay costs; frankly I would rather go to prison than pay this to the state that has banned the Bible.”

“If it is now a criminal offense to hold a sign with a verse from Psalm 139 on it in a London street, then none of us is free,” he declared.

Andrea Williams, chief executive of the Christian Legal Centre, said Friday that “the effect of the PSPO is to create an area where Bible verses and prayer are outlawed.”

In October, [she observed](#):

There have now been over 10 million abortions in the UK since abortion was legalized in 1967. That is a staggering number. That is almost twice the population of Scotland and more than the entire population of London. Millions of people would be alive today if abortion had not been legalized.

Instead of lamenting this loss of life we are industrializing it, making it ever easier to obtain abortion effectively on demand, and now we are criminalizing dissent.

The 2014 Anti-Social Behavior, Crime and Policing Act gave local councils the authority to issue PSPOs, which Christian Concern notes are “usually reserved for anti-social behavior such as dog fouling, littering and alcohol and drug misuse.” Ealing passed its PSPO in 2018, creating the first abortion-clinic buffer zone in the United Kingdom.

Since then, numerous councils have promulgated PSPOs to shield abortion clinics from opposition — and vulnerable women from alternatives to abortion. Parliament took the next logical step in January 2023, creating a buffer zone around every abortion clinic in the nation.

Referring to Green’s conviction, Christian Concern wrote:

It is believed that the last time something like this happened in this country was in 1670. The Quakers William Penn and William Meade were arrested and put on trial for a silent



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religious act in a public street for an apparent contravention of an Act of Parliament that prohibited gatherings of more than 5 people.

Their brave stand eventually led to the free speech clause of the Pennsylvania and, in due course, the American constitution.

One hopes that Green's response produces a similar rebirth of liberty in the home of the Magna Carta.



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