Assisted Suicide

A seminar from CARE

Assisted Suicide

1. What does the Bible say?

2. What is currently happening in the UK?

What is ‘assisted dying’?

1. A doctor withholding treatment from a patient who does not wish to have their life extended

2. A doctor providing a patient with palliative care treatment that may speed up death but will make the patient more comfortable

3. A doctor providing a patient lethal drugs, so that once taken, they will be dead within hours

What is ‘assisted dying’?

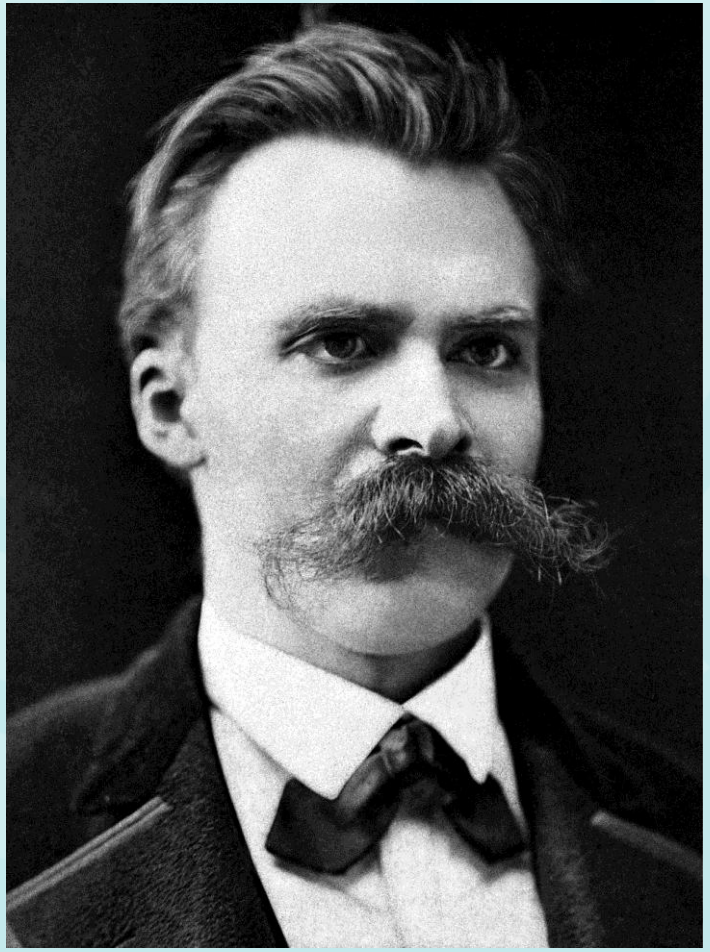
A better term is:

Assisted Suicide

Arguments for Assisted Suicide

1. It provides dignity
2. It reduces suffering
3. It gives us autonomy

1. Dignity



“I want to die proudly when it is no longer possible to live properly.”

Frederick Nietzsche

1. Dignity

"So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them."

(Genesis 1:27)

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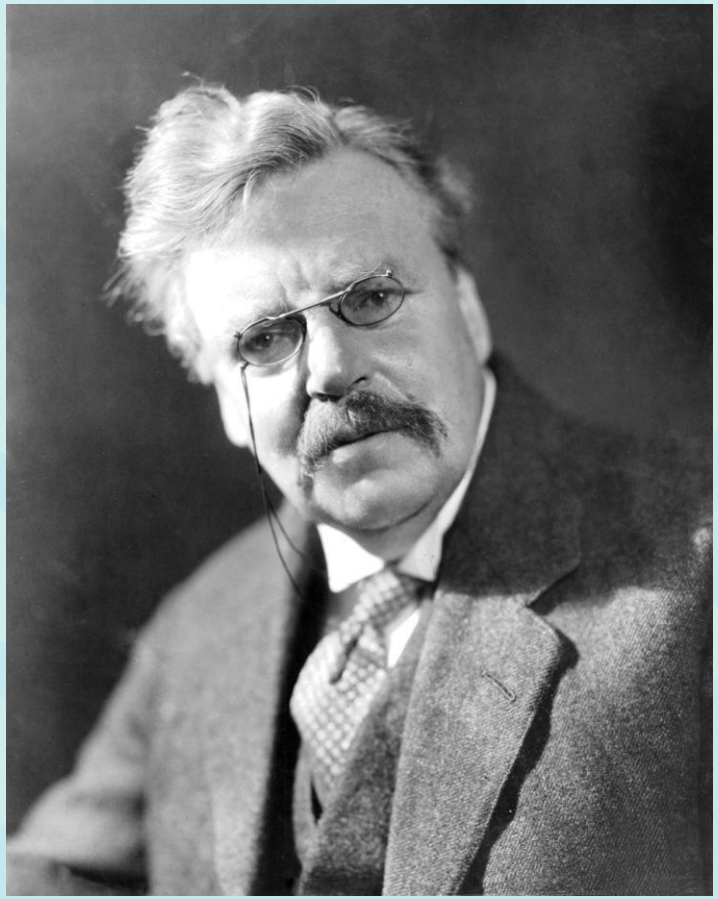
"Life is a precious gift from God. Neither illness nor suffering diminish the value of a human life, nor can they diminish the image of God in which human beings are created."

(Bishop Stephen Croft)

1. Dignity



"People are equal in the same way pennies are equal. Some are bright, others are dull; some are worn smooth, others are sharp and fresh.

But all are equal in value for each penny bears the image of the sovereign; each person bears the image of the King of Kings."

G.K. Chesterton

2. Suffering

“For many people the fear of being snuffed out before our time has been superseded by a greater fear, that of suffering a painful and lingering death when all possibility of revival has gone, being kept alive by deteriorating all the time.

It is not death that people fear most, but undignified dying.”

Ludovic Kennedy

2. Suffering

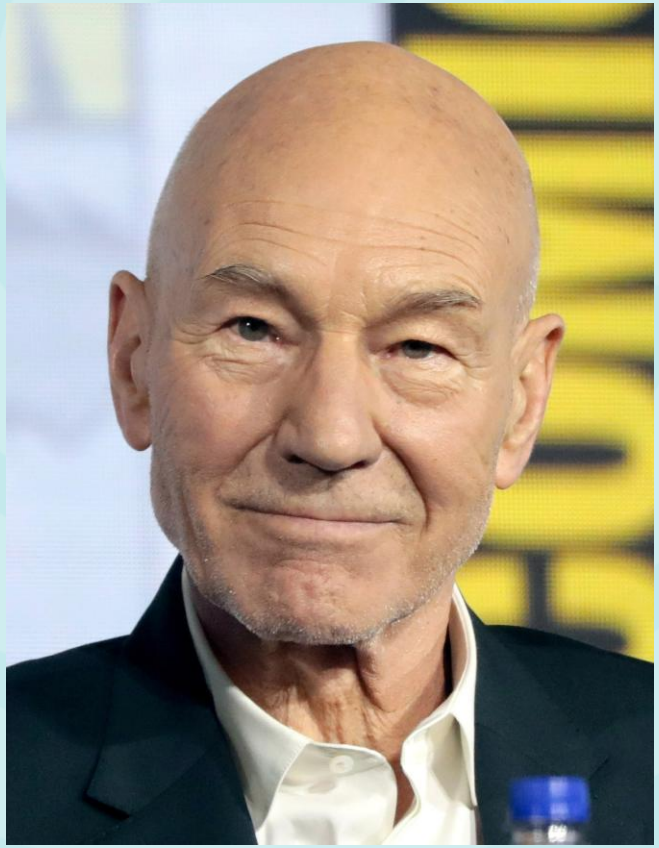
2. Suffering

“Biblical thought always draws a distinction between removing suffering and removing the sufferer. In biblical thinking, human life is sacrosanct. We are not at liberty to destroy innocent human life, however noble may be the motive.”

Dr John Wyatt

2. Suffering

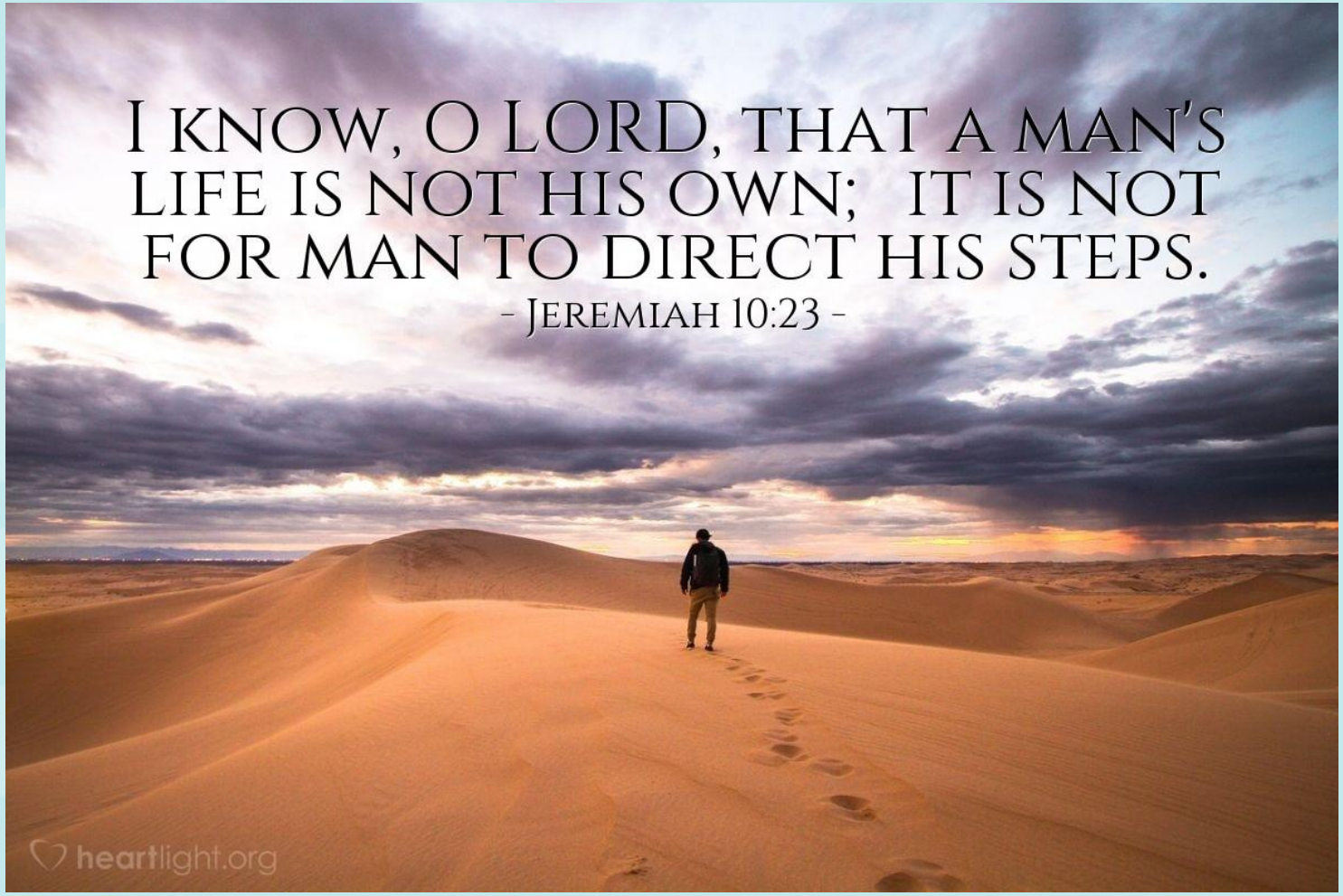
3. Autonomy



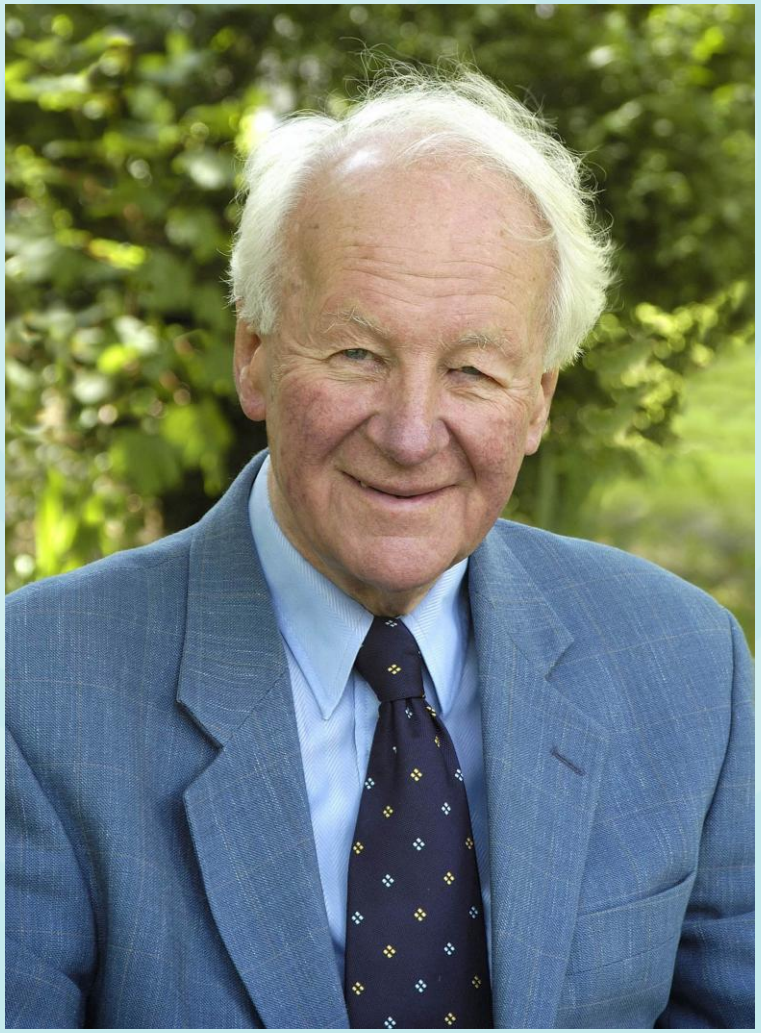
“We have no control over how we arrive in the world but at the end of life we should have control over how we leave it.”

Patrick Stewart

3. Autonomy


I KNOW, O LORD, THAT A MAN'S LIFE IS NOT HIS OWN; IT IS NOT FOR MAN TO DIRECT HIS STEPS.
- JEREMIAH 10:23 -
heartlight.org

3. Autonomy



“The proper name for this frame of mind is not autonomy but hubris, presumption before God. Although the lines of demarcation between God’s responsibility and ours are not always sharp, and although God does call us into a privileged partnership with himself, yet we human beings may not trespass into his territory or assume his prerogatives.”

John Stott

3. Autonomy

- Undermines suicide prevention efforts
- No disability group supports it
- Fears that many will feel a burden on family or friends

3. Autonomy

"[An Assisted Suicide] report recommends that physician-assisted suicide should not be offered to people with disabilities who are not terminally ill "*at this point in time*". It is those italicised words that send a chill down the spine of many people with physical disabilities."

Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson

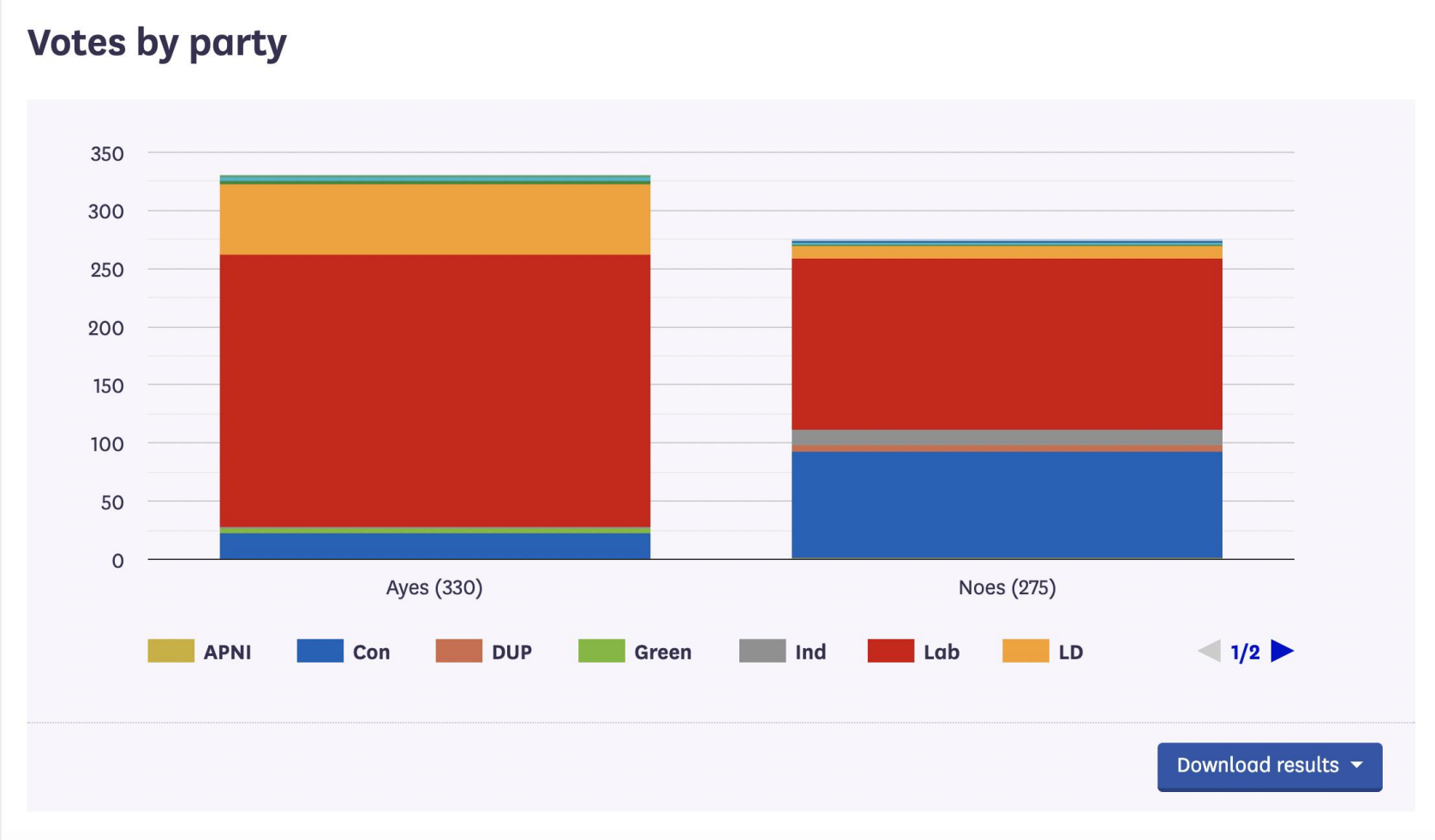
Arguments vs Assisted Suicide

1. Human dignity is inherent
2. Reduce suffering through palliative care
3. There are limits to autonomy, to protect others

Q and A

The Leadbeater Bill

2nd Reading

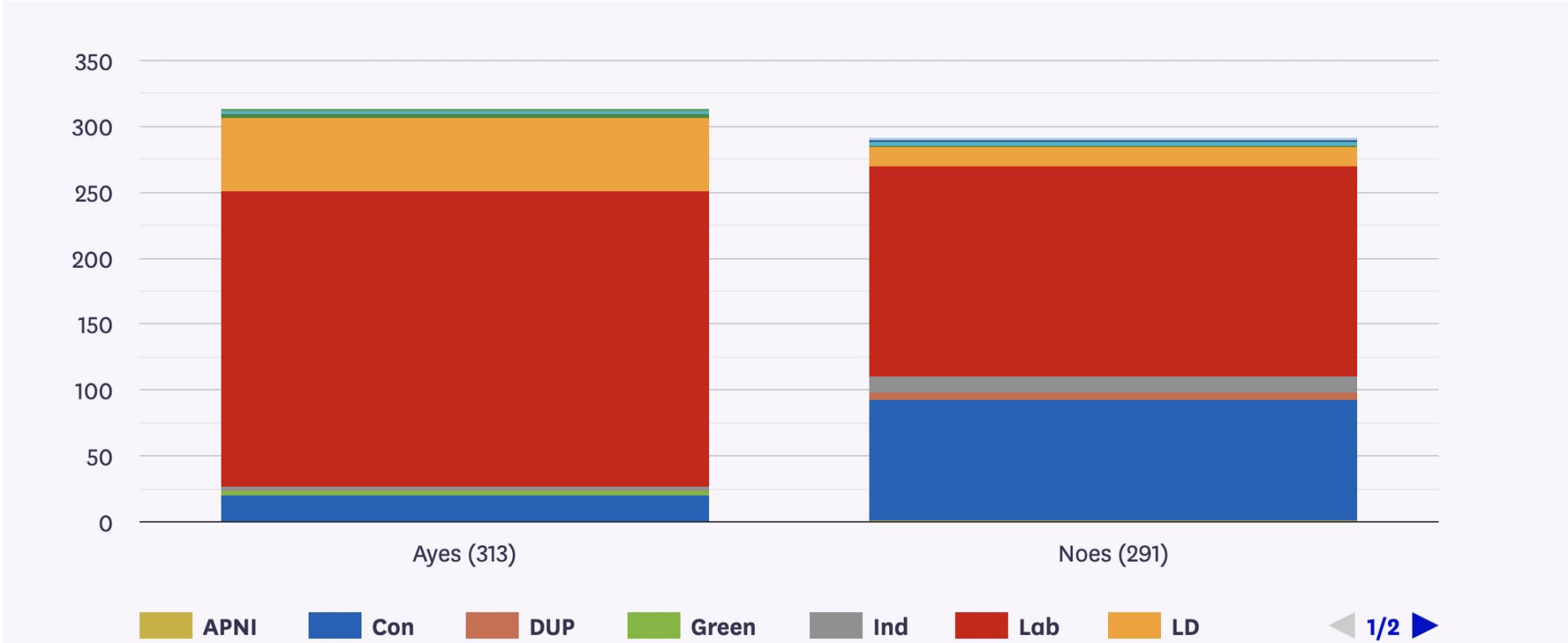

Votes by party
350
300
250
200
150
100
50
0
Ayes (330)
Noes (275)
APNI
Con
DUP
Green
Ind
Lab
LD
1/2
Download results

More than 100 amendments proposed

"For the mover of a bill to present such a huge number of amendments to their *own* bill suggests a serious lack of confidence in its safety and rigour. In 20 years I've not seen anything so shambolic. Even supporters of the bill must surely see that the bill can't pass like this."

3rd Reading

Votes by party



Next Steps for the Bill

- House of Lords Second Reading
- House of Lords Committee Stage and Report Stage
- House of Lords Third Reading
- ‘Ping-pong’

Problems with the Bill

1. 6-month prognoses are not reliable
2. People can request it for any reason
3. Doctors expected to stop coercion
4. Safeguards do not hold

Canada

- Had similar safeguards to the UK legislation
- Legislation now being considered to include children
- Plans to expand it to include mental illness
- Stories of people having it because of poverty
- 28% of Canadians believe homelessness is an appropriate reason

A God of Miracles

What can you do?

- Pray
- Write to Peers
- Support palliative care

Palliative care

“It was possible to live a lifetime in a few weeks; that time is a matter of depth, not length; that in the right atmosphere and with pain controlled so that the patient is free to be herself, the last days can be the richest, they can be a time of reconciliation that makes the dying peaceful and the mourning bearable.”

Palliative care

- 215,000 people miss out on palliative care every year
- A “postcode lottery”
- Just over 1% of NHS budget

Palliative care

“It would mean that we became a society where the state fully funds a service for terminally ill people to end their own lives but shockingly only funds around one third of palliative care.

Every person is of immeasurable and irreducible value, and should be able to access the care and support that they need.”

Alison’s Story

Q and A

About CARE

- Our Vision: **Politics Renewed, Lives Transformed**
- We speak on behalf of the most vulnerable in society
- We look to bring truth and grace to politics
- We **Engage** the church, **Equip** politicians, and **Empower** future leaders

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