

Living Out

Charity Commission decision dated 15 February 2016

Issue

Whether the CIO, Living Out, would at the time of its registration be established for exclusively charitable purposes and be entitled to registration.

That involves determination of the following issues:

- a. What are the proposed purposes of the institution?
- b. Are the proposed purposes of the institution charitable, namely
 - (i) is the purpose one which falls within the description of purposes and:
 - (ii) is the purpose for public benefit?

The decision:

In light of the revised objects of the CIO:

For the public benefit, the advancement of the evangelical Christian religion and Christian principles of love, acceptance, compassion and understanding, in particular, but not exclusively by:

- *Encouraging evangelical congregations to welcome and accept same sex attracted individuals and provide them with pastoral support.*
- *Repudiate all attitudes and actions which victimise or diminish people whose affections are directed towards people of the same sex.*
- *Providing pastoral support and advice in relation to biblical teachings on human sexuality assisting same sex attracted Christians reconcile their sexuality with the teachings of the bible*

and the further supporting evidence produced, it is concluded that the organisation is entitled to be registered in the Register of Charities, in accordance with section 30 of the Charities Act 2011.

The original decision:

The original decision was made on 22 May 2015.

The objects of Living Out as set out in the application were:

For the public benefit, the advancement of the evangelical Christian religion in particular (but not limited to) providing teaching based on the Bible on issues of human sexuality, raising awareness and understanding of evangelical Christian beliefs and practices in relation to human sexuality and by providing pastoral support and advice for those who are struggling with such issues.

In determining the precise meaning of the objects and the meaning of the phrase ‘*in particular providing teaching based on the Bible on issues of human sexuality, raising awareness and understanding of evangelical Christian beliefs and practices in relation to human sexuality*’ regard was had to the background information in relation to Living Out.

It was not evidenced that the organisation sought to promote the wider Christian religion rather than the specific doctrines with regard to homosexuality. The organisation was concerned with a particular doctrine forming part of a wider set of religious beliefs. It was necessary to determine whether the particular doctrine was capable of conferring a public benefit. Such an approach is one which has been accepted by the Court in a number of cases.

Whether or not the promotion of the particular doctrine in this case was for the public benefit was a matter on which neither the Court nor the Commission could take a view. The promulgation of the doctrines in question is not a matter which it is possible for the Commission to say either is, or is not, for the public benefit.

Accordingly, the Commission was not satisfied that the purpose of Living Out was for the public benefit.

Grounds for review:

The organization sought a review of the decision on the basis that the purpose involved the wider promotion of the Christian religion, rather than the particular tenets relating to homosexuality. Living out was concerned with Christian principles of love, compassion and tolerance. It was not merely focused on assisting people who experience same-sex attraction, but with the much wider questions of how the Christian religion brings to bear principles of love, compassion, grace and generosity to people of all sexual orientations and experiences.

Decision review:

The Commission met with representatives of Living Out. They explained the organisation undertook outreach work directed at promoting understanding and support within the Church towards same sex attracted individuals, assisting such individuals to practice their faith.

Further evidence of the work of Living Out was submitted following this meeting, to illustrate the wider promotion of Christian doctrines. This included a summary of outreach activities undertaken thus far, such as:

- Training delivered by two of the trustees at theological colleges for future clergy; focussing on how to support people facing issues of sexuality in a compassionate way.
- Speaking at major Christian Conferences, delivering pastoral and practical teaching on sexuality, promoting care and understanding.
- Assisting with the development of material on sexuality for Christian youth organisation "Youth for Christ".
- Taking part in Interviews on this subject on Radio 5 Live, Local BBC Radio Stations, Premier Christian Radio, and delivering training for BBC Local Radio Religious Affairs Editors from across the UK on Christianity and Same-Sex attraction.
- Supporting individuals (via email and face to face), and helping people engage with others about their sexuality, enabling them to live out their whole Christian life in that context.

The Commission also received details of some of the written materials produced by Living Out. This targets audiences such as parents, young people, youth workers and pastors. It promotes Christian principles of, for example, unconditional love, compassion and acceptance towards people affected by issues of sexuality. Such material included:

- Articles published on Living Out's website (www.livingout.org).

- Material published in “Christianity Magazine”; representing engagement with Christians of different perspectives as well as challenges to churches on their homophobia.

In light of the further evidence and submissions, the Commission was satisfied that Living Out was a more broadly-focussed organisation, interested in promoting acceptance, love, compassion and a welcoming place in the Christian Church for same-sex attracted individuals who wish to stay true to their Christian faith; and which was reflected by the revised objects adopted by Living Out.

On the basis of the further evidence of its work and the revised objects, the Commission was satisfied that if registered, at the time of registration Living Out would be established for charitable purposes and entitled to be registered under s30 of the Charities Act 2011.