

Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament

Question & Answers

A. THE STATUS OF CBS

1. Is the CBS a Church of England charity?

No. The trustees wanted to be quite clear on this point and so took advice from a leading charity lawyer. They advised that the CBS is subject to neither Rome nor Canterbury. It is not part of a Church of England structure and it has its own independent hierarchy. Its membership includes individuals outside the Church of England.

The CBS was founded for the advancement of the catholic faith in accordance with traditions which were, at the time, outside the scope of the Church of England. Subsequent changes in the Church of England have meant that rites that had previously caused CBS's founders and supporters to get into trouble with the authorities had come to be accepted by the Church of England authorities.

B. CBS - ITS FUNDS

2. Isn't the Confraternity's money meant to be used for Church of England purposes?

The Confraternity's funds must be used for the charitable purposes stated in its Constitution, namely "the advancement of the catholic faith in the Anglican Tradition". There is no requirement for it to be limited to the Church of England and there is no constitutional link with the Church of England.

3. Where did the Confraternity's money come from?

Much of the CBS's funds were received in the form of subscriptions from large numbers of private individuals, received directly rather than through any Church of England channels. There have also been a number of bequests, typically around £100 or £200 each and sometimes up to £1,000. Much of the current balance is attributable to the successful investment of funds by successive trustees.

4. Can I get my subscriptions back if I don't approve of the grant?

No, subscriptions are not refundable.

C. CBS – ITS MEMBERS

5. Is it true that the Trustees amended the Constitution so that they could remain as members, despite having joined the Ordinariate?

Amendments to the Constitution are made by the Council-General, not by the Trustees.

In May 2009 the whole Council-General approved amendments to the Constitution to allow the Council-General to add to the list of churches from which the Confraternity can draw its members.

In 2010, members of the Council-General voted by an overwhelming majority to add the Ordinariate and the Anglican Church in North America to this list.

6. Can the decision to admit members of the Ordinariate be rescinded?

No. The Council-General could make a fresh decision to remove the Ordinariate from the list of churches whose members can be admitted to the CBS, but this would not have retrospective effect.

7. Can the Constitution of CBS be amended to exclude members of the Ordinariate?

The trustees have been advised that in theory the Council-General could amend the Constitution to limit membership as it sees fit, however before doing so a number of legal issues would need to be considered including discrimination law.

We are told that there could also be issues to address if CBS wanted to terminate the membership of existing members.

D. GRANT TO THE ORDINARIATE

8. Who decided to make the grant to the Ordinariate? Shouldn't the Trustees have consulted members before making the grant?

The Trustees took this decision, as with all past grant decisions.

The Trustees have power under the Constitution to exercise any powers of the Confraternity that are not formally reserved to the Council-General or the Superior-General.

9. Has the money already been paid to the Ordinariate?

Yes, the grant was paid over to the Ordinariate on 27 May 2011.

10. What were the terms on which the grant was made?

The grant was paid on condition that it would be used for the provision of theological teaching, learning and development for candidates for priesthood, for the support of those priests following their ordination and for other purposes connected with the advancement of the catholic faith.

11. Can the CBS get the money back?

Yes but only if the Ordinariate fails to comply with the terms on which the grant has been made.

12. What about donors who would have expected their funds to be kept within the Church of England?

Donors' wishes are important but, unless the donors made their gifts subject to conditions (which the trustees would be obliged to honour), they are applicable for the Confraternity's charitable purposes. Those purposes are not limited to the Church of England.

The research and advice commissioned by the Trustees confirms that the founders and historic supporters of the Confraternity can be assumed to have intended their gifts to be used to support the practice of religion in accordance with doctrines that now look more consistent with the Ordinariate than with the direction in which the Church of England seems to be travelling.

13. As some of the trustees are members of the Ordinariate, didn't they have a conflict of interest in relation to the grant?

The Trustees were mindful of the potential conflict issue when considering the request from the Ordinariate.

When the grant was made, it was confirmed by the Ordinariate that it would not be used so as to confer any personal benefit on any of the Trustees and specifically that no part of the grant would be paid by way of stipend or salary to any of the Confraternity's Trustees.

14. Is it true that members' meetings were cancelled in order to avoid having to consult them about the grant?

No, this is not true. The Council-General meets annually, and met in June this year in the usual way.

15. Aren't the Trustees running off with the family silver?

Emphatically not. The Trustees have identified the Ordinariate as a constructive and effective way of advancing the Confraternity's charitable purposes. They are not intending to leave the Confraternity.

E. THE FUTURE OF CBS

16. Can the CBS continue to operate now that the grant has been made?

Absolutely – the CBS has sufficient funds to continue its grantmaking activities as before. It will continue to further its charitable purposes, which have remained unchanged since 1999 as follows:

“3.1 The Confraternity is established for the advancement of the catholic faith in the Anglican Tradition and in particular to promote:

3.1.1 the honour due to Jesus Christ our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament of his Body and Blood;

3.1.2 prayer for one another at the Eucharist;

- 3.1.3 careful preparation for and reception of Holy Communion, including the Eucharistic fast;
- 3.1.4 the reverent and dignified celebration of the Eucharist and the reservation and veneration of the Blessed Sacrament;
- 3.1.5 the continuance of the catholic priesthood; and
- 3.1.6 catholic theological teaching, learning and development.”

17. What is the Confraternity going to do next?

The Council-General agreed at its meeting on 30 June that the Superior-General would convene an advisory group which will include a range of views to discern the way forward. This group’s job will be:

- (a) to consider the future membership and role of the Confraternity;
- (b) to consult members (including by convening District meetings); and
- (c) to report back to the Council-General on or before 30 June 2012.

18. Isn’t the Confraternity irrevocably split by the grant decision?

It was clear from the Council-General meeting on 30 June that there were strong feelings both in favour of the grant and against it. However, the serving Superior-General, Father Christopher Pearson, was unanimously re-elected for a period of one year to lead the Confraternity through a process of consultation and discernment.

The Council-General has agreed a plan of action which includes the appointment of Father Sam Philpott, who has expressed in public his opposition to the grant, as a Trustee to work alongside the other Trustees.

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