

## Affirming your Statement of Faith – why do it?

Most Christian organisations have a Statement of Faith which sets out the fundamentals of their belief. This can be a separate document, part of the Constitution of the organisation, or a church doctrine to which they profess their adherence (eg for Anglicans, the 39 Articles).

This Statement of Faith is generally separate from the Vision or Mission Statement of the organisation – in a sense, the Vision or Mission grows out of the Statement of Faith.

The very first section of the CMA Standards Council Principles and Standards is headed “God First”. We believe it is essential that the organisation be and remain at all times centred in Christ and that this must be the ultimate touchstone for the organisation’s objects, vision, mission and activities.

Our Standards 1.1 and 1.2 read as follows:

- 1.1 The organisation must publicly state its Christian ethos and purposes, for example in its constitution, vision/mission statements or website.
- 1.2 The organisation must have a written statement of faith, approved annually and unanimously by its governing body, which is consistent with, and is not in conflict with, the Nicene Creed or otherwise satisfactorily demonstrate its commitment.

You will note that Standard 1.2 requires that the statement of Faith be approved “annually and unanimously” by the organisation’s governing body. The reason for this is that history has shown that Christian organisations may start out Christ-centred, closely and faithfully aligning themselves with their Statement of Faith, but over time can drift away and become Christian in name only, albeit still doing good works.

A classic example would be the YMCA, which started off in 1851 as the Young Men’s Christian Association, but which now “proudly” states that to be a member you need not be young, male or Christian! Their Mission is to be an organisation with a “base of Christian values” – a very different thing from being a Christ centred organisation with a Statement of Faith consistent with the Nicene Creed.

This phenomenon is known as “Mission Drift”, and can subtly happen over time. Often it can happen for the best of reasons, eg:

- to broaden the skill base or networking capacity of the governing body, non-Christians are invited to join the governing body, eventually forming the majority;
- to broaden the range of potential donors or volunteers, the Christian basis of the organisation is downplayed, hidden or removed;
- for reasons of personnel security, where the organisation operates in hostile areas, being overtly Christian may pose a serious risk to the safety of workers and volunteers; or
- to obtain tax benefits, or Government grants, the Christian basis of the organisation is downplayed, hidden or removed.

None of these decisions is “wrong” in and of itself, but unless an organisation is careful, the cumulative effect over time can be Mission Drift. The outcome is that the soul (or heart, or ethos – call it what you will) of the organisation moves away from being God First, to the detriment of both

the Kingdom and the organisation itself. Decisions become made for “worldly” reasons, on a “worldly” basis, without seeking and prioritising God’s will.

We believe one way of helping to combat Mission Drift is for the members of the governing body, as the guiding hand and corporate brain of the organisation, to consciously recommit each year to the Christ centredness of the organisation, to remind themselves of *why* they are doing what they are doing. If the *why* is clear in their minds, then the *what* and *how* will follow.

We suggest that this be done by the governing body passing a unanimous resolution recommitting the organisation to its statement of faith at its first meeting of the year.

In passing, we suggest that, while it is not one of our Standards, it would be good practice for the governing body at the same time to review and recommit to its purpose as set out in its objects/vision statement/mission statement, to help remind itself that all decisions it makes must be to further that purpose.