

**Subject:** TLC Faith and their celebrants.

**FOI reference:** FOI/17/01521

**Date received:** 30 June 2017

**Date responded:** 21 July 2017

**Information requested:**

Information about the TLC Faith and its celebrants.

**NRS Response:**

Most of the information requested relates to the relevant statutory provisions and policies and practice of NRS rather than being information that we hold. We have sought to answer these questions in full whether or not we hold relevant information on those points.

1. *“How can the TLC Faith be considered a faith when there is absolutely no information available about them or their beliefs anywhere?”*

Applications for temporary authorisation to solemnise marriage in Scotland can be made by **religious or belief bodies** for one of their members or by members themselves. Temporary authorisation can be for a specified marriage (section 12(1)(a) of the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 (“1977 Act”)) or for a specified period (section 12(1)(b) of the 1977 Act).

“Religious or belief body” means an organised group of people—

(a) which meets regularly for religious worship; or

(b) the principal object (or one of the principal objects) of which is to uphold or promote philosophical beliefs and which meets regularly for that purpose (section 26 of the 1977 Act).

TLC Faith’s statement of beliefs was initially supplied to National Records of Scotland (NRS) in an application package, and formed part of the material we assessed as part of considering their application for authorisation. I have attached a copy of the statement they supplied to NRS. TLC Faith state explicitly that they aim to further understanding of their beliefs through word of mouth, rather than via social media. In authorising religious and belief bodies to solemnise marriages in Scotland, we assess (as above) whether they are a legitimate body upholding their philosophical or religious beliefs, have a constitution, office bearers and so on, but do not require any body to lay out those beliefs in any particular way, or direct how they must be communicated to potential members of that body.

2. *“The TLC celebrants have no information available online regarding this. In fact they don't even have a website so where is this documented that this is what they are following?”*

There is no requirement for a religious or belief body to make information available online for the purposes of its members being temporarily authorized to solemnise marriage in Scotland.

NRS must, in registering celebrants and temporarily authorising celebrants, be satisfied that they are (and continue to be) fit and proper persons to solemnise marriage in Scotland. NRS will act on evidence showing that celebrants, once authorised, have not upheld the standards the Registrar General expects of someone authorised to solemnise marriages in Scotland. Temporary authorisation can be removed, and is not a guarantee of ongoing authorisation.

3. *“Is TLC the sponsoring religious or belief body that is affiliated with the celebrants or are TLC sponsored by another religious/ belief body?”*

Yes – celebrants for TLC Faith are affiliated with that body, and authorised on that basis.

4. *“If celebrants are temporarily authorised to conduct weddings- how long does this temporary authorisation last for? They seem to be carrying out several weddings each week.”*

Celebrants temporarily authorised under section 12 of the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 are authorised either to solemnise a marriage or marriages specified in the authorisation or marriages during such period as is specified in the authorisation. Where celebrants have successfully carried out weddings over a period of time under this arrangement, we may work with the body the celebrant is affiliated with, with a view to registering the celebrant as empowered to solemnise marriage for a period of up to 3 years under section 9 of the 1977 Act. Some bodies – such as Humanist Society Scotland – following such a longer-term period of authorisation – have chosen to apply to Scottish Government to become a prescribed body, which enables them to nominate a list of celebrants to the Registrar General to be registered to solemnise marriages during a specified period.

## 1.1 TLC FAITH - STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Church of TLC Faith was set up in March 2009, by Pastor Christine Lyons.

1. At TLC Faith we believe that through our Tender Loving Care we have the ability to reach people, to touch their lives, and therefore make a difference. By doing so we believe we can help make the world a better place for everyone
2. We believe that by adhering to this, and through our charitable and volunteering work, our spiritual rewards and reaped here on earth, in our lives now, and in whatever else may follow.
3. We believe that there should be no barriers to race, culture, colour, gender, sex, and TLC Faith welcomes members from all other faiths and beliefs.
4. We believe in freedom of thought, expression of thought, within the framework of the TLC Faith Belief and Value system, allowing members to express and share their own religious beliefs with others, through our open discussion periods.
5. We accept death as an inevitable part of life and, if we have followed TLC Faith core value system to the best of their ability, and passed this wisdom on to others, then we can, with a clear conscience, be ready to face whatever may or not be ahead of us.
6. At TLC Faith we believe no one knows for certain what death will bring. And without physical evidence of what this is, we will not speculate on what this may or may not be. We will simply be ready to embrace it. However, as we welcome members from other faiths, they are free to continue with their own beliefs regarding death

### TLC FAITH VALUE SYSTEM

Basically TLC Faith's Value System is twofold, and this is reinforced in various ways throughout our services.

- It emphasises that everyone should know the difference between right and wrong, accepting that everyone is accountable for their actions – and that each action has either a positive or negative consequence. This is based on Respect. Paramount is respect for ourselves, for others and for the environment.
- We believe that by helping others less fortunate than ourselves, through volunteering and charity work, will indeed help us to feel better about ourselves and make us better people.
- We also encourage prayer times within our services – although these will be silent to cater for the different religious beliefs of our members.

There are several phases in our lives which TLC can influence:

### **THE FOUNDATION PHASE**

Children born to parents of TLC Faith will be loved, protected and guided by parents introducing them to the differences between right and wrong from a very young age. TLC Faith encourages parents to develop simple boundaries for their children, even as toddlers. We believe that they have the intelligence to know what is expected of them, thus building the foundations of teaching them Respect. They are taught to respect their parents, their siblings, peers, and surrounding environment. All other TLC Faith members will offer their support and advice and parents are actively encouraged to seek this during our weekly services. We will also offer silent prayers (to respect member's different religious beliefs) for all children. Children will be made very welcome at our services, and we also offer a separate crèche facility for the very young.

### **THE ELEMENTARY PHASE**

- ) This is the transitional phase from childhood to adulthood. Again building upon, and reinforcing, Respect. Respect for oneself is essential during these difficult years. Respect for family, peers, elders and the importance of developing relationships using the model of the TLC Faith value system.

### **THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE**

In adulthood, maintaining and sustaining relationships, built on the core value of Respect. Leading by example: being the best they can be. Realising that there are others less fortunate than ourselves, and through actively helping these people, makes us feel better about ourselves and reap our spiritual rewards.

We therefore encourage members of this age group to take responsibility for their own destiny, although there are designated Elders who will organise specific volunteering tasks within the local community.

- ) This brings us to the heart of TLC Faith. The way to complete fulfilment is to help others in any which way is meaningful to each of us. This could mean formally volunteering time and effort within a community charity based project, or it could be informally helping, or befriending an elderly neighbour or vulnerable person. At our weekly services we will discuss various projects and the goodness we acquire, from being and doing good. This will have the knock on effect of inspiring other members to follow suit.

### **THE ADVANCED PHASE**

This refers full circle back to our core value system. Respect for the elderly is paramount to TLC Faith. We must respect our elderly parents, and we encourage our members to volunteer, to 'befriend'/adopt elderly people living alone in their community. We believe that no one should be alone in this advanced phase in life, and that as our church membership grows, then the number of lonely elderly people living in our community will diminish. We have already received referrals and been alerted to vulnerable elderly and paired them with our volunteer members.

## THE TRANSITIONAL PHASE

This refers to dying and death. TLC Faith members do not have to surrender any of their personal religious beliefs they have regarding death – they are free to continue with those. We do, however, offer an alternate perspective which many of our members choose to follow. We accept death as an inevitable part of life and, if we have followed TLC Faith core value system to the best of their ability, and passed this wisdom on to others, then we can, with a clear conscience, be ready to face whatever may or not be ahead of us. No one knows what that will be until the point of death. And without physical evidence of what this is, we will not speculate on what this may or may not be. We will simply be ready to embrace it.

### 1.2 THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF TLC FAITH

These can best be summarised in the table below.

PHASE	AIM	OBJECTIVES (Reasons)
Foundation	-To support parents -To offer advice to parents	-To enable them to introduce Respect to their children -To introduce the concept of simple boundaries to young children. -To start to teach them the difference between right and wrong.
Elementary	-To build Respect for oneself, peers, elders and their environment	-To enable them to start forging relationships using TLC Faith Core value system - to lead by example
Intermediate	-Maintain relationships built on TLC Faith value system -encourage members to volunteer/charitable projects -encourage members to take responsibility for their own destiny	-To enable members to be the best they can be. -to become role models -to help others less fortunate -to reap spiritual rewards here on earth by doing good things for others
Advanced	-to influence the lives of the elderly	-by applying TLC Core values of Respect to make life easier for the elderly -to volunteer to befriend the lonely and vulnerable elderly in the community and as the membership of -- -TLC Faith grows the number of the lonely and vulnerable in the community will diminish

### 1.3 DETAILS OF APPOINTMENT OF OFFICE BEARERS

At TLC Faith Office Bearers are referred to as Elders.

Elders are elected as per TLC Faith Constitution. Each candidate must be nominated and be seconded in order to proceed to the elections in March of each year. All candidates will be given an opportunity to address the members at services – outlining previous experiences and what they can bring to the posts. We believe that there is no need for a specific 'Post Position Descriptions'. TLC Faith is a church which is continuing to evolve, and providing all candidates adopt the core value and belief system of Respect and helping others, they will be

allowed to proceed to the election. In March 2012, because of the increasing membership numbers, the number of Elders were increased to 8. This was a decision taken by the Pastor and Elders from the previous year.

The election process was designed to be simple – Each member was given 3 cards of different colours and each card had a different points value. At the end of the service, members would put these cards in envelopes with the candidate's name. It was acceptable that all three cards could be placed in one candidate's envelope or split between three. Candidates with the most points would then be elected.

At a meeting chaired by the Pastor, all new 8 Elders will then discuss the various posts eg Creche Co-ordinator, Youth Co-ordinator, Membership Coordinator, Funeral Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator, Venue Coordinator, and two other 'Floating Elders' to add expertise as and where required. Elders will then be nominated, seconded and position carried. In the case of more than one nominee, as per TLC Faith Constitution, then the card system will be used.

In the event that an Elder resigns, then a 'Floating Elder' will take forward that position on a temporary basis until a new election can be arranged.

There is already one Depute Pastor who has been appointed and trained by the Pastor. Two other Trainee Pastors have been recruited in the past year to cope with the demand for TLC Faith Funeral Services in the community.

#### **1.4 DETAILS OF MEMBERSHIP AND MEETINGS**

Membership numbers have grown quickly since the formation of the Church of TLC Faith in March 2010. On average we have between 55 and 70 members attending our weekly services.

- There is no joining fee or forms for new members to complete. As part of the TLC Faith Constitution, members come to our church services because they want to, not because they feel obligated to, or that they are bound by financial obligations or commitments.
- No fees are involved. There is no weekly collection either, although members are encouraged to make donations to charities of their choice outwith our weekly services. Should they wish to organise fundraisers activities at our social functions, then the individuals organising such events will be responsible for any monies raised and allocations of such funds. TLC Faith is not affiliated to one particular charity.
- Services take place on a weekly basis. Elders are elected and it is their duty to organise meeting places. These places vary – from having services in member's homes, community venues...and in the summer we have used outdoor venues as well. Venues are booked 6 weeks in advance and all members informed. Again no fees are involved. (At the point of writing, because our numbers are growing, we are actively seeking premises to use on a regular basis).

- According to TLC Faith Constitution there is a Code of Conduct which members are expected to follow. If in the rare event, any member brings this into disrepute, they will be asked to leave immediately, as per written into the Code of Conduct. There is also a written Appeals procedure which can be followed.

**1.5 COPY OF PROPOSED MARRIAGE CEREMONY**

A copy of the service is attached as Appendix A

**1.6 FULL NAME AND DESIGNATION OF PASTOR**

This is Christine Barbara Lyons, Pastor, TLC FAITH

**1.7 LETTERS FROM TWO OFFICE BEARERS FROM TLC FAITH**

These are attached as Appendices B and C

**1.8 THE FULL NAMES OF THE COUPLE, THE DATE AND PLACE OF THE MARRIAGE**

The names of the couple are [REDACTED]

The date of the Marriage is [REDACTED] February 2013

The place of the marriage is [REDACTED]