

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND

Registered Charity 209376

November 2019

Why does Bethesda not open up and/or change its entry criteria to allow other Christians to come into its homes?

The Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund (GSBF) Trust Deed established the basis on which the Fund was to operate:

A fund to provide accommodation, personal care and support for the Lord's aged and infirmed people who are members of and/or regular attenders of Gospel Standard (GS) chapels and who have signed their agreement to the GS Articles of Faith.

The accommodation provided, is primarily through the Bethesda homes. Homes in which:

- the Lord's elderly people from Gospel Standard (GS) chapels could spend their last days with like-minded individuals, who love the truths set out in the GS Articles of Faith that: salvation from beginning to end is all of the sovereign electing love and mercy in the Covenant between Father, Son and Holy Ghost and the strength or ability of man has no part in it. ("Salvation is of the Lord" Jonah 2:9)
- the residents have a desire to walk honourably and in love to the Lord and shun those attractions that would draw them away from their dear Redeemer. (Yet knowing that in themselves "... dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18)).
- there is a witness, through their conduct and practice, that seeks the honour and glory of Almighty God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

If the trustees were to open the entry criteria for the Bethesda homes and allow access to those who may not hold the same position doctrinally, experimentally and practically; then there would be a danger of such a move impacting and eroding Bethesda's ethos as set out above. The trustees have a responsibility to adhere to the provisions of its Trust Deed to ensure that the benefits provided are to the intended beneficiaries within GS chapels.

The trustees are sometimes required to consider applications from individuals who may have exceptional circumstances. In these cases, subject to the individual being able to confirm their agreement to the GS Articles of Faith, the trustees prayerfully consider the individual's personal situation and the reasons why they were perhaps not able to regularly attend a GS chapel. It must be stressed, that the 'exceptional circumstances' of such cases are of a confidential nature.

Sometimes questions arise as to why one applicant was accepted by the trustees, when another was not. We accept that the decisions of the trustees may be difficult to understand without disclosure of the confidential matters that have been considered. However, we do seek to make all decisions in the fear of the Lord and to the honour of His Name. Some decisions are hard to reach, but we trust that they are not made in a harsh way and are also mindful of Bethesda's distinct position.

It is sometimes commented that Bethesda is not a church - which is true, however, Bethesda is the Lord's provision for those in GS chapels (the defined beneficiaries) and it would seem appropriate that the entry criteria to Bethesda reflects this.

The position may be summed up by quoting from the first edition of the Bethesda brochure, which was issued in 1951. Mr S F Paul, at that time Secretary of the Fund, stated in his preface:

“... that the Committee of the Gospel Standard Societies conceived the idea of establishing homes for the aged and infirm friends connected with our Gospel Standard causes of truth, so that they might be favoured in their declining days or times of affliction, to dwell with those who are like-minded with themselves, and to be cared for in a spiritual as well as a home-like atmosphere.”

This is what is committed into the custody of the trustees to uphold and it is our continuing desire to be good and faithful stewards in fulfilling our duty to Bethesda.

On behalf of the GSBF trustees

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Ridout". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish underneath the name.

M Ridout
Chairman