Employing a Person who is a Christian

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| Can we specifically employ a Christian? | |
| 1 | We want someone who ‘get’s us’! PCCs can easily fall into the trap of thinking that because they are a church body, then anyone who works for them must be a Christian. This is definitely not the case, and may give rise to a discrimination challenge, so beware! |
| 2 | What is the legal position? The Equality Act 2010 sets out a number of ‘protected characteristics’ which includes religion and belief, and provides what is called an ‘Occupational Requirement’ exception for employers where there is a genuine need. |
| 3 | How does a PCC determine a genuine need? To avoid a discrimination challenge a PCC should make sure that any requirement for a job is fair, reasonable, and equitable and a genuine need can clearly be seen as core to the role and ‘purposes of the organisation’. |
| 4 | A ‘purpose’ must be core to a church’s new job needs, and in addition to this the PCC would have to show that the requirement was necessary to ’comply with the doctrines of the religion’, and this would include the ‘teaching and beliefs of the organisation’. |
| 5 | Is being Christian core to the role? Getting the job description right is the first step! Whatever the post, the job description should set out its roles and responsibilities, and the person specification will help oversee the sorts of gifts, skills and qualities needed. |
| 6 | Once the full picture of the role is known, then the Occupational Requirement can be tested out and the possibility of appointing someone with an active Christian faith can come into play. ‘Would it be nice if’ is different to ‘it is essential’ for the post holder to be a Christian. |
| 7 | What if the post doesn’t reach an ‘essential’ threshold? Why not advertise for the role and in the person specification you can always include: ‘is sympathetic to the aims and objectives’ of the organisation? You can explore the behaviours required at an interview. |

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| 8 | Remember that applying an Occupational Requirement to a post could mean that a PCC would potentially be discriminating against a non-Christian prospective candidate if having an active Christian faith couldn’t be shown as essential core part of a role. |
| 9 | Expressing religious views? Regarding religious views/beliefs about particular issues such as marriage, sexuality, male/female leadership for example — if your PCC hold to a particular tenet state this in the specific roles you apply an Occupational Requirement to. | |
| 10 | What to say in a job advert? For an advert for Occupational Requirement role: ‘under the provisions of the Equality Act this role carries an Occupational Retirement for the post holder to be a practicing Christian’. If the job also requires national CofE Safer Recruitment/DBS state this too. | |

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| Additional links, more information and resources | |
| What sort of roles wouldn’t reach an occupational requirement threshold for being a Christian? | Examples would include roles like caretaker, cleaner, kitchen or catering assistant, handyperson, office/administrative assistant. |
| What sort of roles might reach an occupational requirement Christian threshold? | Depending on the role profile, children and families workers, parish or deanery youth worker, Sunday School teachers, any post in a church leadership role.  Roles that may need further review include a Parish or Deanery Administrator where it may be possible that a role may have enough specific need to reach an Occupational Requirement. |
| Other sources of advice and support | <https://archive.christianconcern.com/sites/default/files/equality-employers%20of%20religion-proof.pdf> |