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U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services

ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS OFFICE  
425 Eye Street N.W.  
BCIS, AAO, 20 MASS, 3/F  
Washington, D.C. 20536

[redacted]

File: WAC 01 217 52921 Office: CALIFORNIA SERVICE CENTER

JUL 10 2003  
Date:

IN RE: Petitioner:  
Beneficiary:

[redacted]

Petition: Petition for Special Immigrant Religious Worker Pursuant to Section 203(b)(4) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(4), as described at Section 101(a)(27)(C) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(27)(C)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:

SELF-REPRESENTED

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

This is the decision in your case. All documents have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied or the analysis used in reaching the decision was inconsistent with the information provided or with precedent decisions, you may file a motion to reconsider. Such a motion must state the reasons for reconsideration and be supported by any pertinent precedent decisions. Any motion to reconsider must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider, as required under 8 C.F.R. § 103.5(a)(1)(i).

If you have new or additional information that you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reopen. Such a motion must state the new facts to be proved at the reopened proceeding and be supported by affidavits or other documentary evidence. Any motion to reopen must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reopen, except that failure to file before this period expires may be excused in the discretion of the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (Bureau) where it is demonstrated that the delay was reasonable and beyond the control of the applicant or petitioner. *Id.*

Any motion must be filed with the office that originally decided your case along with a fee of \$110 as required under 8 C.F.R. § 103.7.

*for* *Robert P. Wiemann*  
Robert P. Wiemann, Director  
Administrative Appeals Office

**DISCUSSION:** The immigrant visa petition was denied by the Acting Director, California Service Center, and is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The petitioner seeks classification of the beneficiary as a special immigrant religious worker pursuant to section 203(b)(4) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(4), in order to employ her as a music director.

The acting director denied the petition, finding that the petitioner failed to establish that the position qualifies as that of a religious worker and that it had the ability to pay the beneficiary's wage.

On appeal, the petitioner asserts that the beneficiary is an accompanist and a missionary who worked for the petitioner in a full-time paid capacity.

Section 203(b)(4) of the Act provides classification to qualified special immigrant religious workers as described in section 101(a)(27)(C) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(27)(C), which pertains to an immigrant who:

(i) for at least 2 years immediately preceding the time of application for admission, has been a member of a religious denomination having a bona fide nonprofit, religious organization in the United States;

(ii) seeks to enter the United States--

(I) solely for the purpose of carrying on the vocation of a minister of that religious denomination,

(II) before October 1, 2003, in order to work for the organization at the request of the organization in a professional capacity in a religious vocation or occupation, or

(III) before October 1, 2003, in order to work for the organization (or for a bona fide organization which is affiliated with the religious denomination and is exempt from

taxation as an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Code of 1986) at the request of the organization in a religious vocation or occupation; and

(iii) has been carrying on such vocation, professional work, or other work continuously for at least the 2-year period described in clause (i).

The petitioner in this matter is a church. The beneficiary is a native and citizen of Korea. The petitioner submitted evidence that it has the appropriate tax-exempt recognition. The evidence on the record indicates that the beneficiary entered the United States as a nonimmigrant visitor for pleasure (B-2) on December 2, 1996.

In order to establish eligibility for classification as a special immigrant religious worker, the petitioner must satisfy several eligibility requirements.

The first issue to be addressed in this proceeding is whether the petitioner established that the proposed position constitutes a qualifying religious occupation for the purpose of special immigrant classification.

8 C.F.R. § 204.5(m)(2) states, in pertinent part, that:

*Religious vocation* means a calling to religious life evidenced by the demonstration of commitment practiced in the religious denomination, such as the taking of vows. Examples of individuals with a religious vocation include, but are not limited to, nuns, monks, and religious brothers and sisters.

*Religious occupation* means an activity which relates to a traditional religious function. Examples of individuals in religious occupations include, but are not limited to, liturgical workers, religious instructors, religious counselors, cantors, catechists, workers in religious hospitals or religious health care facilities, missionaries, religious translators, or religious broadcasters. This group does not include janitors, maintenance workers, clerks, fundraisers, or persons solely involved in the

solicitation of donations.

To establish eligibility for special immigrant classification, the petitioner must establish that the specific position that it is offering qualifies as a religious occupation as defined in the regulations. The statute is silent on what constitutes a "religious occupation" and the regulation states only that it is an activity relating to a traditional religious function.

In this case, the petitioner asserts that the beneficiary's duties include "leading worship by piano playing, leading choir group, teaching and selecting hymn and gospel songs, prepar[ing] music pieces, [making] hospital visit for patients, counseling members problems, attending special events and revival meetings." [sic.]

The regulations specify that religious occupations involve activities that relate to traditional religious functions. The nature of the activity to be performed must embody the tenets of the particular religion and have religious significance. Their services must be directly related to the creed of the denomination.

After a review of the record, it is concluded in this case, that the petitioner has not established that the position of "music director" constitutes a qualifying religious occupation.

First, the petitioner submitted no documentation to establish that the position of music director is a traditional permanent salaried position requiring a religious background at its facility or in the denomination at large. Simply going on record without supporting documentary evidence is not sufficient for purposes of meeting the burden of proof in these proceedings. See *Matter of Treasure Craft of California*, 14 I&N Dec. 190 (Reg. Comm. 1972).

Second, the petitioner failed to establish that the beneficiary's job duties are directly related to the creed and practice of the petitioner's religion, and that the position is defined and recognized by the governing body of the denomination.

The second issue to be addressed in this proceeding is whether the petitioner established that it had the ability

to pay the proffered wage.

8 C.F.R. 204.5(g)(2) states, in pertinent part, that:

Any petition filed by or for an employment-based immigrant which requires an offer of employment must be accompanied by evidence that the prospective United States employer has the ability to pay the wage. The petitioner must demonstrate this ability at the time the priority date is established and continuing until the beneficiary obtains lawful permanent residence. Evidence of this ability shall be either in the form of annual reports, federal tax returns, or audited financial statements.

The petitioner has not furnished the church's annual reports, federal tax returns, or audited financial statements that are current as of the date of filing the petition. Therefore, the petitioner has not satisfied the documentary requirement. For this reason as well, the petition may not be approved.

Further, while the determination of an individual's status or duties within a religious organization is not under the Bureau's purview, the determination as to the individual's qualifications to receive benefits under the immigration laws of the United States rests within the Bureau. Authority over the latter determination lies not with any ecclesiastical body but with the secular authorities of the United States. *Matter of Hall*, 18 I&N Dec. 203 (BIA 1982); *Matter of Rhee*, 16 I&N Dec. 607 (BIA 1978).

The burden of proof in these proceedings rests solely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. Here, the petitioner has not sustained that burden.

**ORDER:** The appeal is dismissed.