Conciliation report to the Bishop of Guildford following a Complaint by the Board of Deputies of British Jews under the Clergy Discipline Measure concerning The Revd Dr Stephen Sizer.
14th October 2013

By Sir Gavin Lightman and The Very Revd Christopher Lewis

We have studied the relevant material and have met Mr Jonathan Arkush (on behalf of the Board of Deputies of British Jews) and Dr Stephen Sizer. It is not our intention to achieve complete agreement between the parties, but rather to reduce the area of disagreement and to find ways in which they can move forward and in which any future disputes of this kind can be resolved.

In October 2012 the Board of Deputies of British Jews lodged a formal complaint against Dr Sizer under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003. The complaint alleged that Dr Sizer had made anti-Semitic statements and published links to anti-Semitic websites. The complaint alleged that this conduct by Stephen Sizer was unbecoming or inappropriate to the office and work of a clerk in Holy Orders and constituted misconduct under Section 8(1) of the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003.

Without accepting the substance of the complaint, Dr Sizer regrets that on occasions his use of language has caused offence to some and agrees that he should have reflected on his choice of words more carefully. The content of certain websites having been drawn to his attention, Dr Sizer also accepts that he should have taken more care before linking to them.

He does not accept that this amounts to conduct unbecoming or inappropriate to a clerk in Holy Orders.

Dr Sizer maintains his opposition to anti-Semitism and maintains that he did not link to the websites in question in order to introduce his readers to anti-Semitic material.

<u>Both parties agree that:</u>

1] Freedom of speech within the law is of fundamental importance.

2] Exercise of this freedom may cause offence, but is best carried out while demonstrating care and sensitivity over the use of language. Gratuitously insulting or offensive words or references have no place in political debate. In particular, inflammatory reference to terms relating to historically specific contexts should be avoided.

3] Links to websites need to be monitored carefully in order to avoid the possibility that there is implied approval of material other than that specifically referred to, or indeed unintended approval of the content and authorship of material referred to.

4] Their hope is that there will not be future disputes of this kind. Should such a dispute occur, it should ideally be resolved informally by personal contact such as a telephone call or a meeting. If that does not lead to resolution, then the normal channels should be used. In the case of a dispute involving the Church of England,

this could be done through the Inter-faith Adviser of the diocese concerned or of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Dr Sizer, in addition to assenting to the points above, undertakes to:

A] Have three people who will read his website and blog in order to check their content and, in particular, monitor any links to websites.

B] Reflect on any points concerning his publications which are made to him (preferably privately) and respond promptly to identifiable critics.

In the light of the above, The Board of Deputies agrees that its complaint is resolved on the terms in this report.

Both parties agree that this paper fairly describes undertakings made.