Clergy Discipline Measure 2003

In the Clergy Discipline Tribunal – Diocese of Winchester

Re the Reverend Dr Stephen Robert Sizer

WITNESS STATEMENT OF
MICHAEL LAURENCE LANGRISH

I, **MICHAEL LAURENCE LANGRISH**, of 39, The Meadows, Walberton, Arundel, BN18 0PB, **WILL SAY** as follows:

1. I make this statement on behalf of the Reverend Dr Stephen Sizer in support of his Answer to a Complaint made against him by the Board of Deputies of British Jews ("**the Board of Deputies**").

Biography

2. I am a retired bishop of the Church of England, having served as Bishop of Birkenhead from 1993 to 2000 and as Bishop of Exeter from 2000 to 2013. Before I was ordained, from 1969 to 1971, I was a lecturer in education in Nigeria. I am married to Esther and have two daughters and one son.

The Peacemaker Trust

3. The Peacemaker Trust was founded by Stephen in 2017 and he is its Director. The Trust seeks to be a catalyst for peace-making, especially where minorities are persecuted, where justice is denied, human rights are suppressed or reconciliation is needed. It is a faith ministry, entirely dependent on the prayers, advocacy and financial support of its supporters. It affirms the 5 Marks of Mission and the Nicene Creed as its doctrinal statement. Its Patrons are the Most Revd Dr Mouneer Anis (until recently Primate of Jerusalem and the Middle East) and the Most Revd Henry Orombi (formerly Primate of

Uganda). Its International Board of Reference includes Anglican Bishops Azad Marshall (Co-Adjudicator Bishop of Raiwind, Pakistan), Seth Ndayirukiye (Bishop of Matana Diocese, Burundi), Abraham Nhial (Bishop of Aweil Diocese, South Sudan) John Gladwin (retired bishop of Chelmsford), Riah Abu El Assal (retired bishop of Jerusalem) and Bill Musk (retired assistant bishop of the Diocese of Egypt and North Africa). I, too, am a member of the International Board of Reference and have worked alongside Stephen in this excellent work.

4. Current Peacemaker Trust projects include feeding the poorest in Cyangugu, Rwanda, welcoming asylum seekers and refugees in the Southampton and Winchester area, teaching Christian leaders in Uganda and Tanzania to run Christianity Explored and olive tree planting in Palestine.

5. The Vision of the Trust is of a world reconciled to God and where its people are at peace with one another. Those who support it and Stephen's work aspire to be catalysts for justice, reconciliation and peace-making. In the words of the prophet Micah - "*They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore*." (Micah 4:3) This sums up not merely the aim of Stephen's work, but the character of the man.

Stephen and anti-Semitism

6. From my knowledge of, and acquaintance with, Stephen over twenty years I have never known him to express a single anti-Semitic view or sentiment. He has certainly very carefully critiqued particular expressions of political and religious Zionism and the impact of these, principally in the context of the Middle East, where he has also shown himself to be aware of, and sensitive to, negative aspects of how these have affected ancient Jewish communities as well as other faith, cultural and ethnic groups in the region. He has also exercised the right of any citizen in a democracy to be critical of the actions of the current government of another country when these have compromised prospects for justice and peace. This he has done both courageously and responsibly in his advocacy for peace and justice in the Middle East. In my view, none of this

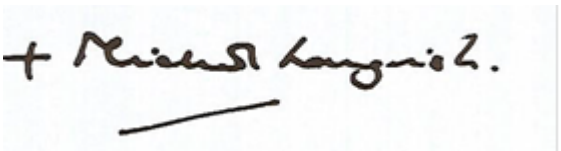
constitutes anti-Semitism, something that I have frequently heard him explicitly condemn, along with other forms of racial and religious discrimination.

7. Stephen has used his wisdom and his platform to inform Christians from a Biblical perspective and has been invited to speak in a wide variety of contexts including those that few Christians might have considered going to. Given that the subject matter is controversial (one about which there are widely divergent, passionately held and intellectually respectable understandings), Stephen has, in the process, attracted hostility and made some implacable enemies, but that always happens in pursuit of truth. When his critique has inevitably led Stephen to speak critically of some aspects of Israeli life, culture, government policy and actions, or underlying political philosophy, this has proved anathema to those Jewish, and Christian, Zionists, who equate any criticism of Israel, its structures or statecraft, with anti-Semitism.

8. My experience of Stephen is of a godly, prayerful minister of the gospel, a faithful teacher and pastor of God's people, who seeks only to serve to the best of the ability his Lord, His Church and His Kingdom. This he has done as a loyal minister in the Church of England for the past 38 years. The suggestion by the complainant that Stephen was forced to resign from the parish of Virginia Water because of his writing and speaking has no basis in fact. As a member of the International Board of Reference of the Peacemaker Trust I can testify to the fact that conversations had been going on with Stephen over a considerable period of time about the possibility of his leaving parish ministry to concentrate fully on the work that now forms the purpose of the Trust.

Statement of truth

9. I believe the facts and matters in this statement to be true.



MICHAEL LAURENCE LANGRISH

Date: 17 October 2020