

Clergy Discipline Measure 2003

In the Clergy Discipline Tribunal – Diocese of Winchester

Re the Reverend Dr Stephen Robert Sizer

**WITNESS STATEMENT OF CANON DR
GEORGE MICHAEL BUTTERWORTH**

I, **GEORGE MICHAEL BUTTERWORTH**, of 3 Horseshoe Close, Cheddington, Leighton Buzzard LU7 0SB, **WILL SAY** as follows:

1. I make this statement on behalf of the Reverend Dr Stephen Sizer (“Stephen”) 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. Between 1980 and 1997, I was Academic Registrar and/or lecturer in Old Testament and Hebrew at Oak Hill College, which was accredited by Middlesex University. I later became Principal of the St Albans and Oxford Ministry Course, a module in which I arranged leaders in religions other than Christianity to come and speak to the students so as to assist their inter-religious understanding.
3. Between January 1980 and February 1997 I attended Southgate Progressive Synagogue roughly every four to six weeks, where I also attended other events, such as the study lunches. I preached at their fiftieth anniversary. One of their members assisted a reading group when we studied ‘My Name is Asher Lev’. I belonged during this period to a ‘clergy group’ which contained Christian ministers and Jewish rabbis, and which was led by one of two Jewish professional counsellors.
4. During this period and up to the present I have been a member of the CCJ and, while living in Southgate, attended local branch meetings. I was a committee member and did my stint as chair. I helped to arrange CCJ meetings at the college at which I taught and facilitated the supplying of greenery from college grounds for the synagogue succah.
5. I have done research degrees on the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (1971) MPhil Nottingham University: The Date of the Book of Joel; (1989) PhD Kings College, London: Structure and the Book of Zechariah (published 1992); plus a small Bible Commentary on Leviticus and Numbers. I have made several contributions to other works.

6. I have known Stephen for 25 years. I first came met him in January 1996 in connection with the thesis for his Master's degree, which in time became a PhD. From that point, I have followed Stephen's career and have maintained contact with him.

The Peacemaker Trust

7. I became involved with The Peacemaker Trust in 2017 and became a Trustee in the same year. My willingness to support the Trust arose from my sympathy for the purpose which was the promotion of mutual respect, understanding and reconciliation between religious communities.
8. The work of The Peacemaker Trust does not discriminate against any religion and neither does it favour one religion over another. The focus is on peaceable co-existence and understanding. Stephen has done excellent and valuable work for The Peacemaker Trust.

Anti-zionism

9. I have been a keen student of Zionism and anti-Zionism and the interplay with anti-Semitism. I am firmly of the view that criticism of the actions of the state of Israel does not in itself amount to anti-Semitism.
10. There have been occasions where I have written to Stephen when I have read something that I thought might have sounded too one-sided. He has always responded and I have been reassured by those responses. I am aware of the danger that friendship might make me hold back from expressing criticism of Stephen, but I strongly believe that true friendship involves telling the truth at all times.
11. Stephen has been motivated by ensuring the wellbeing of people of all religions although clearly he has a particular focus on the wellbeing of Jews wherever they live across the world and an interest in the way in which Judaism and Jewish people are regarded by Christians.
12. Certainly, Stephen has called for the end of Israeli occupation of Palestinians due to the brutality of that occupation and its harm on both the occupied and the occupier. Had it been the other way around, I know that Stephen would, with the same dedication and energy, have called for the end of Palestinian occupation of Israelis. Those who accuse Stephen of anti-Semitism do harm to the real victims of anti-Semitism. There is a clear differentiation between criticizing Israel due to acts of brutality against the Palestinian population and unfounded acts of anti-Semitism.
13. Over the last 25 years, I believe I have kept a sufficiently close eye on Stephen's career, his public profile and his various writings and posts such that I have a good understanding of his views. Even though occasional statements may have been considered controversial, I have

always felt sure that Stephen was a true friend to Jews and the nation of Israel, and I have never seen any anti-Semitic tendencies in his writing, behaviour or attitude by Stephen.

Statement of truth

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

George Michael Butterworth
GEORGE MICHAEL
BUTTERWORTH

Date: 16th October 2020