

## **Declarations under section 8 Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 in relation to the National Front and the British National Party**

Section 8 of the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 ('the CDM'), as amended by the Clergy Discipline (Amendment) Measure 2013, provides that the House of Bishops may declare in writing that the "*constitution, policies, objectives, activities or public statements*" of a political party or organisation are "*incompatible with the teaching of the Church of England in relation to the equality of persons or groups of different races*".

If such a declaration has been made in relation to a political party or organisation, section 8 goes on to provide that it is unbecoming or inappropriate conduct for any archbishop, bishop, priest or deacon to "*be a member of, or to promote, or express or solicit support for*" the party or organisation concerned.

The rationale behind these provisions is that the clergy of the Church of England are required by canon law (in the form of Canon C 26.2) "*at all times [to] be diligent to frame and fashion their lives according to the doctrine of Christ, and to make [themselves] wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ.*" That duty extends to a cleric's private life just as much as his or her professional life.

Declarations under section 8 have been made by the House of Bishops in respect of the National Front and the British National Party. The declarations were laid before the General Synod and came into force on 11 July 2014. From that date a cleric will accordingly engage in unbecoming or inappropriate conduct for the purposes of the CDM if he or she is a member of, or promotes, or expresses or solicits support for, either party.

Merely *expressing support* for a particular *policy* or *policies* of the National Front or the British National Party (for example, an economic or transport policy) will not expose a cleric to disciplinary proceedings under section 8. But taking the further step of *joining* either party, or *speaking in support of it generally*, or *encouraging others to join or support it generally*, will have that consequence.

### Notes:

1. The Church's teaching in relation to the equality of persons or groups of different races is set out in the House of Bishops' statement *Affirming our Common Humanity* published in 2010, GS Misc 972.
2. The House of Bishops' reasons for making declarations in respect of the National Front and the British National Party are set out in explanatory memorandum GS 1946-7x.
3. GS Misc 972 and GS 1946-7x can be accessed at <http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/general-synod/agendas-and-papers.aspx>