

The House of Bishops of the Church of England have voted to make membership or support of the British National Party (BNP) or National Front (NF) a potential disciplinary offence for its clergy.

The formal declarations by the House of Bishops mean that a complaint of misconduct can be made under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 against any cleric of the Church of England who is a member of, or promotes or expresses or solicits support for, the BNP or NF.

The declarations will be laid before the General Synod of the Church at its July meeting in York and will come into force at 5.30pm on 11 July 2014 unless 25 members of the General Synod give notice that they wish a declaration to be debated. If such notice is given, the expectation is that the declaration would be debated at the Synod's July group of sessions in York, and it could not come into force unless approved by the Synod.

The declarations state that on May 19 2014 the House of Bishops resolved to declare that the constitution, policies, objectives, activities or public statements of the National Front and the British National Party are incompatible with the teaching of the Church of England in relation to the equality of persons or groups of different races.

Once a declaration comes into force support for the political party concerned by clergy of the Church of England would be unbecoming or inappropriate conduct. The declarations from the House of Bishops, which were made under section 8(4) of the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003, implement in relation to the clergy of the Church of England, a policy of the General Synod agreed in February 2009 following a Private Member's Motion from Vasantha Gnanadoss: "That this Synod, noting that in 2004 the Association of Chief Police Officers adopted a policy whereby "no member of the Police Service, whether police officer or police staff, may be a member of an organisation whose constitution, aims, objectives or pronouncements contradict the general duty to promote race equality" and "this specifically includes the British National Party", request the House of Bishops to formulate and implement a comparable policy for the Church of England, to apply to clergy, ordinands, and such employed lay persons as have duties that require them to represent or speak on behalf of the Church."

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Notes

- An explanatory note [explaining the background](#) to the declarations GS 1946-7X can be found on the Church of England website, together with the declarations:

<http://churchofengland.org/media/2000255/gs%201946%20-%20declaration%20re%20national%20front.pdf>

<http://churchofengland.org/media/2000268/gs%201947%20-%20declaration%20re%20british%20national%20party.pdf>

- The Church's teaching in relation to the equality of persons or groups of different races is set out in the 2010 House of Bishops'

theological statement Affirming our Common Humanity <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1165806/gs%20misc%20972.doc>

- In making a declaration of incompatibility the House of Bishops took account of the constitutions of both parties and published statements on their behalf, including, for example, the BNP's manifesto for the last General Election ("Democracy, Freedom, Culture and Identity) which is published on the BNP website.

Source URL: *<https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/bnp-and-national-front-incompatible-teaching-church>*