

**THE BISHOP'S DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL
FOR THE DIOCESE OF PETERBOROUGH**

In the matter of a complaint under The Clergy Discipline Measure 2003

Complainant: The Venerable Christine Allsopp, Archdeacon of Northampton

Respondent: The Reverend Teresa Davies

DETERMINATION OF PENALTY

1. The Guidelines (from the *Guidelines for Professional Conduct of the Clergy*) which the Tribunal were asked to consider in reaching their determination were:-

3.10 In their personal life the clergy should set an example of integrity in relationships and faithfulness in marriage.

10.1 The clergy are called to a high standard of moral behaviour

11.1 The reputation of the church in the community depends to a great extent on the example of its clergy, who should recognise their role as public representatives of the church. Their lives should enhance and embody the communication of the gospel.

2. When considering the position of an individual Respondent, the Tribunal have a responsibility to consider the wider picture, as described in paragraph 4 of the Code of Practice. The administration of discipline must:-

- have regard to the interests of justice for all who may be affected by the faults, failings or shortcomings of the clergy, including the wider church,
- support the collective good standing of all faithful men and women who are called to service in the ordained ministry, and use their best endeavours to ensure that the clergy continue to be worthy of the great trust put in them as ordained ministers

3. The two issues here are sexual misconduct, as described in the statements made by the Respondent, and alcohol abuse. Sexual misconduct is a deliberate and damaging failure to comply with the high standards of Christian behaviour required of the clergy. Clergy who commit sexual misconduct have to be dealt with firmly and in a way which would protect those who could be harmed if the Respondent were otherwise allowed to remain in ministry.

The Tribunal considered the alcohol issue to be less serious, but they bear in mind their finding that it happened on three different occasions when she was engaged in public ministry.

4. The Tribunal has considered submissions received from the Respondent about penalty in which she says she has admitted and shown remorse at all times for her conduct. She suggests that a rebuke would be a sufficient penalty for her behaviour, which happened over a very short span of time, and has marred what had been a previously unblemished record.

5. However, the submissions indicate to the Tribunal that the Respondent still has no appreciation of the seriousness of the findings against her, nor of the damage caused. Further, she did not make a full and frank admission at her meeting with the Archdeacon on the 26th January 2007. She claimed she was trying to be “laddish” and shocking, and that she had never had any sexual relationship outside her marriage. It was not until the Tribunal hearing that she conceded that the entries on the “swingers” website for sexual contact related to herself and her husband, Mick. The Tribunal is disinclined to give much weight to her mitigation in those circumstances.

6 The Tribunal considers the Respondent’s behaviour to be a serious breach, and one that requires a serious penalty to be imposed. The most serious penalty is prohibition without limit of time from exercising any functions as a member of the clergy of the Church of England, and is usually imposed where there appears to be no realistic prospect of rehabilitating the Respondent back into ministry.

7. The Tribunal considers that in the fullness of time the Respondent may or should fully appreciate the seriousness of her misconduct, and she could then begin to experience repentance and move on towards rehabilitation. Meanwhile, they consider that an appropriate period of time, taking both matters concurrently, to be twelve years. They would urge the Respondent during that period and particularly towards the end of it, to seek appropriate pastoral and other support.