

The President of Tribunals
c/o The Legal Office
Church House
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3AZ

10 March 2014

I am writing to consult you as to the appropriate penalty to be imposed upon the Revd Ian Hughes, who was recently convicted of making and possessing indecent images/ photographs of children. He was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment. I enclose a copy Certificate of Conviction.

I understand that some of the images were graded in the worst category, and the overall number of images was very large.

The Guidance on Penalties, section 5, states *inter alia*:

'Anyone convicted of possessing child pornography should be regarded as complicit with the original abuse involved in the making of the images. There can be no realistic expectation that a convicted cleric could be safely restored into ministry. Removal from office and prohibition for life should normally be imposed.'

This strongly implies that a penalty of prohibition for life should be imposed, and I understand the reasons for this. Yet I am a little troubled, for two reasons.

Firstly, while I accept the complicity in the original abuse, it is nevertheless the case that many people who download child pornography believe it to be different from direct abuse of a child. They may well be entirely unwilling to perpetrate such abuse directly. The internet has a seductive character in this regard.

Secondly, once prohibition for life is imposed, the Measure offers no possibility of a review, unless new evidence comes to light, affecting the original facts. Mr Hughes is 46, Sensitive/irrelevant and accessing child pornography has been connected with his struggles with his sexuality.

In every other respect he has had a good ministry, and has been very well regarded by his parishioners. I could envisage a situation, perhaps in 15 or 20 years' time, when it might be judged appropriate for him to return to public ministry in some form or context, probably as an assistant, non-stipendiary priest.

Notwithstanding these hesitations, which I felt it right to share with you, it seems clear from the Guidance that a penalty of prohibition for life should be imposed. If so, I do wonder whether some possibility of a later review might be introduced when the Measure is next amended.

I look forward to hearing from you. Under a recent change in the Rules, I believe our correspondence will need to be disclosed to Mr Hughes.

CC Diocesan Registrar