

# **Free Church of England's Position On Freemasonry**

It is a matter of genuine surprise and concern that from time to time the Free Church of England is accused of 'being riddled with Freemasonry'. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Until a few decades ago in most Protestant Churches in this country it was thought possible to be both a good Mason and good Christian and to hold high office in the Church. In the 1950s and 60s Archbishop Fisher of Canterbury, for example, was a Freemason. At the same time so was the Bishop Primus of the Free Church of England. However, from the 1980s the Free Church of England has shared the Church of England's growing doubts about the compatibility of Masonic practice with Christian profession. In 1986 when a presbyter who was a Freemason was elected as bishop, the degree of disquiet within the Free Church of England was such that he resigned as a Mason before consecration as a bishop (as the Revd Jonathan Baker did in 2011 prior to his consecration as Bishop of Ebbsfleet). That, we think, gives an accurate insight into the Free Church of England's position on the matter.

None of the current bishops of the Free Church of England is a Freemason. The Diocesan Bishops are guided by the view expressed by the General Synod of the Church of England that 'There are a number of very fundamental reasons to question the compatibility of Freemasonry with Christianity'.