



## Centre for the study of Jewish-Christian Relations

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### Anglican-Jewish 'Common Mission' in Jeopardy

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Last week's meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council demonstrates the urgent need for the Anglican Church to initiate a dialogue with Jewish theologians, teachers and leaders. Dr. Edward Kessler, Director of the Centre for the study of Jewish-Christian Relations is concerned that increasing pressures on Anglican-Jewish relations are damaging and calls on Anglican leaders to build bridges before the gulf becomes dangerously wide.

It was only just over 15 years ago that the Anglican Church was a leading light in Christian-Jewish dialogue, producing a remarkable document commending Anglicans to engage in a dialogue with Judaism and to show "a willingness to listen to the partner; to try to see with their eyes and feel with their heart". At that time, the Church called for a 'common mission' between Christians and Jews.

Last week's decision by the Anglican Consultative Council to produce a one-sided document that was noticeable for its strong criticism of Israel and equally noticeable for its silence about failings of the Palestinians and their leadership points to a growing distance between Anglicans and Jews. "From my discussions with Anglicans," Kessler points out, "it is also clear that many Anglicans do not agree with the Council and especially with the Anglican Peace and Justice Network which produced the document." The Archbishop of Canterbury has called a growing division within the Anglican Communion a potential 'catastrophe'.

Kessler feels it is essential for leading Anglican and Jewish thinkers to meet soon to discuss the issues that are of most concern. "Jews must be prepared to discuss the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians with Christians and to listen to their concerns. At the same time", he says, "Christians must realise that Judaism is not only a religion but a people and a civilization and through dialogue work to understand the importance of the land of Israel to the majority of Jews throughout the world"

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