

Methodist Church issues progress report on Past Cases Review

A year after the apology to survivors and victims of abuse, and the publication of *Courage, Cost & Hope* - the report on the Past Cases Review (PCR), the Methodist Church has given an update to the Methodist Conference, the supreme decision-making body of the Church, about its work over the past 12 months.

In May 2015, the Revd Dr Martyn Atkins, who was then serving as Secretary of the Methodist Conference and General Secretary, issued a full and unreserved apology to survivors and victims of abuse in response to the Past Cases Review report.

A huge amount of work has been undertaken so far by the Past Cases Review Implementation Group (PCRIG) on the report's 23 recommendations. They include:

Survivors' Reference Group

Supervision for Presbyters is to be strengthened

"a system of structured supervision for ministers be instituted to address the identified weakness in relation to accountability and support in terms of safe practice". Significant progress has been made on this.

Ministerial code of conduct

Recording pastoral practice

Complaints and discipline

Safeguarding training and policy

The Implementation Group expects to be able to report to the 2017 Conference that all the recommendations of the report will be implemented in full or with a clear process and timetable for completing the implementation set out.

We again acknowledge the courage of the survivors and victims who relived exceptionally difficult, life-changing, experiences to participate in the review.

As the work of the Implementation Group progresses, we also remember the need for ongoing culture change throughout the Church, especially for its ministers and leaders, the lessons that continue to be learnt, and the commitment to improve safeguarding practice across the Connexion.

Our constant prayer is that this work ensures the Church is a safe place for all.

Connexional News is compiled by Rev Andy Fyall

News from

The Methodist Church



August 2016

President Elect & Vice President Elect for 2017-18

Rev Loraine Mellor & Mrs Jill Baker



Loraine has been a presbyter since 1995 and is Chair of the Nottingham and Derby District. A member of the Church's Strategy and Resources Committee, Loraine is coordinator of the Larger than Circuit group which is considering how the Church can best reflect the missional needs of today's Church.

"I want to encourage and enable the Church to put God back on the agenda in our communities and enthuse people to share the Good News. The Church has reached a tipping point, the time has come for us to take some risks in our mission and in our discipleship in order to help us grow," said Mrs Mellor

Jill is a local preacher and tutor in the Scotland District, exploring and leading pilgrimages. She enjoys writing and, in the past, spent eight years as a mission partner in the South Caribbean. Jill was President of Methodist Women in Britain between 2011 and 2013.

"I am thankful to the Methodist family for the prayer and for the support it offers in hard times. I am committed to working locally and connexionally for an inclusive, just, compassionate and creative Church."

The role of President of the Conference is reserved for Presbyters, and Vice-President for lay people or Deacons.

Methodist Church to review its understanding of marriage and relationships

A task group established to consider whether the Methodist Church's understanding of marriage and relationships should be revisited has reported back to this year's Methodist Conference.

Following a decision at the Conference in 2014, people from across the Methodist Connexion have been considering marriage and relationships as part of a process overseen by the task group. The discussions show that there is a broad range of opinions held by Methodists on these matters.

The Church is to reconsider how its understanding of marriage should be expressed. This does not necessarily mean that there will be a change of definition, but that the Church wishes to re-examine the definition through a period of theological and scriptural reflection.

The task group prepared guidance and other resources to help members of the Methodist Church in their discussions on marriage and relationships.

The task group was established at the Methodist Conference in 2014 to consider whether or not the Methodist Church should revisit its definition of marriage and its understanding of family life, marriage and the single person. Its report, received by the Methodist Conference earlier today, 5 July 2016, is the result of two years consideration by the task group, along with reflection and conversation within the Methodist Church. So far, at least 8,000 members have taken the opportunity to participate in conversations across the Methodist Church, where a wide range of views were expressed.

The Church's definition of marriage was one of those subjects discussed. The task group considered the existing 1992 "Statement on Christian Understanding of Family Life, The Single Person and Marriage". In the Statement the Methodist Church reiterates its view that marriage is "the lifelong union of one man and one woman". However, whilst many Methodists support this definition as it stands, there is a range of reasons to revisit it. For example, some people feel the Church's definition should be extended to include the marriage of same sex couples. Some people feel that the definition only describes the status of marriage, not its purpose and responsibilities and revisiting the definition is important part of the process even if it remains unchanged. The Conference directed that a new Statement on marriage and relationships should now be prepared and that, as part of that process, the definition of marriage should be revisited.

Call on your MP to challenge racism and discrimination

The Methodist Conference of 2016 unanimously passed a resolution calling for respect and tolerance in our national life in the wake of the divisive EU Referendum Campaign. It asked that the statement below be sent to MP's and others in positions of leadership. This page makes sending the statement to your MP easier by automatically generating an email and based on the postcode you give addressing it to the correct MP.

You may prefer to use old fashioned post to contact you MP, and you may even consider meeting your MP to talk about these concerns.

The Conference also encouraged the Methodist people to join the campaign to wear an empty safety pin as a badge symbolising solidarity against racism (please see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-36661097> for details).

THE CONFERENCE 2016 STATEMENT:

The Methodist Conference believes that the British Isles are enriched by diversity and celebrates the contribution made by those who have come from other parts of the world.

The Christian tradition calls for respect, tolerance, love of neighbour and hospitality to the stranger. All bear the responsibility of speaking and acting for healing, reconciliation, and mutual respect.

The Methodist Conference abhors and deeply regrets those actions and words which incite hatred and lead to the victimisation of groups within society and notes with concern that such actions and words have been normalised in recent public discourse. Believing that racism is a denial of the gospel and that to stay silent when others are abused is to collude with those who seek to promote hatred and division, the Methodist Conference calls:

- on the Methodist people to challenge racism and discrimination.
- for a political debate which neither demonises any nor leaves the vulnerable (the foreigner, the immigrant and refugee) in danger of victimisation.
- on political leaders to work together for the good of the whole community putting the needs of the nation before party politics.
- on all those in positions of power and authority to hear the voices of those who have been marginalised and alienated and to respond to them in ways which offer real hope for the future.