
The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler
Secretary of the Conference

Methodist Church House
25 Marylebone Road
London NW1 5JR

Professor Alexis Jay OBE
Chair
Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

+44 (0) 20 7486 5502 (enquiries)
enquiries@methodistchurch.org.uk
www.methodist.org.uk
registered charity no 1132208

25 June 2021

Dear Chair,

Case Study: Child Protection in Religious Organisations and Settings

I write on behalf of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, a Core Participant in this Case Study, to assist the Panel by providing updated information in relation to the case of PR-A10.

The Church has been committed to working with the Inquiry from its inception and this letter is sent in accordance with that commitment, to ensure full cooperation and the effective sharing of information.

PR-A10 gave evidence to the Inquiry on 16 March 2020. Due to the time which has passed and in order to assist the Panel, I have set out herein a short update on the case and the associated review of the Methodist Church's Complaints and Discipline process (known within the Church as "the Part 11 procedure").

As the Panel is aware, I met PR-A10 in September 2019 and sent a written letter of apology to her on 23 October 2019. In accordance with our safeguarding principles, I also offered support in the form of counselling and contact with the Survivors' Reference Group.

After listening to the powerful evidence which she gave at the Inquiry, I wrote to PR-A10 to ask if she would be willing to meet with me again to discuss a range of matters, including the conclusion of her case and her involvement in the review of the Part 11 procedure. PR-A10 met with me, Tim Carter, Director of Safeguarding and Joanne Anderton, the current Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice, on 5 January 2021.

As the Panel is also aware, the decision of the Connexional Discipline Committee in PR-A10's case was appealed by the Connexional Advocate on 17 December 2019. The appeal was heard in March 2020, with the outcome that the Appeal Committee upheld the decision of the Connexional Discipline Committee. No further sanction was imposed, but the Committee noted that the minister in pastoral charge had been reprimanded and that those reprimands were held on his record and would be reported to the Methodist Conference (the Church's ruling body) - which they duly were in June 2020.

I also discussed with PR-A10 the progress of the review of the Part 11 procedure, which is now well underway. As affirmed in our opening statement to the Inquiry on 16 March 2020, PR-A10's evidence is being used as a case study to inform the review. PR-A10's comments and recommendations have been shared with the Revd Helen Cameron, who is leading the workstream. Mrs Cameron has also written to PR-A10, with consent, to invite PR-A10's direct participation in the review. We are very grateful to PR-A10 for agreeing to help the Church in this way and I have personally thanked her for doing so.

An interim report has been collated to update the Methodist Conference in 2021 on the progress of the review. Aside from PR-A10's participation, a consultation process was held which gathered information from over 120 Superintendent ministers and Chairs of districts. Further to this, a forum of key stakeholders was held in January 2021, involving a range of participants from diverse backgrounds across the Church. The Methodist Survivors' Advisory Group has been consulted as part of this work. The forum presented a compelling case for procedural change.

I am confident that the review will overhaul the Part 11 procedure and in doing so will address the matters raised by PR-A10, to ensure that the procedure coheres effectively with our safeguarding function, and to improve the levels of support and engagement for survivors of abuse. It is anticipated that the review will conclude with a final report being made to the Methodist Conference in 2022 and the implementation of reforms from 2022-23 onwards.

In my letter to the Inquiry dated 25 June 2020, I expressed my thanks on behalf of the Church for the work of the Panel and the Inquiry team. The Methodist Church was one of the organisations that had supported the creation of the Inquiry and we wish to reiterate our thanks, with particular appreciation for the work which has continued throughout a very difficult period and despite the challenges posed by the global pandemic.

As we look toward the final report, I wish to affirm the Church's support for the Inquiry's work in reviewing safeguarding frameworks within the context of religious organisations. The Methodist Conference continues to be committed to ongoing review and improvement of the Church's safeguarding policy, practice and systems to protect children, young people and adults from abuse within the life of the Church.

Yours sincerely,

DPA

The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler
Secretary of the Conference

Direct line:
E-mail: