



Information to applicants making a claim of abuse that occurred while in Methodist care

Our Commitment

The Methodist Church of New Zealand/Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa (“the Church”) is committed to the prevention of abuse and to the wellbeing of members, children, young people, vulnerable adults and their families.

We are committed to acting at all times in the best interest of the children, young people and vulnerable adults to whom it provides a service.

We are committed to dealing with abuse, suspected abuse or disclosure of abuse in a timely fashion.

We are committed to doing all we can to provide a fair, consistent, and compassionate redress for people who were abused as children in our care.

We are committed to actively contributing to the healing and justice process for survivors of abuse.

We are committed to transparency and will seek to address issues and challenges with compassion and humility.

We are committed to do no harm to survivors, and to avoid re-traumatisation of survivors and their families.

We will apologise to anyone who was abused while in our care and in consultation with those affected, actively seek ways to make amends for what happened and offer support through the investigative process and in the future.

We respect the rights of survivors to control how they deal with the outcomes of the harm they experienced.

We will ensure that people the Church appoints in this process will be appropriately trained in understanding abuse, the impact of harm and any relevant cultural awareness and sensitivities.

Purpose

The Methodist Church of New Zealand/Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa seeks to:

- Ensure a compassionate and consistent response across the Church
- Acknowledge our responsibility for past wrongs
- Support those who have suffered to heal
- Offer an opportunity for survivors who wish to seek engagement with the Church to use a process which is
 - Survivor focused
 - Takes a whānau-centred view
 - Working in partnership with iwi and Māori
 - Is responsive and appropriate to differing needs for example: cultural, gender, age, faith, disabilities, mental health challenges etc.

Eligibility Scope and Definitions

This process offers redress where the Church exercised responsibility, either directly or indirectly, for the care of the individual and the setting in which the abuse occurred.

“Abuse” is defined as emotional, physical, sexual abuse, neglect or deprivation.¹

Available Redress

The Church will be responsive to the particular needs of the applicant. The Church acknowledges is unlikely to be able to adequately compensate for the pain and loss experienced by the person.

The Church may offer the following in terms of redress:

- A personal response from the relevant part of the Church, which may include a verbal and/or written apology to the applicant by the relevant part of the Church, and where appropriate to the applicant’s whānau
- Funding for counselling or psychological care, where needed
- A monetary sum as some acknowledgement of the seriousness of the harm suffered
- Assistance to report abuse to the Police, if agreed with the person

Process

1. Contact the Church

The first step is to contact the Church to lodge an application for resolution. The first point of contact is the General Secretary (or President).

Phone: 0800 CONNEX ext 824 or 0800 266 639 ext 824

Email: generalsecretary@methodist.org.nz

If the alleged abuser is the General Secretary, then please email the President president@methodist.org.nz.

Website: http://www.methodist.org.nz/historic_abuse/breaking-the-silence

Mail:

General Secretary – Private & Confidential Methodist Connexional Office P O Box 931 Christchurch 8140

2. Appointment of an independent coordinator

The Church will arrange an independent Coordinator to meet with you to talk and assist you with the process.

However you may choose to submit an application directly to the Review Panel without the support of an independent Coordinator. Send your completed application form to the Review Panel, via the General Secretary (or President) – contact details above.

3. Explain what happened in your application

The independent Coordinator will assist with gaining access to your Church records and provide copies and assistance to identify any information or documentation that may be required.

Explain what happened to you in as much detail as you have in the application form, and include the impact the abuse has had on you.

Please use the same application form to write about each institution where you experienced abuse.

¹ As defined in Oranga Tamariki Act 1989

4. The Review Panel

After all the relevant documentation has been collated, your application will be considered by the Review Panel.² The team is made up of three members, of which two are independent to the Church.

Each situation and person's experience will be responded to compassionately by our Review Panel, which consists of caring and experienced people. The Review Panel will consider your application and you have the right to meet with them to tell your story.

In determining applications, the Review Panel will apply the "reasonable likelihood" standard of proof. Reasonable likelihood is reliable evidence capable of supporting a finding that the events claimed probably took place. This probability must be substantially greater than a mere possibility that the events claimed took place.

The Review Panel will decide whether the standard of proof has been met and where it has it will also decide the nature of the redress offered. This could be an apology, an offer of counselling, an ex gratia payment and/or other redress options.

The offer of redress will be open for a period of one year from the date of the decision of the Review Panel. The offer of redress will be in full and final settlement of the claim made.

5. The Appeal Process

You may seek an appeal of the decision of the Review Panel and any offer of redress.

You must seek an appeal in writing to the Church through the Coordinator within three months of the date the decision or offer was made, whichever was later.

You need to provide the Church with the following for an appeal:

- information about any relevant changes in their circumstances between the original request for redress and your current circumstances;
- an impact statement outlining the effect of the change in circumstances; and
- information about your desired outcome of the appeal.

Appeals will be undertaken by the General Secretary (or President) on a case by case basis, and determinations made within one month of receiving the appeal request. The General Secretary (or President) will consider:

- the original decision made by the Review Panel and the reasons for their decision;
- whether the original decision by the Review Panel was appropriate and reasonable in all the surrounding circumstances and on the basis of the information available to the Review Panel at the time;
- whether the original decision of the Review Panel should be confirmed, varied or whether other action should be taken.

The General Secretary (or President) will advise the applicant in writing of the review outcome .

Please remember that you may still be eligible for other community support and counselling and your independent Coordinator will help you access this, if requested.

You may change your mind at any step of the process and you can seek legal advice at any time.

² The Review Panel is a panel of people, appointed by the Church, with relevant skills including: legal, medical and psychosocial, and experienced in issues relating to abuse. Two of the three members are independent to the Church.