48. The Methodist record: slavery, race, Native peoples and abuse

This chapter sets out the record of the Methodist churches in the same format as the other records: what happened, the criticism, the Methodist response, and whether it was corrected. It covers the American church's retreat from the rules against slaveholding that Wesley's preachers adopted in 1784 and its division over a slaveholding bishop in 1844; the treatment of Black Methodists, from the walkout at St. George's in Philadelphia to the racially defined Central Jurisdiction of 1939–1968; the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864, led by an ordained Methodist elder; the boarding and residential schools for Native children run by Methodist missions in the United States and Canada; and the review of past abuse cases in the Methodist Church in Britain. Each case draws on the churches' own statements and on the historians and reports they have commissioned.

The criticism

- **Principle gave way to growth.** The rules of 1784 requiring members to free their slaves were suspended within months because of opposition, and by 1808 each annual conference could make its own rules on slaveholding.
- **Race was built into the church's structure.** Black Methodists were pulled from their knees at St. George's and left to found their own churches (AME, 1816; CME, 1870), and the 1939 reunion placed those who stayed in a jurisdiction defined by race.
- **Methodist leaders carried out and defended Sand Creek.** The commander was an ordained elder and the governor a prominent Methodist layman; the church's own historian found that it defended them and that its later response was marked by indifference.
- **Missions served assimilation.** Under the federal Peace Policy and in Canada, Methodist missions ran schools that separated Native children from their families, languages and religions.
- **Accountability was weak.** The British church's own review of abuse since 1950 found it had failed in a number of respects and named the lack of accountability among its gravest themes.

How Methodists answer

- **Wesley's witness stands.** Wesley urged "Give liberty to whom liberty is due" (1774) and in 1791, days before his death, encouraged Wilberforce against "that execrable villainy"; the General Rules still list slaveholding among the evils every member is to avoid.
- **The church repents in public.** The United Methodist General Conference held an Act of Repentance for Racism (2000) and an Act of Repentance toward Healing Relationships with

Indigenous Peoples (2012), and entered full communion with the historically Black Methodist churches (2012).

- **It has commissioned and published its own history.** The Sand Creek report (2016), the boarding schools report (2024) and Britain's *Courage, Cost and Hope* (2015) were all ordered by the churches themselves and made public.
- **Reform came from within.** The Central Jurisdiction was dismantled by the church's own General Conferences between 1956 and 1968, and the United Church of Canada, heir of the Methodist schools, apologized in 1986 and 1998.

Summary

1. Retreating from the rules against slaveholding

Period: 1784–1808

Status: ACKNOWLEDGED

Key correction: Emancipation (1865); Act of Repentance for Racism (2000)

2. Bishop Andrew and the division of 1844

Period: 1844–1939

Status: REUNITED AT A PRICE

Key correction: Reunion of 1939

3. Black Methodists pushed out: St. George's, Bethel and the separate churches

Period: 1780s–1870

Status: REPENTED OF

Key correction: Act of Repentance (2000); Pan-Methodist full communion (2012)

4. The Central Jurisdiction

Period: 1939–1968

Status: ENDED

Key correction: Abolished at the 1968 union

5. The Sand Creek Massacre

Period: 1864

Status: APOLOGIZED FOR

Key correction: Apology (1996); Roberts report (2016); renewed commitments (2024)

6. Methodist missions and Native American boarding schools

Period: 1869–20th c.

Status: PARTLY ACKNOWLEDGED

Key correction: Agencies' study (2021); first report (2024)

7. Residential schools in Canada

Period: 1849–1969

Status: APOLOGIZED FOR

Key correction: United Church apologies (1986, 1998)

8. Abuse in the Methodist Church in Britain: the Past Cases Review

Period: 1950–2015

Status: PARTLY CORRECTED

Key correction: *Courage, Cost and Hope* (2015); 23 recommendations

Close all

A. Slavery and race 4

1. Retreating from the rules against slaveholding 1784–1808 ACKNOWLEDGED

2. Bishop Andrew and the division of 1844 1844–1939 REUNITED AT A PRICE

3. Black Methodists pushed out: St. George's, Bethel and the separate churches 1780s–1870

REPENTED OF

4. The Central Jurisdiction 1939–1968 ENDED

B. Native peoples 3

5. The Sand Creek Massacre 1864 APOLOGIZED FOR

6. Methodist missions and Native American boarding schools 1869–20th c.
PARTLY ACKNOWLEDGED

7. Residential schools in Canada 1849–1969 APOLOGIZED FOR

C. Abuse and safeguarding 1

8. Abuse in the Methodist Church in Britain: the Past Cases Review 1950–2015
PARTLY CORRECTED

The other records: Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Baptist.

1. Retreating from the rules against slaveholding 1784–1808

ACKNOWLEDGED

WHAT HAPPENED

John Wesley's *Thoughts upon Slavery* (1774) pleaded, "Give liberty to whom liberty is due, that is to every child of man." Methodist preachers in the northern states declared in 1780 that slavery was "contrary to the laws of God, man and nature" and called on preachers who held slaves to free them. At the Christmas Conference in Baltimore (December 1784), which organized the Methodist Episcopal Church, the preachers added rules requiring every member who held slaves to free them on a schedule set by age, on pain of exclusion from the society and the Lord's Supper, and barring slaveholders from joining. The rules met fierce resistance: Thomas Coke was threatened with violence for preaching emancipation in Virginia in 1785, and petitions asked for their suspension. A conference at Baltimore later in 1785 suspended them indefinitely; Coke judged this prudent because of the "great opposition" and "our work being in too infantile a state to push things to extremity." The General Conference of 1796 called slavery a "great evil" but left action to the annual conferences. In 1804 Francis Asbury allowed two editions of the Discipline to

be printed, one omitting the section on slavery for South Carolina, and in 1808 the General Conference gave each annual conference the right to make its own rules on slaveholding. Southern Methodists turned instead to evangelizing the enslaved, eventually appointing ministers to serve on plantations.

The criticism

The historian Wade Crawford Barclay called the 1785 suspension the "first official concession made by American Methodism to slavery," and a failure to be true to Wesley's refusal to compromise on a moral issue. Critics within the tradition describe it as a test of whether the young church would risk losing members for the sake of principle, and on this reading it chose growth: within a generation the rule had been left out of the Discipline printed for South Carolina and handed to each annual conference to decide.

Methodist response

The 1784 rules were suspended but never rescinded, and the antislavery witness did not die. Coke and Asbury called on George Washington in 1785 to ask his support for abolition in Virginia; in 1794 the Virginia preachers agreed almost unanimously not to hold slaves where the law allowed them to free them; and in 1796 the General Conference still named slavery a great evil. In a letter of 24 February 1791, days before his death, Wesley urged William Wilberforce on against "that execrable villainy." The General Rules printed in the United Methodist Book of Discipline today list "slaveholding; buying or selling slaves" among the evils every member is to avoid.

Was it corrected? Acknowledged. Slavery in the United States ended with emancipation (1865). The church's own historians and archives now describe the 1785 suspension and the southern Disciplines as a compromise with slavery, and on 4 May 2000 the United Methodist General Conference held an Act of Repentance for Racism (see case 3).

Sources: Wesley Corpus, John Wesley, Thoughts upon Slavery (1774); Wesley Corpus, John Wesley, letter to William Wilberforce (24 February 1791); A. Glenn Mower Jr., "Early American Methodism and Slavery," The Chronicle (Susquehanna Conference Archives, 2020), citing Barclay and Norwood; Wofford College Archives, "From the Archives: Methodism and Slavery" (1 May 2017); United Methodist Church, The General Rules of the Methodist Church.

2. Bishop Andrew and the division of 1844 1844–1939

REUNITED AT A PRICE

WHAT HAPPENED

Before 1844 the Methodist Episcopal Church was, apart from the federal government, the largest organization in the United States. Bishop James O. Andrew had come to own enslaved people through

marriage. The General Conference of 1844 voted to suspend him from the exercise of his office, in the words of the church's own history, "so long as he could not, or would not, free his slaves." Southern delegates then proposed, and the conference adopted, a Plan of Separation permitting the annual conferences in slaveholding states to leave. They met at Louisville, Kentucky, in May 1845 and organized the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The two churches remained divided through the Civil War and for seventy years after it, until they reunited with the Methodist Protestant Church in 1939 to form The Methodist Church.

The criticism

The southern church was organized so that slaveholding would not bar a man from its highest office, and its delegates argued that slavery was sanctioned in the Bible. The division also mattered beyond the church: when the largest denomination split along the line of slavery, a strong tie between North and South was cut, and contemporaries such as Henry Clay saw the church divisions as a danger to the Union. The 1939 reunion, critics add, was bought by writing racial segregation into the new church's structure (case 4).

Methodist response

Andrew's defenders said that he had not sought to own slaves, had acquired them by marriage, and could not free them because state law forbade it; Andrew told the conference that he was "a slaveholder for conscience' sake." On the other side, the northern majority's vote was itself a refusal to accept a slaveholding bishop, at the cost of losing the South. The United Methodist Church today tells this history openly, recording that the factions "clashed over episcopacy, race, and slavery."

Was it corrected? Reunited at a price. Slavery ended in 1865, and the northern and southern churches reunited in 1939, but only on terms that created the racially segregated Central Jurisdiction, which lasted until 1968.

Sources: United Methodist Church, "Division in America and Expansion Overseas (1844–1860)"; Christian History 33, "Broken Churches, Broken Nation" (1992); Christopher H. Evans, The Conversation (8 April 2024); Elesha Coffman, "The Last Time Methodists Split: A Primary Source," Religion in American History (19 May 2016).

3. Black Methodists pushed out: St. George's, Bethel and the separate churches 1780s–1870 REPENTED OF

WHAT HAPPENED

At St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, white members tried to move Black worshipers to segregated seating and physically barred them from kneeling in prayer. In Richard Allen's

own account, a trustee pulled Absalom Jones up from his knees during prayer, saying, "You must get up, you must not kneel here," and another went to pull up William White; the Black members walked out together. The date is disputed: the traditional date is 1787, but the historians Gary B. Nash and Richard S. Newman place it in 1792, after St. George's new gallery was completed, and St. George's itself gives 1794 with the date marked as disputed. Allen had bought land at Sixth and Lombard Streets in 1791, and Bethel Church was dedicated there in July 1794. The Methodist Episcopal Church's officials in Philadelphia continued to claim control of Bethel: in 1815 its elders had the building put up for auction, and Allen had to buy back his own church for $10,125; in 1816 the Bethel congregation won in court. On 9 April 1816, at Bethel, Black Methodist congregations agreed to become one body, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and elected Allen its first bishop. After the Civil War the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, authorized its bishops (1866) to organize its Black members separately, and on 16 December 1870, at Jackson, Tennessee, 41 former slave members of that church organized the Colored (now Christian) Methodist Episcopal Church.

The criticism

The historically Black Methodist churches exist because white Methodists would not let Black Methodists worship, pray and govern as equals. At St. George's, men were pulled from their knees in prayer; at Bethel, the white connection tried to keep control of a congregation's pulpit and property until the courts stopped it. Critics see the pattern as structural, not a lapse of a few trustees: the same denomination that had once made slaveholding grounds for exclusion now treated its Black members as a problem to be managed or set apart.

Methodist response

United Methodists acknowledge this history and have confessed it publicly. On 4 May 2000, at the General Conference in Cleveland, the church held an Act of Repentance for Racism with representatives of the AME, AME Zion and CME churches, recalling the departure of Black Methodists in the 18th and 19th centuries; Bishop William Boyd Grove called racism "a malignancy in the bone marrow of the church." On 30 April 2012 the General Conference approved full communion with the AME, AME Zion, CME, African Union Methodist Protestant and Union American Methodist Episcopal churches. The CME Church's own history adds that its founders chose separation; Isaac Lane wrote, "we preferred a separate organization of our own."

Was it corrected? Repented of. The separations themselves were not undone: the AME, AME Zion and CME churches remain independent denominations. The United Methodist Church confessed its racism in the Act of Repentance (2000) and entered full communion with the Pan-Methodist churches (2012), with mutual recognition of their ordained ministers.

Sources: Historic St. George's, "The Great Walk Out," with Richard Allen's account; Ricardo Howell, "Mother Bethel AME Church," Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia (2009); Will Gravely, "You Must Not Kneel Here," Christian History 62 (1999); Brian J. Terpak, "Building the Black Zion," Concept (Villanova University), on the dating of the walkout; Independence Hall Association, "Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church" (ushistory.org); Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, "The History of the CME Church"; United Methodist News Service, report on the Act of Repentance for Racism (6 May 2000); UM News, "Pan-Methodist Full Communion Resolution Approved" (1 May 2012).

4. The Central Jurisdiction 1939–1968 ENDED

WHAT HAPPENED

When the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church united in 1939 to form The Methodist Church, the southern church agreed to union only after a compromise that organized the new church into jurisdictions. The others were geographical; the Central Jurisdiction was defined by race and took in the nineteen Black annual conferences of the former Methodist Episcopal Church wherever they were in the country. Seventeen of those nineteen conferences voted against the Plan of Union. In 1956 the General Conference adopted Amendment IX, which let churches and conferences transfer out of the Central Jurisdiction voluntarily, and created a commission to study it. In 1964 the Kirk Amendment, keeping the Central Jurisdiction out of the plan for union with the Evangelical United Brethren, passed 464 to 362. The Uniting Conference at Dallas in April 1968, which formed The United Methodist Church, ended the Central Jurisdiction, and a constitutional amendment required any remaining race-based structure to be eliminated by 1972.

The criticism

For almost thirty years a church that taught the equality of all before God wrote racial segregation into its constitution, so that white southern Methodists would accept reunion with the North. Black Methodists were placed in a separate jurisdiction regardless of where they lived, against the votes of most of their own conferences. Bishop Melvin Talbert, who voted against the merger, later said the Black jurisdiction had received only a promise, and a minority report in 1968 said that eleven Black conferences had still not transferred out.

Methodist response

The church dismantled the Central Jurisdiction itself, through its own General Conferences, between 1956 and 1968, during the civil rights era. Black Methodists who lived through it describe it also as a place where Black members developed their own leadership and "honed their skills, even though it was not pleasant," in the words of Mai Gray. At the 1968 union the church created a Commission on Religion and Race, later made a permanent general agency, and a Temporary General Aid Fund of $20 million to support pensions and salaries in former Central Jurisdiction churches.

Was it corrected? Ended. Abolished at the Uniting Conference of 1968, with race-based conferences required to merge by 1972. The geographical jurisdictions created in 1939 remain.

Sources: Joey Butler, "50 years on, Central Jurisdiction's shadow looms," UM News (18 April 2018).

5. The Sand Creek Massacre 1864 APOLOGIZED FOR

WHAT HAPPENED

Early on 29 November 1864, Colorado volunteer troops attacked a Cheyenne and Arapaho encampment on Sand Creek in Colorado Territory, whose leader Black Kettle had sought peace. Estimates of the dead range from about 150 to more than 230; the National Park Service puts the number at around 230, mostly women, children and the elderly, and the troops abused the bodies of the dead afterward. The commander, Col. John M. Chivington, had been ordained an elder of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1852 and had come to Denver in 1860 as presiding elder of the Rocky Mountain District; he gave up his conference membership on taking a military command but was still an ordained elder at the time of the massacre. The territorial governor and superintendent of Indian affairs, John Evans, was a prominent Methodist layman, a leading founder of Northwestern University and the founder of the University of Denver. Chivington was not punished or censured by the church.

The criticism

The church's own commissioned historian, Gary L. Roberts, found that the Methodist Episcopal Church "embraced the prevailing mind-set" of white expansion and defended Evans and Chivington after the massacre, and that the most striking feature of its response was indifference: "Sand Creek was simply not important enough to the church to matter." Even the church's first apology, 132 years later, contained historical errors and, in the judgment of its own bishop, did not adequately respect the survivors' descendants. How far Evans was responsible is disputed. Northwestern's study committee (May 2014) found no evidence that he planned the attack or knew of it in advance, but called his conduct afterward "a deep moral failure"; the University of Denver's committee (November 2014) concluded that he "bears serious culpability."

Methodist response

The United Methodist Church has apologized and sought the full record. Bishop Elaine Stanovsky, whose area includes the massacre site, has said, "We are heirs to the atrocity." In 2012 the General Conference held an Act of Repentance toward Healing Relationships with Indigenous Peoples and ordered an independent study to "provide full disclosure" of Methodist involvement, pledging to work with the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes on reparations, repatriation and research. On 18 May 2016 the General Conference set aside its business to hear Roberts's 173-page report and to welcome

descendants of the survivors. Northern Cheyenne descendant William Walks Along answered, "We now extend our hand in friendship to the Methodist Church."

Was it corrected? Apologized for. The 1996 General Conference at Denver apologized (22 April 1996), though its resolution wrongly called Chivington a lay preacher and was criticized for lacking any action. The church contributed $50,000 toward a National Park Service memorial and study center for the site. After the 2012 and 2016 actions, follow-up stalled through deaths among tribal leaders, the church's divisions and the pandemic; the 2024 General Conference adopted an updated resolution committing the church to negotiate an "ongoing healing relationship" with tribal representatives, help create memorials, encourage the return of artifacts and remains, and support tribal landholdings in ancestral lands.

Sources: National Park Service, Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, History and Culture; Linda Bloom, "United Methodists plan Sand Creek project," UM News (4 April 2013); Elliott Wright, "Justice for 1864 massacre pledged," UM News (1 May 2012); Sam Hodges, "GC2016 recalls, laments Sand Creek Massacre," UM News (18 May 2016); Joey Butler and Jim Patterson, "Church restarts response to Sand Creek Massacre," UM News (18 October 2024); United Methodist News Service, report on the 1996 apology (22 April 1996); Northwestern University, "John Evans Study Committee Issues Report" (29 May 2014); University of Denver, Chancellor's letter on the John Evans Study Committee Report (3 November 2014).

6. Methodist missions and Native American boarding schools

1869–20th c. **PARTLY ACKNOWLEDGED**

WHAT HAPPENED

Under President Grant's "Peace Policy," begun in 1869, the federal government handed the management of Indian reservations to Christian denominations, including Catholics, Methodists, Baptists and Quakers. The Methodists received fourteen agencies, covering some 54,500 Native people, one of the four churches that bore the heaviest share, and missionaries took charge of education on the reservations. Through the late 19th and 20th centuries Methodist missions and agencies sponsored or ran boarding schools that served the federal policy of separating Native children from their families, languages and religions in order to assimilate them. A first report by three United Methodist agencies, *The United Methodist Church and Indigenous Boarding Schools* (September 2024), lists 44 schools of the Wesleyan family, a list its authors say is not exhaustive.

The criticism

Critics, including Native United Methodists, say that Methodist missions were partners in a policy that took children from their homes and tried to erase their cultures, and that the church has only recently begun to ask what happened in its own schools. A resolution adopted by the 2016 General Conference names among the church's offenses that Native children were "forcibly removed to boarding schools,

often operated by religious institutions." As the Rev. Chebon Kernell has put it, "As a denomination, we must be able to answer these questions."

Methodist response

The church's agencies have accepted the charge and begun the inquiry. On 27 September 2021 eleven United Methodist agencies jointly said, "We need to better understand our complicity in this form of cultural genocide," and pledged their own study of Methodist-related boarding schools alongside the U.S. Interior Department's investigation. The 2024 report, presented by the head of the church's archives and history commission, was framed around remembrance and repentance, and the agencies pledged to work with Indigenous United Methodists to rebuild trust.

Was it corrected? Partly acknowledged. The 2012 Act of Repentance toward Indigenous Peoples and the 2016 resolution "Native People and The United Methodist Church" named the harm in general terms; the agencies' study began in 2021 and its first report appeared in September 2024, followed by a research fellowship (June 2025 to June 2026) on Methodist-run boarding school records.

Sources: National Park Service, "President Ulysses S. Grant and Federal Indian Policy"; Elesha Coffman, "Give Peace a Chance," Christian History (8 August 2008); General Board of Global Ministries, "Remembering Native American Victims of US Schools" (statement of 27 September 2021); Crystal Caviness, "Spotlighting UMC's role in Indigenous boarding schools," UM News (18 September 2024); Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, "Trauma Still Lingers" (2 December 2024); ResourceUMC, "GCAH, GBGM and United Women in Faith Launch Indigenous Boarding School Fellowship" (25 November 2025).

7. Residential schools in Canada 1849–1969 APOLOGIZED FOR

WHAT HAPPENED

Canadian Methodists ran Indian residential schools from the first years of the system. Mount Elgin, at Muncey, Ontario, was established in 1847 by an agreement between the Wesleyan Methodist missionary society and the Department of Indian Affairs, opened in 1851, and was run by the Methodists until 1925, when the Methodist Church, Canada, joined the Congregational Union and most Presbyterians to form the United Church of Canada (10 June 1925) and the school passed to the United Church's Board of Home Missions; it closed in 1946. Its record, published by the United Church itself, includes an investigation after two students died of tuberculosis (1908), contaminated water, buildings an inspector called in 1942 "the most dilapidated structures that I have ever inspected," complaints by the Chippewas of the Thames in 1943 of spoiled food and lack of medical care, and former students' memories of strapping for speaking their Oneida language. The United Church counts itself responsible for fifteen residential schools, run by it or its predecessors between 1849 and 1969.

The criticism

Survivors and their communities say the schools, Methodist and United Church alike, were instruments of a policy meant to destroy Indigenous cultures, and that children were neglected and abused in them. The United Church has since described its own first reaction to survivors' lawsuits in the same terms: "We turned away from truth. We reacted with strenuous denial, fear, even anger," with "defensive and legalistic opposition to taking responsibility," while it disputed with the federal government over who was chiefly to blame. An Indigenous minister of the church, Maggie McLeod, told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2014 that the church's apologies "have not been accepted," though they have been acknowledged.

Methodist response

The United Church, as heir of the Methodist schools, has apologized twice. In August 1986 its General Council apologized to First Nations peoples: "We tried to make you be like us." In 1998 Moderator Bill Phipps apologized for the church's part in "this cruel and ill-conceived system of assimilation," saying, "we are truly and most humbly sorry," and told those abused, "You did nothing wrong." In its statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Edmonton, 28 March 2014) the church acknowledged it had been wrong to reject and even outlaw Indigenous spiritual practice, and committed itself to denounce racism, involve Indigenous people in decisions that affect them, support the recovery of languages, and help implement the Commission's recommendations.

Was it corrected? Apologized for. The schools closed (the last United Church school in 1969). Apologies followed in 1986 and 1998, a statement of accountability to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2014, and in 2012 a revised church crest adding the Mohawk words for "All My Relations" to recognize the Indigenous congregations ignored when the church was formed in 1925.

Sources: The United Church of Canada, The Children Remembered, "Mount Elgin Residential School"; The United Church of Canada, "History of The United Church of Canada"; The United Church of Canada, "Apologies"; The United Church of Canada, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (Edmonton, 28 March 2014).

8. Abuse in the Methodist Church in Britain: the Past Cases Review 1950–2015 PARTLY CORRECTED

WHAT HAPPENED

Between 2013 and 2015 the Methodist Church in Britain asked everyone in its districts with knowledge of a safeguarding concern since 1950 to report it, and an independent reviewer, Jane Stacey, examined the responses and how the church had handled each case. The report, *Courage, Cost and Hope*, published on 28 May 2015, recorded 2,566 responses relating to 1,885 cases, including sexual, physical, emotional and

domestic abuse and neglect. Some 914 cases involved reported sexual abuse; about a third of the victims were under 18. Ministers were the perpetrators or alleged perpetrators in about 200 cases and lay employees in 276. The police had been contacted in 61 cases, and six investigations were still under way when the report was published.

The criticism

The sharpest criticism came from the review itself, which described a church that had failed in a number of respects and named the lack of accountability among its two most worrying themes. It reported weak accountability structures, a lack of support for ministers, and, in one case, a senior minister "highly resistant to cooperating with the statutory agencies." The church admitted that it had "not always listened properly to those abused or cared for them,".

Methodist response

The church commissioned the review itself, published its findings in full, and apologized. The Secretary of the Conference, the Rev. Dr. Martyn Atkins, apologized without reservation to survivors in 2015, and again in a "full and unreserved apology" in 2017, and called the abuse "a deep source of grief and shame to the Church." The Conference was invited to set up an implementation group for the report's 23 recommendations. Since then every minister must take part in reflective supervision with a qualified supervisor, the church adopted a *Theology of Safeguarding* (2021) that ties forgiveness to an offender's accountability, and it has committed itself to the recommendations of the national Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

Was it corrected? Partly corrected. The review led to new safeguarding structures and supervision for all ministers. Marking ten years in December 2025, the Secretary of the Conference wrote that there was "reason to believe" it had become a more accountable church, while calling the report still "difficult to read." The harm to survivors cannot be undone, and the review relied on what people chose to report.

Sources: Methodist Church in Britain, "Courage, Cost and Hope: Past Cases Review"; Church Times, "Methodists come clean about historic abuse" (29 May 2015); ITV News, "Methodist Church: what's in the historical abuse report?" (28 May 2015), via BishopAccountability.org; David Pocklington, "Methodist Church review of past abuse cases," Law & Religion UK (28 May 2015); Methodist Church in Britain, "Church issues 'full and unreserved apology' to abuse survivors" (26 October 2017); Jonathan Hustler, "The PCR – Ten Years On: Holding ourselves to account," Methodist Church in Britain (1 December 2025).