

## **METHODIST CHURCH REPORTS**

### ***Special Report***

# The Church and Sex Offenders

## **PREFACE**

This report on The Church and Sex Offenders was adopted by the Methodist Conference in June 2000, along with a series of resolutions concerning the report's implementation and further work to be done (Section 9).

Section 7b of the Report is particularly important. The Conference resolved that the procedures set out there should be 'the practice of the Methodist Church when a person who has been convicted of or has received a formal caution in respect of a sexual offence seeks to become part of a local church community'. Ministers and churches seeking further help and advice in developing and implementing this practice can obtain it from the Methodist Church's Regional Training and Development Officers or from Methodist Church House.

The Report covers very important issues both within the Church and society. We hope that church groups will study it, whether or not there is a convicted or cautioned sex offender in their community. The issues are of importance to all churches and concern the kind of community we seek to be. (Resolution 2(a) describes this as 'a community of love, forgiveness and reconciliation' committed to 'the restoration of broken people and communities'.)

To the end of the Report adopted by Conference we have added Appendices D and E. Appendix D offers Biblical material and a litany for groups studying the report. Appendix E contains a short list of recommended resources.

## **The Report of a Working Party set up by the Methodist Council**

## **CONTENTS**

1. Introduction and Executive Summary
2. How the working party did its work
3. What we know about sex offending
4. Some theological questions
5. Clarifying the issues
6. Pastoral perspectives
7. Practical implications

8. Members of the working party
9. Resolutions
  - Appendix A History and background of the report
  - Appendix B The survey of ministers
  - Appendix C

## **1 INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report has been produced in response to a Notice of Motion to the 1997 Methodist Conference calling for a group to be set up 'to consider the ways in which appropriate and informed pastoral support and care may be given to those in the local church and community who have committed sexual offences.' The particular context for the bringing of the Notice of Motion and for the work of the working party was the development of the Methodist Church's Safeguarding procedures (relating to good practice in work with children and young people) and, in particular, the decision of Conference not to allow people with convictions or police cautions for sex offences to hold office in the Church. Concern was expressed that, while it was clearly the Church's responsibility to do everything possible to protect children and young people from abuse, there was a danger that sex offenders would find no place in the life of the Church and that the gospel and ministry of the Church would thus be limited.

The working party wishes to state clearly at the outset of this report that it became increasingly aware, during the course of its work, of the wider implications of any statement, decision or change of practice relating to child protection issues. Something done to protect children or survivors may appear to exclude offenders. A piece of work aimed at including offenders may put children at risk or cause great pain or offence to those who have experienced sexual violence or abuse and who live with continuing physical, emotional and spiritual pain. The 1997 Report to Conference on Sexual Harassment and Abuse alerted the Church to this experience of survivors and victims and led to the development of new complaints and discipline procedures. The Safeguarding procedures have sought to improve our practice, particularly in work with children and young people, and have made us more aware of child protection issues within the life and activities of churches. This current report addresses issues relating to the place of sex offenders within the church community and beyond. The working party believes that far too little has been done to address the experience and needs of victims and survivors. Serious attention should now be paid to this issue by the Methodist Church, preferably in collaboration with other Churches. (See Resolution 38/4(a).)

The working party has received evidence from a wide variety of sources (see section 2) and tried to bring together insights from different disciplines. We have attempted in this report to set out what is known about sex offenders and have concluded that, while therapeutic interventions during and after custodial sentences may have some effect on future behaviour and reduce the risk of future offending, it is more appropriate to talk of sex offenders as 'recovering' than 'recovered' or 'cured'. Even if they participate in a therapeutic programme whilst in prison (and many offenders do not), when they have served their

sentence they need continuing support from other people to help them rebuild and conduct their lives in a way which manages the thoughts, feelings, behaviours and situations which, in the past, have moved them towards offending.

For Christians, there are theological questions to be considered, particularly about how we understand conversion, restitution, forgiveness and a call to service. Can God change people's lives? Is God's forgiveness truly for all (or at least all who repent)? If we answer these questions in the affirmative, how can that be squared with the Methodist Church's Safeguarding procedures which appear to offer no way back into church office for someone who has been convicted or given a police caution for sexual offences against children? The working party looked at these questions in depth and saw that, whilst God can and does change people's lives and can and does offer forgiveness to all, there is and can be no sure and objective test by which we know when that has happened. The individual's testimony may be true, or it may not. Good intentions expressed at a time of heightened religious experience do not always work out in practice (something which is true for all of us). Some sex offenders who have testified to their conversion and to God's ongoing work in their lives have then re-offended. Given the nature of sex offending, an offender's acceptance of God's forgiveness is most likely to be reflected in an ongoing response in penitence, with the offender accepting a firm code of conduct for his new life in the congregation and in Christ.

The report considers some of the pastoral implications of the presence of sex offenders in congregations. It makes recommendations on appropriate practice both to safeguard children and young people and to enable sex offenders to take their place within the worship and fellowship of the Church. Given the tendency on the part of the media to demonise paedophiles and make it very difficult for sex offenders to rebuild their lives after the completion of their sentence, we believe the Church has a significant role to play in offering them and their families pastoral support and working alongside other agencies to encourage their responsible involvement in church and society.

While women can and sometimes do commit sex offences (and sometimes play a role in assisting a male perpetrator, perhaps by 'grooming' children), less than 5% of sex offences are known to involve female perpetrators. As the vast majority of perpetrators are male, we have described the offender as 'he' throughout this report.

## **2 HOW THE WORKING PARTY DID ITS WORK**

### **a. Meetings**

The working party held ten meetings at which it decided its work plan, received papers and documents prepared by members and others, heard evidence and discussed the principles involved. A draft of the report was circulated to many of those who had been consulted during the process for comment and discussed by the Pastoral Care and Christian Education Committee. The working party is very grateful to all those who submitted evidence and contributed to the process, including:

- i. Donald Findlater, describing the therapeutic approach and experience of the Faithfull Foundation's Wolvercote Clinic in its work with sex offenders;

- ii. The Revd Peter Sedgewick, of the General Synod Board for Social Responsibility, regarding the Church of England's work leading to the publication Meeting the challenge: how churches should respond to sex offenders;
- iii. Nicolas Coote, the Secretary of the Catholic Bishops' Conference, describing similar work being done in the Roman Catholic Church;
- iv. Offenders who wrote to us of their experience and hopes upon release;
- v. Survivors - we were able to draw on the pastoral and personal experience of members of the working party and on work done in preparing the 1997 Conference Report on Sexual Harassment and Abuse. In the Autumn of 1999, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland published Margaret Kennedy's The Courage to Tell, which added to our understanding of survivors' experience of 'church' and faith (and which we feel is important, if painful, reading for the Church as a whole);
- vi. Detective Inspector Tim Bryan of the Metropolitan Police, who outlined the relevant legislation relating to sex offenders, particularly the recent Acts regarding registration;
- vii. Jan Davies and Michael Roberts, of Middlesex Probation Service, who described procedures relating to sex offenders in the community and the work of Risk Management Panels;
- viii. Andrew Cordy, who described the role of Prison chaplains and provided insight into the therapeutic programmes run for sex offenders in prison;
- ix. several Circuit ministers who described their experience in churches and circuits where sex offenders had become involved;
- x. Chris Wood and James West, who outlined the work of Katherine Price Hughes House, West London Mission's Probation Hostel.

## **b. Reporting date**

It soon became apparent that to produce the report would take longer than the time originally allowed, so the working party asked the Methodist Council for permission to delay bringing its report until Conference in 2000. This permission was granted.

## **c. A survey of ministers**

In order to ascertain whether the rehabilitation of sex offenders was a significant issue within the Church, in February 1999 the working party circulated a questionnaire to the ministers of five synods (see Appendix B). Ministers were asked about their experience of working with offenders and victims/survivors in their current appointment and throughout the whole of their ministry.

13.3% of ministers said they knew of offenders in their current appointment, though the percentage varied from 25% in North Wales to 4.2% in South Wales (with Chester & Stoke 10.9%, London North

West 20% and Cymru 5.3%). It is interesting to note the differences between Districts, which may reflect the experience in some Districts of providing ongoing pastoral support for those involved in particular cases (e.g. of historic abuse in residential care homes). Overall, about one fifth (19.6%) of ministers (ranging from 41.7% in North Wales to 8.3% in South Wales) said that they had known of sexual offenders becoming involved in the church at some point during their ministry. While these figures indicate that a significant proportion of ministers are aware of sex offenders in the life of the Church, evidence from the Faithfull Foundation suggests the actual number to be higher than these findings indicate. It seems likely that ministers are frequently unaware of sex offenders who are present in churches.

Ministers were more aware of offenders returning to their previous church and community than of them arriving at a church at which they were previously unknown. Of course, ministers and the community are more likely to know about a sex offender who returns to his previous home after release. A sex offender moving to a new area may not announce his arrival.

One minister who responded to the questionnaire had developed a ministry to adult survivors of abuse and had a large number of such survivors in the congregation. The working party warmly welcomed such a vital ministry and would like to encourage more work in this area.

### **3 WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT SEX OFFENDING**

#### **a. What is a sexual offence?**

A working definition is an offence in which a person seeks to gain emotional and/or physical gratification from inappropriate and illegal sexual contact and activities with another person against their will and/or who is below the age of legal consent. Some offenders engage in very specific acts with very specific individuals or types of individual as their target (adult or child, male or female); for others the range of acts and victims will be much wider and less specific. Our report is about sex offenders in general, though the Church's Safeguarding procedures relate specifically to those convicted of or cautioned for offences against children and the Church has a particular responsibility to protect children and young people from abuse.

The types of sexual offences are set out in Appendix C. These, however, are for the most part broad categories and embrace a very wide range of acts on the part of an offender. It may be more helpful, therefore, to give some examples from specific categories. An indecent assault on a male could range from touching of genitalia over or under clothing, oral sex on the victim, masturbating them, kissing, fondling of any part of the body or digital penetration. An act of gross indecency with a child may involve an offender in exposing himself, getting the child to pose for him, taking indecent photographs, getting a child to masturbate him or masturbating himself in front of a child. Serious criminal offences against a female may include oral, anal or vaginal penetration.

The emotional pleasure and satisfaction gained by the offender may be related not only to sexual gratification, but also to a sense of control and power exercised over his victim.

## **b. Who are sex offenders?**

It is difficult to estimate the number of sex offenders. Some have been convicted or cautioned. Many have not. A Home Office study in 1995 showed that if the Sex Offenders Register had been in effect since 1953, 125,000 offenders would have to register, 25,000 of these for life. Most incidents of child sexual abuse are not reported (current estimates suggest 5-8 % are reported to a statutory agency) and currently in the UK only a minority of reported cases result in prosecution,. A smaller proportion leads to a conviction, so those actually convicted of sexual offences are a very small proportion of those likely to have offended.

Offenders come from every social group and category, irrespective of profession, level of intelligence, educational background, ability, sexual orientation, nationality, religion or age. Most, but not all, sex offenders are male (less than 5% of sex offences are known to involve female perpetrators).

Approximately one third are adolescents. Many sexual offenders committed their first offence as adolescents, but by no means all adolescent offenders go on to become adult offenders. While media coverage often stereotypes sex offenders as less than human, outsiders with no connections to families or communities, this does not reflect what is currently known about them. The majority of offences against children are committed by individuals known to the child and often by the family. 80% of offences against children are committed in their home or in that of the perpetrator. Girls are more likely to be abused within the family, boys outside. Histories of individual offending can range between a single event within or outside the family to ongoing abuse over years. A USA study based on the 'self reports' of 411 convicted sex offenders, given immunity from prosecution in regard to past offences, showed that they had an average of 533 offences and 336 victims each. Offenders did not limit themselves to one type of offence. Many had abused boys and girls, adults and children, and children within and outside their families.

The charges for which individuals are convicted are often "specimen" charges, the ones where there is the strongest evidence and/or where a guilty plea can be gained in return for dropping more serious charges. This has the effect of the reducing the penalty.

Some offenders are socially isolated, with poor social skills and low self esteem. Others may be articulate, well educated and hold responsible positions. They are all extremely skilled in techniques to target and entrap children, and in establishing positions of trust and authority which afford ready access to children. There is also no direct link between being abused and becoming an offender, though many offenders speak of trauma experienced in their own childhood. The reality is that offenders are people whom we know and in some cases like, and who can and will manipulate individuals and organizations, including churches, to gain access to children.

There is no higher rate of mental illness recorded amongst those who commit sexual offences than amongst the general population. In other words, there is no standard psychopathology of sexual offending to which it can be attributed. Sexual offending is not an illness, it is a behaviour consciously undertaken with the knowledge that it is regarded by the majority of people as being morally repugnant and that the discovery will involve relatively severe punitive sanctions, social ostracism and outrage.

### **c. Why do people commit sexual offences?**

Explanations range across the historical, sociological, cultural, psychological and biological. Some arise from empirical research, others out of clinical observations, and others out of vested interest.

Consequently, they are built on radically different foundations and to present even a limited review of the theories and literature available would require much space. What is set out here is an integrated theory which is the most widely acknowledged explanation of sexual offending and which is complex and tentative. (N.B. There are different theories, but not as yet much information, regarding female offenders.)

The theory argues that because of their genetic make up, males have a greater tendency towards aggressive behaviour than do women. This may be overcome, in the majority of males, through learning appropriate and acceptable ways of relating to and behaving towards women as they grow and develop in families and society. The vast majority of males have no desire to, and do not, commit sexual offences. If, however, appropriate behaviour is not established - for example because of poor parental example or lack of affection - then sex and aggression may become fused. Social and cultural attitudes may also exercise an important influence. As a society we need to be made more aware of the standards and messages we adopt and convey which may, advertently or inadvertently, suggest that women are to be seen as objects of sexual pleasure for others; that men 'can't help themselves'; that children are precocious; etc. Such messages feed into the 'permission giving' discussed below and encourage a negative view of women and their role. (The 1997 Report on Sexual Harassment and Abuse described a number of situations in which behaviour reflecting this kind of view was experienced within the Church.) This, along with a failure to develop appropriate social skills and sexual experience can enhance the likelihood of moving towards offending. The availability and use of pornography may reinforce already negative attitudes as well as heighten the desire for sexual gratification. Drugs and alcohol may also be used to dis-inhibit by a person who may otherwise feel moral constraints or fear for the consequences. Add a context in which he feels he will not be caught and the likelihood of offending is even more increased.

This model allows for a variety of factors to converge without presupposing that any single one must pertain or dominate. It gives perspective, therefore, to the wide range of experiences and attitudes, which may be encountered in offenders, all of which may be relevant in their choosing to offend.

### **d. How do sex offenders perpetrate their crime?**

There is a series of steps an offender will follow leading up to the execution of his crime. This model remains true for all offenders, including non-sexual, but it is particularly helpful in understanding how sex offenders operate. The order is always sequential but the time scale for each step as well as the whole may vary from just a few minutes to many years. For example, an offender began to fantasize about sexual acts with a child in his late teens/early twenties but it was not until almost forty years later that he committed his first offence. Another offender began to fantasize about touching a woman's breasts in a busy town centre; within half an hour he had committed an offence.

#### **i. Wanting to offend**

In the case of the sex offender this will be a desire to fulfil an emotional or physical need through some form of illegal sexual activity. Some offenders will have a very clear mental image of what it is they want to do and the type of (or actual) person to whom they want to do it. For others it will be much more vague. For some there will be in place well-rehearsed and developed fantasies which they are seeking the opportunity to enact and to which a victim's face may be added. For others the fantasy will be much more mundane and non-specific. There is not necessarily a direct cause and effect relationship between what is in the mind of the offender and the actual offence.

## ii. Giving himself permission

Most sex offenders know that what they want to do is wrong. In order to proceed, therefore, they have to put in place a way of thinking which overcomes their inhibitions and give themselves permission to carry out the desired act. This way of thinking has to deal with past as well as potential offences and will ultimately lead some offenders to the belief that what they are doing is all right and not harmful to their victims. This may be further developed by the belief that it is not their own, but society's perception of what they do, which is mistaken.

This distorted cognitive process falls into three main categories.

- (a) Making reprehensible conduct socially and ethically acceptable. There may be moral justifications ('it's sex education'; 'it will be better for her to learn from me than from a stranger'; 'she's my step daughter not my natural daughter'; 'it was a proper relationship'; 'i was showing him the affection he didn't get at home'); psychological justification ('it happened because my wife and I weren't getting on'; 'i was drunk at the time'; 'it's because of my own abuse - I can't help it'); palliative comparisons ('i only touched her, I didn't penetrate her'; 'at least it's not a boy'; 'it won't hurt her'); or euphemistic labelling ('i was only fooling around - it just happened' and 'we were only playing').
- (b) Misconstruing the consequences of the behaviour. This may involve minimizing the consequences ('the child didn't suffer'; 'i won't do any harm'; 'he didn't say anything so he must have been enjoying it'; 'i only intend it to be a bit of fun'); misattribution of the consequences ('it's the way that other people perceive it or deal with it that causes the problems for the child'); or ignoring the consequences ('i don't care').
- (c) Devaluing or attributing blame to the victim, either by dehumanisation of the victim ('she was a slag') or by attribution of blame ('she was asking for it the way she was dressed'; 'you know what children are like from an early age these days - she came on to me').

For many offenders this distorted thinking will be accompanied by denial, which covers a wide spectrum but will often have some very specific aspects. There may be: denial of intention ('i did touch her but it was an accident and it certainly wasn't sexual'); denial of the event ('it never happened, she just wanted to get her own back on me'); denial which is supported by family and friends ('they know what he's like and they are supporting me'); psychological denial ('do I seem to you like the kind of person who could do such a thing?'); the denial of need for any kind of therapeutic intervention in their abusive behaviour



('when I was in prison I found God and became a Christian and now I see things clearly'; 'Jesus has healed me - I no longer have any 'bad' thoughts'). This latter form of denial, where a claim of religious experience or conversion is used as a reason not to need therapy, is particularly relevant in the context of this report.

Through such distorted thinking and the associated denial an offender overcomes his sense of culpability and guilt about past and potential offences and the impact on his victims.

### iii. Creating the opportunity to offend

In essence the focus here is on getting into a position which gives access to a particular (or range of) potential victim(s).

It may be something as simple as walking home by a particular route so that contact is made with a child or children at a specific location. It could be deliberately engaging in activities, for example scouting, which provide the opportunity to be a significant person in charge of a group of potential victims. It could be achieved by entering a specific profession, for example teaching or Christian ministry. It could be that an offender might take a job with working hours which allow or necessitate being alone with his children. It could be going to a place, for example a pub or club, where there are likely to be a lot of lone females. Often it involves making friends with the parents of a child. Babysitting of nephews, nieces and grandchildren may be 'generously' offered by offenders. Encouragement of a partner to go out with friends or take up some activity in the evening, leaving you alone with the children is a seemingly 'caring' and 'supportive' act. Generous attention and friendship given to the vulnerable and under-privileged may attract admiration from others.

Sexual offenders are often described as 'grooming' individuals, families and communities. This can take many months or even years, during which the offender builds a relationship and develops opportunities. Rarely does the individual creating the opportunity to offend draw attention to himself through other forms of anti-social behaviour. On the contrary, offenders present themselves in a whole variety of acceptable ways - the self-assured professional, the 'nice old gentleman' who lives down the street, the 'not very bright' but 'harmless' man, the happy family man, the man who's had a 'hard time' and needs some help and support.

### iv. Overcoming the victim's resistance

Physical strength and size, violence and the threat of violence, are certainly factors in overcoming the victim's resistance to sexual assault. In many cases, however, it is much more subtle.

Offending is rarely against complete strangers and considerable thought, time, patience and effort may go into establishing a compliant victim. For example, a 'date rape' victim has usually had some previous, if limited, physical contact with the perpetrator; a child may be groomed from a very early age to accept touching and eventually penetration as 'normal'; isolation of a child within a family setting may make them feel that the consequences of speaking out could mean exclusion from what gives them security; in other cases of familial abuse a child may have the thought implanted that they will be responsible for

the break-up of the family unit if they were to report their abuse; the significance and standing of an abuser to the victim may imply that no one would believe them should they disclose; vulnerable victims may be susceptible to 'rewards' for their 'co-operation'; emotional as well as physical conditioning by the offender may create a 'willingness' for the victim to participate for fear of losing the 'relationship' or 'friendship'; the inference of a 'reputation' and the imparting of a sense of culpability and guilt may deter adults from reporting sexual attacks. Ever present is the idea of secrecy, personal responsibility and unpleasant consequences for the victim who discloses.

#### **e. Sentences for sexual offences**

Most convicted sex offenders receive custodial sentences. A few are given Probation Orders or other community penalties. A Probation Order normally requires an offender to be part of a programme (such as those offered at the West London Mission's Katherine Price Hughes House) to address their sexual offending.

#### **f. Towards a new life**

The brief overview given above demonstrates that the issue of the pastoral care and support of sex offenders must be approached with a good deal of understanding and the absence of sentimentality. Even if they participate in them, sex offenders are not 'cured' by therapeutic programmes and will continue to have a predisposition towards offending. The 1995 Home Office study quoted earlier showed that within five years of their first conviction, 10% of sexual offenders had another conviction for a sexual offence and 22% for either a sexual or a violent offence.

Evidence suggests that completion of treatment can reduce, but by no means remove, the likelihood of further convictions. The Working Party received evidence from Donald Findlater of the Faithfull Foundation; the Revd Andrew Cordy, a full-time prison chaplain who is a Facilitator in the Offending Behaviour Programme Unit; and Chris Wood and James West of the West London Mission. Those programmes that have been seen as most successful both look at behaviour and develop strategies for the offender to avoid situations where they are likely to offend. The year's programme with the Faithfull Foundation can also include work with the offender's family and support networks (including the local church) to show what risk he presents and help them to help him manage his behaviour so as to avoid risk situations in the future.

Several of those who gave evidence to the working party suggested that sex offending could be seen as an addiction, in some ways like alcoholism. (While there are similarities between sex offending and alcoholism and other addictions, there is a major difference in so far as the main victim of sex offending is, of course, not the offender.) An offender cannot claim to be 'recovered' but might be described as 'recovering'. As with the Alcoholics Anonymous' twelve steps programme, a person needs ongoing awareness and ongoing support. It is important that the offender's memory of what he did continues.

The following is a summary of the factors that are currently believed to reduce the risk of re-offending. These factors merely indicate a reduced likelihood of re-offending. No single factor in itself indicates reduced risk.

- First time conviction.
- Realizing the enormity of what they have done, admitting their responsibility and the harm their sexual violence has caused.
- Completion of treatment.
- Support from family and friends on release.
- Establishment of a social network.
- Avoidance of situations involving contact with children.
- Participation in ongoing treatment and agreement to monitoring.

A report by the Inspectorate of Probation [HMIP 1998] stated that at the end of 1996, 9000 sex offenders were on Probation Service case loads, 4338 were in custody and 4763 were in the community. In regard to those in the community, decisions have to be made about the possible risks that these offenders may pose. Simplistic models are not always helpful, as is illustrated by a number of cases where people convicted many years ago of offences deemed to be 'minor' have subsequently re-offended and been convicted of much more serious offences.

#### **g. Preventing further offending ñ recent legislation**

The 1990s saw the introduction of several pieces of legislation relating to sex offenders.

##### **The Criminal Justice Act 1991**

On release from prison, sex offenders sentenced under this Act are subject to statutory supervision by police, probation and other professionals. Offenders sentenced before 1991 were not subject to such monitoring and the whereabouts of many of them are unknown, though legislation in 1998 allows Orders to be made regarding those sex offenders seen as most potentially dangerous.

##### **The Sex Offenders Act 1997**

This introduced the registration of sex offenders released from 1st September 1997, but was not retrospective. Under this Act, offenders are required to register with the local police within fourteen days of become resident in a new area. The sanction for not registering is a three to six month prison sentence. The requirement continues for periods of five, seven or ten years or for life if the custodial sentence was for thirty months or more. (For juveniles the period is half.) When an offender registers, police then work with other appropriate agencies to establish the level of risk and the level of dangerousness or harm posed by the offender. In each area a monthly risk management meeting shares information about known offenders and looks at case management plans around known risks. Risk management panels are generally chaired by police or probation, but include representatives from other appropriate agencies. (These procedures are still relatively new and there may be inconsistencies in how they operate in different areas.) It was suggested to the working party that the church should expect to

be involved in this process in appropriate cases, but this will depend on the development of necessary skills, understanding and credibility on the church's part. Where an offender joins a church, the offender's probation officer may well be willing to discuss the risk factors with the church, along with ways of managing the offender's behaviour. If the officer does not approach the church, the church should approach the officer.

### **The Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

This made it possible to make a Sex Offender Order and to register Schedule 1 offenders sentenced before 1997 and seen to be a continuing threat.

#### **h. Providing support**

What is known about offenders, and the way in which they gain access to children, has to lead us to be extremely cautious in regard to their contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults. We also have to bear in mind that most offenders are not reported or prosecuted. Given this, communities need to be aware that offenders target vulnerable children and young people, and gain the trust and respect of caring adults. Grooming of the adults is a crucial part of the targeting of children, when offenders can assess the support systems available to children and how effective they are. Clear messages must be given that children, young people and adult survivors are listened to, believed and their stories acted upon. Offenders and potential offenders need to know that abuse of children, young people or anyone else is wholly wrong and unacceptable.

A critical factor in the likelihood of re-offending is the level of informed and consistent support offenders receive when they return to the community. The truth is that, outside of the statutory authorities (and that only whilst they are on a licence), the majority have little or no support from family or friends and no public sympathy because of the nature of their crimes. More adult support could and should be offered to known offenders in our communities. However, those offering support should be aware of the person's offences and be able to challenge behaviour that would put the offender in a situation where they are likely to re-offend.

The working party believes that the Church can play a significant role in developing these all important circles of support which will not only provide care for the individual offender but also help to reduce the number of future victims from abuse and contribute directly to public well-being. It is important that the Church takes this role seriously, as it is clear that many sex offenders see church attendance as part of their life both during and after their prison sentence. In his evidence to the Working Party, Donald Findlater said that almost 25% of sex offenders involved in programmes at the Wolvercote Clinic and other centres he had contacted attend church weekly (compared to 8-9% of the general population). Why there is such a link between sex offending and church attendance is not totally clear and raises interesting questions, not least that of how far the church is part of the problem and/or the solution.

#### **4 SOME THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS**

The issues surrounding the experience of sex offending and the restoration into the church's life of those who offend raise many fundamental theological matters. We confine ourselves to the three most commonly raised during our work and in the general discussions in the Church press.

### **a. Forgiveness**

Every Christian knows that the strong statement "Your sins are forgiven" is central to the gospel news. It reverberates through the Bible and our liturgies, is sought whenever we say the Lord's Prayer, is sung about with great joy and lies deep within Christian awareness. Whatever you have done and been in the past, God offers forgiveness.

***And every offender who truly believes,  
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives:***

*Hymns and Psalms 463*

However, there are many differences within the Church as to what such forgiveness means and entails. There are many Protestants, especially those within the holiness traditions, who believe that to be forgiven by God means that the past is eradicated so that a forgiven sinner is henceforth treated as if those sins never were. They are "blotted out". The forgiven sinner starts life again in such a fresh way as to be morally clean. The wonder of justification is precisely this - to be pronounced innocent in Christ.

Many Christians do not interpret the New Testament teaching and our experience in this way. It tends to be simplistic concerning the ongoing mystery of sin, to neglect the social character of our sinning (which is against our neighbour as well as against God) and to be romantic about actual Christian discipleship and its struggles. Thus there are three common misunderstandings we should avoid:

- i. Forgiveness means 'forgetting'. The injured one says to the offender, "I forget what you did". If God does this then God is promoting an unreal world in which history has to be constantly rewritten and in which offended persons are expected to ignore traumas and injuries they have suffered. But the great story of the Old Testament is not like this: Israel's sins are constantly rehearsed for all to remember.
- ii. Forgiveness means the cancelling of debts and obligations. Instead it may well mean the offender having a greater sense of obligation than before (as with Zaccheus who, after encountering Christ, offered to repay four times those he had swindled, even though the law only required it to be twofold). Thus forgiveness should encourage the offender to take responsibility for the damage caused and for seeking to rectify the situation or make restitution (e.g by paying for the survivor's therapy?) US pastoral theologian, Marie Fortune, tells of a group of incest offenders in a treatment programme whose powerful plea was, 'Don't forgive so easily.' All were Christians and all had asked their pastors for forgiveness. Prayers had been said. They'd been forgiven and sent home. All the offenders said this pastoral response was not helpful because it enabled them to avoid accountability for what they had done.
- iii. Forgiveness means being treated as wholly reformed and good. Quite often offenders argue that they have become totally new people and therefore don't need therapeutic intervention. To see forgiveness

in this way would be naïve. Forgiveness helps us on the road to Christian maturity, but does not suddenly place us at the end of our pilgrimage. A sober reading of Romans 7 reminds us that like Paul "I do not do the good I want", and that is still our condition. Being forgiven by God and neighbour does not lift us out of that perpetual perversity which is our human nature.

To be positive, in forgiveness God is saying, "I accept you totally. Despite what you did and were, you are reconciled. In the wonder of Christ I am with you to rebuild your life and put the past right. By the energy of the Holy Spirit live now as a new person, be forgiving too and be full of hope." When we forgive each other we are offering the human level of such goodness.

But it does not stop there. The New Testament makes it clear that God is also constantly saying, "Have the mind that was in Christ. Keep on walking by the Spirit. Cultivate new graces and new wisdom." In the Lord's Prayer we ask forgiveness from God, but that is immediately followed by the request not to be led into temptation or put "to the test". In the context of our concerns that is especially important; the forgiven one must be learning more of his or her self and how to avoid the special weaknesses each of us is prone to. We are called to a radically new life, significantly different from the old, and we have to take responsibility for ensuring that life will be different and that we avoid situations which put ourselves and others at risk. This implies a personal discipline that builds up those inner restraints and desires that help us on to maturity in Christ.

Now we face two ongoing problems. Is forgiveness dependent upon the offender being penitent? Must the sinner experience the full scope of what the New Testament called 'metanoia', a total turning away from evil so as to face in a new direction? There is much clear teaching to this effect. "If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive." (Luke 17.3.) "If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins." (1 John 1.9.) Yet there are many instances where Jesus apparently forgave sinners and later said "Sin no more" and there is no hint of their contrition (e.g. the woman caught in adultery in John 7.53 - 8.11). The dying criminal on the cross beside Jesus is forgiven, it seems (Luke 23.43). The father runs to meet the returning prodigal son long before a word can be spoken.

This could well mean that we should be forgiving even when the response of penitence has not yet been expressed. Maybe the discovery that one has been forgiven promotes penitence and the fitting response? Maybe we are to understand God's forgiveness as being prevenient? A scholar wrote to say, "I suspect that the tension we find here cannot be eradicated."

The second problem is that of the sin which cannot be forgiven, as in Mark 3.28f and parallels, and the sin which is 'mortal' (1 John 5.16). The context makes it clear that this is not a specific sort of sin against another person - say a sexual sin - but that sort of disposition which rejects God, scorns Christ and his ministry and maybe a conscience repudiating any sense of obligation to God or need for mercy from him.

We were greatly exercised by the question as to how readily victims of sexual offences and survivors of abuse should be expected to forgive their abusers. This forgiveness has sometimes been bluntly commanded within the Church, but to expect immediate forgiveness has been pastorally unwise,

grievously insensitive and unrealistic. In the long run God calls us to forgive our enemies and his commands are for our good; in the short run it may be both impossible and undesirable, though it may eventually happen almost as a 'by-product' at the end of a long, hard process of recovery. It may be quite wrong for an abused person to meet the offender again, and always wrong for an offender to try to coerce a victim into forgiveness and reconciliation.

## **b. Conversion**

At the heart of the gospel is the power of God to transform people's lives for good.

*If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new. (2 Cor. 5.17)*

The way into this new life may be by a sudden transforming event, or more frequently by a process lasting a few years. It does crucial things for us:

- it gives us an overwhelming sense of the coming of God to us in Jesus Christ. God is for us, with us, in us, in Christ. Hallelujah!
- it introduces us to radically new aims, purposes, values, and the chance to live for and in the New One, Jesus Christ.
- it enables us to 'make the best' of the initial persona we are given. We are forgiven; make a new start.
- it invites us into the life of the Church, the nourishment of 'the means of grace' and the life of the Christian community.
- it calls us to witness to our faith, to have a ministry, to serve the world, to love God and neighbour.
- even though we become more acutely aware of our failures, sins, weaknesses, we are ushered into the world of God's promises and given constant hope.
- it requires and enables us to accept the discipline and direction of the Church.

There are many things that conversion does not do:

- it does not change our origins, parentage, nationality, first language, age, gender.
- it does not change our physical structure, our height, weight, capacity to see or hear, facility at music or sports.
- it does not change our basic mental/emotional structure. Our IQ remains what it was before. Those especially sensitive to pain remain so; those who are dyslexic remain so.

- it does not stop us sinning. As before, we are tempted, often confused and baffled, and subject to the strange inner law which means that we do not do what we want to do.
- it does not insulate us from all the dangers, illnesses, tragedies and accidents that are the stuff of ordinary life.
- it does not cure sexual offending or the temptation to offend.

*We do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. (2 Cor. 4.10)*

### **c. Church discipline**

It is clear from passages like Matthew 18, 1 Corinthians 6 or 10, or 1 Timothy, that the early Church practised a strong discipline for its members and leaders. It never assumed that conversion to Christ so transformed the believer's character as to render firm control and order unnecessary. On the contrary it enjoined this firmness on all and appeared to have little reluctance to expel uncooperative members who sinned flagrantly (as in 1 Corinthians 5.2 or Hebrews 6.4). The discipline was an integral part of the Church being an agency of the gospel, a school for forgiveness.

Suppose now that a sexual offender joins a church. How should that church respond? Not by a "quick fix" offering ready acceptance with few questions asked and little of the awful past acknowledged. That would be unworthy, unfair on the offender's previous victim(s), dangerous for the congregation's own 'little ones' and very bad indeed for the offender. That person now needs a new framework for life and what Wesley called 'the wisdom working from above', a wisdom involving no naivety, moral carelessness or illusions. Instead it should be offering strong hope through the practice of good discipline.

This would presume ongoing penitence by the offender, this being both the precondition and result of the forgiving experience, causing the person to say something like this - "I am so grateful that God and now the church have forgiven me that I gladly resolve to live differently. As a sex offender I acknowledge what I have done and the harm it caused others. So I accept limitations on where I go and whom I meet as signs of my genuine desire to lead a new life." Some in the Roman Catholic Church argue that priests who have sexually abused children should be told that "If you are truly penitent you must be prepared to offer a tangible sign (i.e. your ministry)." Penitence would also become evident through a proper, wholehearted engagement with ongoing treatment provision and working with the risk management panel and others who are part of the support network.

What would the discipline consist of? That would depend upon the particular individual. In most cases it would probably mean meeting with a small group of Christians regularly and 'in band'; regular worship and a nourishing spiritual lifestyle; an unequivocal pledge to keep clear of 'temptation situations'; a readiness to share deeply of oneself, one's past misuse of power over others, attempts to hide from reality and minimize one's sins; a constantly renewed desire to learn how to centre life on Christ and not on self, and thus learn the ways of love. (See further section 7b.)



Should this discipline be so immutable that the offender can never be involved in church leadership and its offices? No one has a 'right' to hold office in the Church. We may offer, but it is for the Church to confer the office. Authority is conferred and to be exercised as servant of The Servant - and servant ministry is incompatible with 'rights' language.

We accept the widespread conviction that sexual offenders are permanently a grave risk to others. It is, therefore, appropriate in their own interests, and in those of survivors, potential victims and the wider community, for them not to hold office in the Church. Living a safe Christian life is itself a calling from God. However, we also note the plain fact that in time God's grace can work healing wonders in the most damaged personality (which we term 'the optimism of grace'). Always the last word rests with God, with the promise of the new, with the coming of Christ. We found this issue to be especially difficult, but thought that the Church must have a way to respond in very exceptional circumstances (and return to this matter in Section 5.b).

## **5 CLARIFYING THE ISSUES**

### **a. Child protection**

All the members of the working party and all those who gave evidence to it stressed the importance of the Church doing all it can to safeguard children and young people in its care. This has implications in the recruitment, training and support of those who work with children and young people; it means continuing to develop good practice in our children's and youth work and in all our church life; it means developing sensitivity to children and young people we have contact with who may be being abused at home or elsewhere; and it means an increased awareness of the needs of adults who have been victims of sexual offences or who were sexually abused as children. Nobody suggested to the working party that these issues were not important or that the Church should accept low standards of care in matters of child protection.

### **b. Holding office within the church**

We believe that sex offenders have a place within the Church. The issue is about how to balance the welfare of the sex offender with the needs of the wider church community, especially the welfare of children and survivors of abuse. As noted earlier, there is particular controversy around the question of whether a person who has been convicted of a sexual offence should, in effect, be banned for life from holding office in the Church. It is clear that a person who has committed violent or sexual offences against children should not be given responsibility for work with children and young people, but may be less clear why such a person should be barred from other jobs. Of course, some roles that are not directly given responsibility for children nonetheless might allow access to them. But there are other roles that don't allow lone access to premises or face-to-face contact with children and young people. Surely, some argue, these could be open to a convicted or cautioned sex offender? The working party believes not. To place an offender in such a position can (and frequently does) cause deep offence to survivors who are members of the congregation. What is more, by appointing someone to office with a high profile or representative capacity, a church is saying 'This is a trusted, respected person.' This invites parents and others to accept the person as trustworthy. Sexual offending is partly about misuse

of power. Once in a position of trust and respect someone minded to do so can easily move from there into other positions of respect which give more opportunity of access to children. Churches attract vulnerable people and also provide ideal situations for the predatory and manipulative.

Against this it may be argued that to ban someone for life is to set limits on God's power to change people and therefore reflects a flawed and narrow doctrine of forgiveness. At the heart of the Christian gospel is the belief in the power of the Holy Spirit to transform people's lives and to offer them new beginnings. The Methodist Conference's Safeguarding procedures are seen by some to deny this 'good news'. Most of the members of the working party were firmly committed to the belief that God can and does transform people's lives. However, as we received evidence from those who work with sex offenders, it was clear that, while we do know quite a lot about rates of re-offending, there is not (and can never be) a sure test by which we know that a particular person has been transformed by God and will not re-offend. Indeed, it seemed that many sex offenders become involved in the life of the prison chapel and regularly attend worship during their sentence and many testify to a conversion experience, or to a renewal and deepening of faith. We were also confronted with the grim reality that some sexual offences are committed by converted, active church members. Avowed religious experience is no guarantee of safety from sexual offending. We were given from the Faithfull Foundation specific examples of church leaders who had offended, 'repented', been allowed to continue in Christian ministry and then offended again. Experience from the West London Mission's Katherine Price Hughes house suggested that many offenders said they had been converted.

Given all this, the working party does not believe that the current restriction should be lifted. However, as there is evident unease on the part of some within the Church who see the restriction as too inflexible, we believe consideration should be given to the possibility of suggesting that the Senior Persons Group (set up by the Methodist Council as part of the Safeguarding arrangements) be asked to consider (on the basis of risk assessment) any very exceptional case where it is believed a person should be able to take up office despite SO 010 (2) (ii). We make this recommendation (Resolution 38/5) very hesitatingly, as we found it difficult to identify situations where such a provision might be necessary. Two suggestions of possible exceptions made to the working party were:

- (a) where the person is believed to have committed a very minor offence, a long time in the past, where there was no suggestion of lack of consent (e.g. where the act would have been seen as consensual were it not for the age of the girl being slightly under 16 and the boy being slightly over 16) and where the current risk is judged to be minimal, and
- (b) where the law has changed since the offence was committed, and what was then an offence is no longer one.

We would recommend that the route to the Senior Persons' Group would be via the District Chairs.

### **c. Offences against adults**

The working party became aware of what might be an anomaly in the Church's practice. We were asked to consider how 'appropriate and informed pastoral support and care may be given to those in the local

church and community who have committed sexual offences.<sup>1</sup> However, the issue was raised in response to the development of child protection procedures within the Church and the decision that people who had been convicted or received a police caution for sexual offences against children should not be able to hold office. So, what of those who have been convicted of sexual offences against adults? The working party believes consideration should be given to whether those who commit sexual offences against adults should be subject to the same or similar disciplines. Resolution 4c suggests this matter be referred to the Methodist Council.

## **6 PASTORAL PERSPECTIVES**

This report has to deal with different perspectives which are inconsistent. This is true in many areas of church life, but perhaps particularly so in issues relating to sex offenders and the Church. We need to acknowledge the extent of pain and difficulty in pastoral situations that arise from incidents of sexual violence and abuse, whether it be the pain of survivors/victims, their families, the offenders and their families, the community, those responsible in that community, or the ministers and pastoral carers. From a pastoral point of view there is potentially a responsibility to all. Many believe that the pain of survivors needs to be paramount in our minds, but the main focus of this report (and the working party's brief) relates to offenders. We believe that providing appropriate support to offenders will also help prevent and minimize the risk of further offending. We therefore start this section of the report from the offender's perspective:

### **a. The offender's perspective**

What does the sex offender need to receive from the church community as part of his rehabilitation? Acceptance, love, a place to worship and join in fellowship, comrades for the journey, and people who accept him as he is and commit themselves to supporting him in his attempt to live a new life as a recovering sex offender.

Offenders (not necessarily sex offenders) who wrote to the working party said:

*My own personal concern is the validity of how people perceive my faith. Is it just a con? . . . But I can offer something . . . . To those who doubt, may I be an example, someone who people can see God working in.*

*I would like to think that I could be welcome in any community. I do not expect to be treated like a long lost son. I would like a chance to prove myself and not be "tarred with the same brush".*

One offender told of his family's bad experience. His wife and nine-year-old daughter were initially welcomed in one church but 'at the mention of her husband being in prison she was shunned and made to feel most unwelcome.<sup>1</sup> This experience reminds us that it is not just the offender whose needs we have to consider. The offender's family will be living with all kinds of difficulties, in their own relationships (and with the offender) and in how they are perceived and treated by the wider community. There is a very significant role for churches here in offering care and support to families of offenders.

Another said he had had a similar experience:

*In the past I have been made very unwelcome by churches outside prison. No sooner had I told them I was an ex-offender than they acted like I had told them I had leprosy.*

Given this kind of response it may not be surprising when an offender prefers not to 'go public' about his past life.

Like anyone else, a sex offender has much both to contribute and receive within the Christian community. The sex offender's past means such involvement needs to include helping him manage his behaviour and not get into situations which in the past led to offences. It also means protecting him from the danger of having false allegations and suspicions levelled at him. We believe that an offender who truly wishes to participate in the life of the church, who realizes the extent of his crime (and the difficulty his presence in the congregation may cause to survivors), and who is truly committed to a new life will understand and accept the need for the imposition of restrictions, even lifelong.

#### **b. The victim's/survivor's perspective**

We should start by saying that victims and survivors need exactly the same things from the church as do offenders - acceptance, love, a place to worship and join in fellowship, comrades for the journey, and people who accept her as she is and commit themselves to supporting her in her attempt to live a new life.

Within any church community there may be survivors/victims of the sex offender's crimes. More likely there will be at least some people who are survivors of abuse at the hands of other perpetrators. The minister and other members of the church may not know who they are, as they may not have felt able to tell their story. The long term harm of sexual abuse should not be underestimated, and is often seen most clearly in adult survivors' continuing pain and their struggle to create a sense of self and meaning. Many succeed against the odds (often with little support), many do not. Research suggests that children and adult survivors of abuse want messages from communities which reduce the sense of isolation and blame that they feel. All members of society need to be encouraged to listen to and support children and adults who have been abused. How the Church responds to sex offenders affects them. Survivors in congregations where a sex offender is allowed to participate fully in the life of the church community may feel their own pain has not been acknowledged and heard. It may be very difficult for them to remain as a member of the same congregation; even more difficult to be expected to be in the same housegroup. They may feel they have to leave the congregation or even abandon their faith.

The case was strongly made to the working party that if greater attention appears to be paid to measures relating to restoring the perpetrator than on caring for the victims, this can appear to continue the original inequality that allowed the abuse. While pastoral care of offenders is clearly something Christians must address, pastoral care of survivors has often been ignored or neglected and many survivors have felt alone and abandoned. If sex offending is treated lightly; if a person is quickly restored to positions of trust and authority, this can seem to devalue the significance of a victim's experience.

As stated elsewhere in this report, we believe more work needs to be done on offering effective pastoral care and support to victims and survivors.

### **c. The church's perspective**

Obviously the church, unlike wider society, is committed to being a welcoming, accepting community. No-one is beyond the reach of God's love. So we have a responsibility to bring together people of diverse and sometimes conflicting experience within the same community of love. That is the vision of our calling. It is clearly not that easy. But its difficulty cannot lead us to drop the vision.

Where abuse has occurred within the life of a church, or there have been allegations involving members of that church, there are likely to be divided loyalties and people will find it difficult to know how to deal with these. Many allegations do not lead to prosecution or conviction and the church is left with suspicions and unresolved tensions. Some people, including the one against whom the allegation was made, will see him as having 'been cleared'. Others may believe 'there is no smoke without fire' and be concerned that while the evidence was not sufficient to lead to a conviction, there may be more than sufficient reason to believe that person is not suitable to continue to work with children. Those who pursued the original allegation will be as vulnerable as those who opposed it. If the allegation is not proved their position will be extremely difficult. Such a situation calls for particularly sensitive pastoral support, some of which may need to be provided from elsewhere in the circuit or district. Communities can become deeply divided in such situations.

Great sensitivity, planning and forethought will be required where a church community contains both offenders and survivors and their families. Those responsible, both lay and ordained, may require (and should obtain) specialist advice and assistance in ensuring that the pastoral needs of all are taken seriously and addressed.

### **d. The wider community's perspective**

Within the wider community many known sex offenders find it difficult to rebuild their lives on release from prison. They are not welcome. They may be hounded from one place to another. Nowhere is really safe for them. They are demonized. And the Church cannot condone this way of treating anyone. Indeed, the Church should bear witness to a different approach to all offenders from that of society as a whole. It should welcome their families and enable them to join or remain part of the wider fellowship of the Church. At the same time the Church needs to be seen to stand with vulnerable and abused people, to ensure that victims and survivors are supported and their pastoral needs met, and to do what it can to make life safer for children. For many sex offenders, social isolation and a failure to integrate into an adult community contribute to an emotional lovelessness and poor self-esteem that serve to increase the risk of re-offending. To offer them appropriate support is, at the same time, to further the needs of child protection.

**e. The minister's perspective** (In many churches, particularly in smaller communities, this will also be the perspective of local preachers, stewards and other church leaders.)

As the one who on Sunday pronounces absolution and preaches forgiveness, a minister is faced with working out what these things mean in practice. The minister may want to help a sex offender become part of the Christian community and grow in faith but there is tension because the minister is also responsible for making sure that boundaries are kept. It is likely to be the minister who receives a phone call from a prison chaplain saying that a sex offender is coming towards the end of his sentence and wants to move to a new area and become part of the life of your local church. But the minister is also trusted by parents, both churchgoers and those who 'send' their children to junior church, shell group or uniformed organization - and those parents would be amazed to discover that you have welcomed a sex offender into the church without warning anyone. But the minister also knows that if you had warned people, many of them are unforgiving and the offender may not have been made welcome.

Evidence we received from circuit ministers suggested it is important for a minister not to be seen as taking sides. In many situations, a minister will therefore need to divide the provision of pastoral support between different people (e.g. where an offender, his victim and his family remain members of the same church it is inadvisable for the same person to try to offer support to all parties). Other ministers, pastoral visitors, colleagues outside the church, members of District Taking Care groups or people appointed as advisors under the new complaints and discipline procedures may all be potential sources of support.

Dealing with these issues can be incredibly emotionally draining. It is essential that good supervision and support are made available and ministers and others are encouraged to take it up. The 1997 Report on Sexual Harassment and Abuse proposed that increased attention should be paid to developing effective supervision of pastoral work and suggested some ways in which this might be done. We believe this is important for effective ministry in general, but especially so in situations such as those discussed in this report, if ministers are to do this work with balance and sensitivity. Circuit Superintendents and District Chairs carry a particular responsibility to seek to ensure such support and supervision is provided. The working party believes this is a very important matter for the Methodist Council to address.

There are particular sensitivities relating to confidentiality and the working party believes the earlier Conference Report on confidentiality is very useful in balancing what is said in pastoral conversations against the need to keep children and young people safe. As the practice of supervision develops, we would also encourage the development of a 'team' approach to confidentiality, where a minister can state 'up front' to an offender that there are limits and that this is to ensure that they are safe, as well as to ensure the safety of others. In developing a multi-agency response to helping sex offenders rebuild their lives, there also needs to be agreement with the offender about types of information to be exchanged between agencies working with him.

## **7 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **a. Commentary on the Methodist Church's current Safeguarding procedures**

The current position in the Methodist Church, under S.O 010 (2), is that

- (i) no person who has been convicted of or has received a formal caution from the police concerning an offence mentioned in the First Schedule to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 shall undertake work with children and young persons in the life of the Church;
- (ii) no person who has been convicted of or has received a formal caution from the police concerning sexual offences against children shall be appointed to any office, post or responsibility or engaged under any contract to which this sub-clause applies.

The working party wish to affirm their support of this Standing Order, for reasons stated in section 5b. of this report.

The working party felt that consideration should be given as to whether there is an anomaly to be addressed in the way we treat sex offenders against adults differently from those who offend against children.

The working part considered how to respond in situations where a convicted or cautioned offender continues to protest his innocence and where some members of the church support his claim. We believe that if a person has been convicted or received an official police caution the church can only work on the basis of that history and not accept a person's story that they were 'framed' as a basis for ignoring the conviction or the caution. While there clearly have been miscarriages of justice in our legal system, there are also cases of guilty people continuing to proclaim their innocence (and of sex offenders minimizing or denying what they did). If the offender believes an injustice has been done there are appropriate ways forward, to seek to have the conviction overturned and their name formally cleared. Until such time as that happens, the church has to work with the record as it exists.

#### **b. Procedures necessary for offenders to be involved in a church community**

The notice of motion describes the church as 'a community of love, forgiveness and reconciliation, committed to the restoration of broken people and communities.' It clearly has a role to play in offering pastoral support and care to those in the local church and community who have committed sexual offences. What is more, a relatively high proportion of sex offenders have been involved in the life and worship of the prison chapel and would hope to continue their involvement in Christian worship and fellowship on release. Indeed, many sex offenders see the church as having a significant part to play in helping them rebuild their lives. Like everyone else, such offenders have much both to receive and contribute within the life of a local church community and their participation in the worship and fellowship of a local church enables faith to grow and develop. For the protection of the church community, survivors, and particularly children and young people, but also for the protection of the offender (who needs not to be put in situations where he could be vulnerable to accusation or to the opportunity to re-offend) it will be important that the basis of their involvement in a local church is clearly understood and stated.

**We suggest Methodist churches should adopt the following procedure:**

##### **i. Pre-release**

Where the offender is approaching release from prison, it will be important wherever possible for the chaplain of the prison to be in contact with the minister of the local church and circuit where the offender hopes to settle on release. If the circuit minister is aware of the arrival of a sex offender but has not heard from the prison chaplain, the minister should try to make contact with the chaplain, who may be able to describe the treatment received by the offender and the kind of programme that will be in place to help him return to the community. It may be possible for a visit to be arranged so that the minister can meet the chaplain and the offender. It will also be crucial for those responsible in the local church to be in contact with the local risk management panel, the offender's probation officer and the police, so that any agreement regarding involvement in the local church is known about and seen as part of the multi-agency, multi-disciplinary approach to the oversight of the offender upon release from prison. In approaching and seeking to work with secular agencies there may be some initial suspicion and it may help to provide the agency with a copy of the Methodist Church's procedure or even this whole report, to demonstrate the Church's willingness to work together with other agencies in the responsibility for sex offenders and the protection of potential victims. (See Resolution 38/3(b).)

For known sex offenders already living in the community and involved in the life of the church, the same provisions should be made.

#### **ii. Setting up a small group within the church**

A small group should be set up, consisting of approximately five persons, including the minister, persons who have agreed to offer pastoral support for the offender and accompany them in worship and other church activities, someone with expertise or experience in this field and someone to represent the wider church community. The group should acquaint itself with any therapeutic programme the offender has undergone or will continue to be part of. The group should meet the offender, their probation officer and other appropriate people so that clear boundaries can be established for the protection of children and young people and to reduce the likelihood of false allegations or suspicions. This group will, at best, operate alongside other agencies in a multi-agency approach to the offender's rehabilitation.

#### **iii. Carrying out a risk assessment**

One of the first tasks of the small group will be to carry out a risk assessment. This will involve looking at the church building and activities with a view to identifying potential risks that will need to be guarded against or which could lead to the offender being vulnerable to allegations. The offender's probation officer or another member of the risk management panel may be willing to help with this assessment as part of their arrangements for the offender. Having identified the potential risks the group needs to consider how they can be minimized either by a change in practice or by monitoring or restricting the offender's participation in any particular activities. The results of the risk assessment will lead to the creation of an agreed 'contract' with the offender.

#### **iv. Writing a contract**

When the boundaries and terms of involvement have been discussed and agreed with the offender, they should be written into a contract (see below). While a written contract sounds very formal, sex



offenders can be manipulative and test boundaries. A written contract clarifies the terms on which the person is involved in the life of the church. The contract should involve the person's family and partner who may also be attending church and need to be informed. It might begin by setting out the pastoral support and care being offered by the church and then move on to other conditions, such as some of the following examples:

- I will never allow myself to be in a situation where I am alone with children/young people
- I will attend meetings/house groups as directed by the small group
- I will sit where directed in the church and will not place myself in the vicinity of children and young people
- I will not enter certain parts of the building designated by the small group, nor any area where children's activities are in progress
- I will decline invitations of hospitality where there are children in the home
- I accept that 'x' and 'y' will sit with me during church activities, accompanying me when I need to use other facilities. They will know that I am a Schedule 1 offender/registered with the police under the terms of the Sex Offenders Act
- I accept that 'z' will provide me with pastoral care
- I accept that there are certain people who will need to be told of my circumstances in order for them to protect the children/young people for whom they care
- I accept that contact will need to be made with my probation officer, who will meet with church leaders or members of the small group as and when necessary
- I understand that if I do not keep to these conditions, then I may be banned from attending the church, and in such circumstances the church leaders may choose to inform the statutory agencies (eg probation and social services) and any other relevant organisation, and the church congregation
- I understand that any other concerns will be taken seriously and reported
- I understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly every \_\_\_\_\_ months and will remain for an indefinite period.

*(adapted from Guidance to Churches: protecting children and appointing children's workers, Churches Child Protection Advisory Service)*

The document needs to be signed and dated by the offender and by the church representatives.

#### **v. Small group to meet regularly**

The small group should continue to meet the individual from time to time to review the arrangement and address any concerns. If boundaries are not being kept, or if the contract is not being kept in other ways, it is important to address the problem. (In extreme cases, where boundaries continue not to be kept, it may be necessary to prohibit the offender from coming on the premises.) When officers or ministers change in the church it will be important to ensure continuity of awareness and provision of pastoral support for the offender.

#### **vi. Making people aware - who needs to know what?**

A sex offender coming to join a congregation may not want people to know his history. One of the important matters for the small group and the offender will be an agreement on who needs to know. Without agreement on this, it will not be possible for the offender to join the congregation. Key people, especially those responsible for leading children's and young people's groups, need to know that the person is attending the church, that he should not be having contact with the children and that he should never be on his own with children and young people.

There is much to be said for explaining the circumstances to the whole congregation, to promote understanding and support for the individual but also to ensure that church members do not unwittingly allow children contact with the individual concerned. However, this needs to be weighed against any need for confidentiality or pastoral sensitivity. It will be important to obtain advice from the statutory agencies and the risk management panel. The need to know must be balanced with the danger that the offender may be hounded out of the community (to his detriment and to the greater danger of other children if he decides to maintain a lower profile next time around).

Always we should promote awareness within the church of what would happen if a sex offender joined the congregation. It could be explained that from time to time this might happen and, if it does, then the procedures are as described in this report (i.e. that people who need to know because they work with children in the church are informed; the church liaises with other concerned agencies; a small group will link with the offender; there will be a contract; arrangements will be reviewed regularly.) This information is particularly important to survivors. They are likely to ask (and need to know) how they will be kept safe. Who can they go and talk to if they feel frightened, worried or hurt?

#### **c. General points**

##### **i. Young offenders**

Approximately one third of sex offenders are adolescents. With young offenders, as with adults, the church needs to liaise with the risk management panel and look at how to reduce future risk. The young offender will need to sign a contract and so will those with parental responsibility for them.

##### **ii. Developing good practice**

The general need for the Church to adopt good practice in child protection terms cannot be over-emphasized. Adopting the Safeguarding procedures both helps deal with known offenders and offers

the best possible safeguard against the activities of offenders who are not known about and who have not been caught.

### **Support**

The nature of sexual abuse and offending is such as to raise very emotional and difficult situations that can be stressful for all. It is important for those with responsibilities to have appropriate support networks. One of these networks is likely to include members of other agencies with responsibilities for sex offenders in the community (especially Police and Probation). Another will be within the church, where there is developing experience and expertise in this area of work. Each District should develop a team of those who can offer consultancy and support where necessary (including members of a Taking Care group where there is one, Training and Development Officer, Child Protection Officer, etc.)

### **8 MEMBERS OF THE WORKING PARTY**

- Richard G Jones (chair)
- Pearl Luxon
- Paul Beetham
- Elizabeth Ovey (from September 1999)
- Andrew Cordy
- Pennie Pennie
- Anne Hollows
- Caroline Riley (from September 1999)
- Shaun Kelly
- David Gamble (convenor)

### **9 RESOLUTIONS**

**38/1.** The Conference adopts the report and resolves that it shall constitute the reply to Memorials M45 and M46 of 1999.

**38/2.** The Conference:

(a) reaffirms its commitment to the creation of a community of love, forgiveness and reconciliation and to the restoration of broken people and communities;

(b) recognizes that in making that commitment effective it must be sensitive both to the feelings and needs of existing and potential sufferers from abuse and sexual crime and to the needs of offenders and their families, to all of whom it will seek to offer appropriate and informed pastoral support and care;

(c) reaffirms its belief that the current Safeguarding procedures of the Methodist Church are in the interests of both children and young people and of individuals within the Church who have in the past been convicted of or received a formal caution in respect of sexual offences;

(d) believes that the needs of child protection and of pastoral support for persons so convicted or cautioned should be seen as complementary rather than as matters to be dealt with separately in the life of the Church.

**38/3.** The Conference directs that:

(a) the procedure set out in section 7b of the report be adopted as the practice of the Methodist Church when a person who has been convicted of or has received a formal caution in respect of a sexual offence seeks to become part of a local church community;

(b) it be referred to the connexional Team for consideration of how that procedure may be published for use in the Church and in a form which can be made available to risk management panels, probation services, the police and other agencies;

(c) it be referred to the Superintendent Chaplain of Prisons to consider in consultation with those persons appointed as Methodist chaplains in pastoral care of inmates of prisons and prison staff whether there are improvements to be made in the way in which such chaplains relate to local churches and circuits over the release of prisoners convicted of sexual offences into local communities, how such prisoners can be prepared for their involvement in churches following the procedure set out in this report, and whether there are means by which the wider Church community may be enabled better to understand the work done by and the concerns of such chaplains;

(d) all those in training for ordained ministry in the Methodist Church should receive training in child protection and the rehabilitation of persons so convicted or cautioned within the life of the Church.

**38/4.** The Conference refers to the Methodist Council for consideration:

(a) the possibility of establishing a further working party or determining some other way, preferably in consultation with other Churches, to consider how pastoral care and support may most effectively be offered to survivors of sexual abuse;

(b) the implications of the report for structures for support and supervision at circuit and district level; special attention should be given to the provision of support for those involved in situations in which a person who has been convicted of or received a formal caution in respect of a sexual offence is seeking to or has become part of a local church community;

(c) whether it is anomalous that the Church distinguishes in its treatment of persons so convicted or cautioned by reference to the question whether the offence was or offences were committed against an adult or against a child or young person, and if so, by what means that anomaly might be addressed;

(d) how training and awareness-building relating to the issues raised in the report might be offered.

(e) whether

(i) the procedures set out in section 7b require to be incorporated in Standing Orders and

(ii) in exceptional circumstances the Senior Persons Group should have power to authorise a local church to dispense with following that procedure

and to bring a report to the Conference of 2001 with any amendments to Standing Orders which may be proposed as a result of that consideration.

**38/5.** The Conference directs the Methodist Council to bring to the Conference of 2001 for its judgment amendments to Standing Orders, such that in the exceptional circumstances outlined in the report the Senior Persons' Group which now considers and advises upon cases of ministers and local preachers who have been so convicted or cautioned shall have power to determine that a person so convicted or cautioned, whether presbyteral, diaconal or lay, should be eligible to hold office in the Church notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order 010(2).

**38/6.** The Conference directs the Methodist Council to review the developments in the life of the Church which follow from the report and to report on those developments to the Conference of 2003.

#### **APPENDIX A HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF THE REPORT**

This report has been produced by a working party set up in response to a Notice of Motion adopted by the Methodist Conference in 1997:

##### **Notice of Motion No 10, Sexual Offences: Subsequent pastoral care:**

The Conference directs the Methodist Council to establish a working group with relevant expertise and experience to consider the ways in which appropriate and informed pastoral support and care may be given to those in the local church and community who have committed sexual offences, and to bring specific recommendations to the Conference of 1998.

The Conference does this, recognising that as a community of love, forgiveness and reconciliation, committed to the restoration of broken people and communities, it must be sensitive to the feelings and needs of existing and potential sufferers from abuse, as well as the needs of offenders.

The Methodist Council referred this matter to the Working Party on Sexual Harassment and Abuse. Following discussions in the working party and at an ecumenical seminar held at Leyhill Prison on March 26th 1998, this working party was set up with the following amended terms of reference:

- 1. To consider the ways in which appropriate and informed pastoral support and care may be given to those in the local church and community who have committed sexual offences*
- 2. To listen to and learn from the experience of those individuals and communities most closely involved in this issue, particularly offenders, victims and their families, and representatives of local churches with relevant experience*

*3. To consult and co-operate with other churches, agencies and individuals engaged in this field*

*4. To report and make specific recommendations in the first instance to the Methodist Council, and then to the Methodist Conference in 1999.*

### **The Background ñ The Safeguarding procedures and notices of motion**

For a number of years during the 1990s, Conference had been asked to deal with issues relating to child protection, following the publication of the Home Office's Safe from Harm Guidelines and the Methodist Division of Education and Youth's Safeguarding procedures and booklets. Particular care was to be taken in the appointment of workers with children and young people. However, experience within the church community made it clear that due care had to be taken in the making of all appointments. Standing Orders were amended to include the following requirement (as amended in 1999):

#### **010 Qualification for Appointment**

(2) Subject to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (or any statutory modification or re-enactment thereof for the time being in force and any regulations or orders made or having effect thereunder)

- (i) no person who has been convicted of or has received a formal caution from the police concerning an offence mentioned in the First Schedule to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 shall undertake work with children and young persons in the life of the Church;
- (ii) no person who has been convicted of or has received a formal caution from the police concerning sexual offences against children shall be appointed to any office, post or responsibility or engaged under any contract to which this sub-clause applies

(3) Sub-clause (ii) of clause (2) above shall apply to:

- (iii) first appointment to a station as a ministerial or diaconal probationer or, if no such appointment has been made, admission into full connexion as a minister or deacon;
- (iv) first appointment to a station as a minister or deacon recognised and regarded as such under the Deed of Union or first entry upon the stations as a minister or deacon authorised by the Conference to serve as such
- (v) readmission into full connexion as a minister or deacon;
- (vi) any other appointment or re-appointment to any office, post or responsibility or any engagement or re-engagement under a contract of service or for services which is at the date of appointment, re-appointment, engagement or re-engagement specified for this purpose by the Methodist Council, either generally by reference to categories or by a ruling in the particular case.

(4) Clause (2) above shall have effect in relation to persons in any jurisdiction within the home Districts other than England and Wales as if, in any such jurisdiction in which any of the legislative provisions there mentioned does not have effect, there were substituted a reference to the legislation, if any, of similar substance in force in that jurisdiction from time to time.

In response to clause 3 (vi), later in 1999 the Methodist Council agreed the following categories:

1 Any duty or responsibility exercised on behalf of the Methodist Church which involves:

- a. lone access to church premises
- b. face-to-face contact with children and young people without the presence of another adult
- c. carrying out duties off church premises in circumstances in which the person concerned may be seen as a representative of the church.

2. Any office within the following categories:

***Representational - Liturgical or pastoral***

membership of the

***Church Council - Local Preachers***

***Circuit Meeting - Worship leaders***

***District Synod - Organists/choir leaders***

***Methodist Council - Pastoral visitors/Class leaders***

***Methodist Conference - Workers with children and young people***

In the light of what was beginning to look like a life-long, blanket ban on sex offenders holding office in the church, the 1997 Notice of Motion sought to ensure that due consideration was given to their place in the church and to the provision of appropriate pastoral support and care for them. The 1999 Conference referred two memorials to the working party, each expressing unease at the apparent inflexibility of the new S.O. 010.

Two further memorials, from the 1999 Conference, were referred to the working party:

#### **M45 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (1)**

The Nottingham (North) (22/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 40. Vote: Unan.) recognises the importance of safeguarding children and young people, but feels that Standing Order 010 section 2 (ii) presents a requirement which is unnecessary and contrary to our Church's doctrines.

In our view, it is unnecessary because many holders of offices within the Church have no contact with children. Attendance at church services when children are present can give a greater contact with children and the holding of office per se.

Our theological problem with the Standing Order is over its apparent disregard for the doctrine of forgiveness and restitution which is at the heart of the doctrines which the same Standing Order states must be upheld.

The Nottingham North Circuit requests that, either:

1. S.O. 010 Section 2 (ii) be redrafted to deal with the theological qualifications referred to above; or,
2. A considered statement be issued as a matter of urgency explaining the answers to the theological reservations raised, in order to allay the serious disquiet felt by people - both lay and ordained - within this Circuit.

#### **M46 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (2)**

The Saltash (12/22) Circuit Meeting (Present: 32. Vote: 29 for, 0 ag) recognises and appreciates the importance of providing the utmost protection to children and of the issues addressed in standing Order 010 (2), but believe that, in its present form, this Standing Order leaves the church wide open to serious criticism. The meeting, therefore, requests the Conference to consider the following three comments and the two proposals that flow therefrom.

1. The standing order allows for no exceptions. Yet both Scripture and the history of the church bear witness to the fact that God can and will overturn human regulations and restrictions to 'Call' whom he wills into service. It is our conviction that the church should take account of judgements made by Civil Courts and the Police but not in such a way as to deny room for the working of God the Holy Spirit.
2. The Order provides no opportunity for persons previously convicted or in receipt of a formal Police Caution to relate those past events to their present life and service in the membership of God's People. We draw attention to the fact that not all Court Convictions or Police Cautions are 'Infallible' or 'Safe', nor do they all bear the same weight. (A married man of 40, convicted at the age of 18 of having sexual intercourse with a minor, is not inevitably thereby a dangerous person to his own children or that of others). It is our conviction that the love of God requires the church always to exercise (and to be seen as exercising) personal judgement rather than imposing an impersonal blanket exclusion based solely on the judgement of secular authorities.
3. The Order prohibits those described from being appointed to 'Office' in the life of the church. Since, however, the word 'office' is not defined except as that which requires the formality of 'appointment', the application of this Order is open to varied interpretation. It is our conviction that in so sensitive an area of church life, a lack of definition in regard to the word 'office' will lead to bitterness and division between both local churches and circuits.



### **Proposal One:**

The Conference establish a 'Judicial' (or otherwise named) Committee in each District, so that any person with a previous conviction or caution as defined in the current S.O. 010 (2) (i and ii), but who now personally affirms a 'Call to Serve' and locally is deemed worthy of appointment, may be tested and adjudged. In the event of such a Committee being established, paragraphs (i and ii) would require the addition of the sentence 'unless approval has been granted by the District "Judicial" Committee'.

### **Proposal Two:**

The Conference provide a precise clarification of the term 'office' in S.O. 010 (2) (ii). (This proposal was the subject of an amendment to Standing Orders brought by the Law and Polity Committee.)

### **APPENDIX B THE SURVEY OF MINISTERS**

Seven questions were asked and the returns were as follows (the answers to the 7th question have not been added to the table): (*in the chart 5/6 means 5 ministers reported 6 cases*)

*Chester & Stoke - London NW - S Wales - N Wales - Cymru - Total*

1 In your current appointment how many adults do you know who have a history of sexual offending against children?

*5/6 - 6/10 - 1/1 - 6/9 - 1/2 - 19/28*

2 How many of the offenders have returned to a church where they were already known?

*4/4 - 2/2 - 0/0 - 3/3 - ñ - 9/9*

3 How many were referred, having been unknown before?

*1/1 - 1/1 - 0/0 - 0/0 - ñ - 2/2*

4 How many just arrived?

*0/0 - 1/1 - 0/0 - 2/2 - ñ - 3/3*

5 Again, in your current appointment, how many children do you know who have been the victims of such offending?

*children 2/5 adults 2/4*

*children 6/8 adults 2/22*

*children 2/4 adults 1/2*

*children 3/5 adults 1/several*

*ñ*

**children 13/22 adults 5/28+**

6 How many instances of sexual offenders becoming part of your church have you known in your previous appointments?

7/8 - 5/11 - 2/4 - 10/15 - 4/5 - **28/43**

7 How long have you been in the Circuit work?

**TOTAL QUESTIONNAIRES RETURNED**

46 - 30 - 24 - 24 - 19 - **143**

### **APPENDIX C**

The following list is that published in Safeguarding: A policy for good practice in the care of children and young people (2000). Because the Church's Safeguarding procedures relate specifically to child protection, it is a list of sexual offences against children. Anyone with a conviction or official police caution for any of these offences is prohibited from holding office within the Methodist Church (See Appendix A). The current report raises the issue of the anomaly with regard to offenders against adults.

### **SAFEGUARDING FORM B. LIST OF OFFENCES**

Sexual offences which, if committed against a person under the age of 18 (in cases in which the offence may also be committed against an adult), bar people from holding office in England and Wales

1 An offence under Section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 (rape) when committed against a person under the age of 18.

2 An offence specified in Schedule 1 to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, namely:

a Children and Young Persons Act 1933

- Section 3 Allowing persons under sixteen to be in brothels

b. Sexual Offences Act 1956

- Sections 2&3 Procurement of intercourse by threats or false imprisonment
- Section 4 Administering drugs to obtain or facilitate intercourse
- Section 5 Sexual intercourse with a girl under 13
- Section 6 Sexual intercourse with a girl under 16
- Sections 7&9 Intercourse with defectives
- Section 10 Incest by a man

- Section 11 Incest by a woman
- Section 12 Buggery
- Section 13 Gross indecency
- Section 14 Indecent assault on a man
- Section 15 Indecent assault on a woman
- Section 16 Assault with intention to commit buggery
- Section 19 Abduction of unmarried girl under 18 from parent or guardian
- Section 20 Abduction of unmarried girl under 16 from parent or guardian
- Section 22 Causing prostitution of women
- Section 23 Procurement of a girl under 21
- Section 24 Detention of a woman in a brothel or other premises
- Sections 25 & 26 Allowing premises to be used for intercourse
- Section 28 Causing or encouraging prostitution etc.

3 An offence under section 1(1) of the Indecency with Children Act 1960 (indecent conduct towards a child)

4 An offence under section 54 of the Criminal Law Act 1977 (inciting a girl under 16 to have incestuous sexual intercourse)

5 An offence contrary to section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978 (indecent photographs of children)

6 An offence contrary to section 160 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (the possession of indecent photographs of children)

7 An offence contrary to section 170 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 in relation to goods prohibited to be imported under section 42 of the Customs Consolidation Act 1876 (prohibitions and restrictions relating to pornography) where the prohibited goods included indecent photographs of children under the age of 16.

Sexual Offences which bar people from holding office in Scotland

1. An offence of rape (when committed against a person under the age of 18)
2. An offence specified in Schedule 1 to the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995

3. An offence contrary to section 170 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 in relation to goods prohibited to be imported under Section 42 of the Customs Consolidation Act 1876 (prohibitions and restrictions relating to pornography) where the prohibited goods included indecent photographs of children under the age of 16
4. An offence under sections 52 and 52A of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (indecent photographs)

NB. Within other legal jurisdictions, SO 010 (4) states that the restriction on holding office 'shall have effect in relation to persons in any jurisdiction within the home Districts other than England and Wales as if, in any such jurisdiction in which any of the legislative provisions there mentioned does not have effect, there were substituted a reference to the legislation, if any, of similar substance in force in that jurisdiction from time to time.'

## **APPENDIX D ADDITIONAL MATERIAL FOR USE WHEN STUDYING THIS REPORT IN CHURCH GROUPS**

### **1 A Biblical way into the report**

Matthew 18 is very challenging in relation to the issues raised in this report.

- Divide the chapter into sections: verses 1-7; 8-11; 12-14; 15-20; 21-35.
- Allocate each section to an individual or small group and allow about 5 minutes for them to reflect on their section, asking the question - What is this passage saying about the issues raised in this report?
- Then share findings.

### **2 A Litany**

(from Richard Jones, used at a meeting of the Working Party)

Let us thank God for human sexuality and all its energies -  
inspiring so much creativity  
giving vitality to human communities  
enabling partnerships to find strength and commitment  
enabling new births to come to be  
enriching family life

Let us confess our sins -  
Wherein we have made sexuality:  
a weapon to exploit others or manipulate the weak  
a vehicle for lust or exhibitionism  
a means to satisfy our own selfishness  
or wherein we have been impure, unforgiving or uncaring

**Good Lord, have mercy on us**

Let us pray for:

Those who long for rewarding human relationships and have never experienced them

**Lord have mercy**

Those whose sexual life is constant fantasy

**Lord have mercy**

Those whose families have fallen apart

**Lord have mercy**

Those who are orphaned or have no caring home

**Lord have mercy**

Those who are bruised or bewildered by failed marriages or partnerships

**Lord have mercy**

Those who long for children but cannot have them

**Lord have mercy**

Those who have been traumatised by sexual abuse

**Lord have mercy**

Those who have committed sexual offences, whether or not they have been found out

**Lord have mercy**

Those who care professionally for sexual offenders and their rehabilitation

**Lord have mercy**

Those whose friends or partners are in prison for sexual offences

**Lord have mercy**

Congregations caring for sexual offenders who have joined them

**Lord have mercy**

In the name of Christ

**Amen**

#### **APPENDIX E A SHORT LIST OF RESOURCES**

- Good Practice Guides
- Good Practice, The United Reformed Church, 1998/99
- Guidance to Churches: Protecting Children and appointing children's workers, PCCA, 1998
- Meeting the Challenge - How churches should respond to sex offenders, Church of England Board for Social Responsibility, 1999
- Safeguarding: A policy for good practice in the care of children and young people, The Methodist Church, 2000
- Related books
- Cashman, H. Christianity and Child Sexual Abuse, SPCK, 1993

- Grubin, D. Sex Offending against children; Understanding the risk, Police Research Series Paper 99, 1998
- Kennedy, M. The Courage to tell; Christian survivors of sexual abuse tell their stories of pain and hope, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 1999
- Moule, C. F. D. Forgiveness and Reconciliation, SPCK, 1999
- Parkinson, P. Child Sexual Abuse and the Churches, Hodder and Stoughton, 1997
- Poling, James Newton, The Abuse of Power: A Theological problem, Abingdon, 1991
- Tutu, D. No future without forgiveness, Rider, 1999