

CHAPTER 2

CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

2.1 TRAINING FOR ALIGNMENT ON POLITY & DISCIPLINE MATTERS

Conference notes the growing anxiety in the understanding and application of our polity as it relates to discipline, arbitration, mediation and the nature of pastoral commissions. In order to ensure alignment, fairness and equity across our structures, Conference directs the HR Unit to set up Connexional training for members of the Connexional Discipline Committee, District Discipline Committee, Arbitration panel, Mediation panel and District Mediation panels.

2.2 TIMING ISSUES RELATING TO MATTERS OF DISCIPLINE

Conference notes the problems created by timing discrepancies between the submission, the laying of the charge, and the communication between the District Discipline Registrar & District Disciplinary Committee. Conference resolves the following amendments to the Laws and Discipline:

11.5: “and shall deliver the charge ...add: “*within 14 days*” as stipulated in paragraph 11.11.

11.6: “...Decides that the complaint does not demand a charge and hearing the District Discipline Registrar shall inform the accuser accordinglyadd: “*within 14 days*” and may refer it accordingly...

Conference further refers the matter to Revisions Committee to consider the possibility of establishing an office of the Connexional Discipline Registrar, who shall have the same qualification as the District Discipline Registrar.

2.3 INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN FOR MINISTERS

Taking the socio-economic, financial, theological implications into account Conference resolves to increase the number of adopted children from “2” to “4”, and directs the Revisions Committee to amend L&D 9.72.2 to read: “no more than 4”. Conference further mandates the Finance Unit to review the financial implications of this decision, and report to Conference 2016.

2.4 CONSTITUTIONALITY OF OUR POLITY & STRUCTURES

Conference recognises that our Polity and Structures are in their nature evolving and organic, and instructs the Revisions and Structures Committees to continue reviewing the Structures and Polity of the MCSA, especially in light of the Constitutions of our Member Countries.

2.5 PARTY POLITICAL CHAPLAINCY

Conference re-affirms the 2014 Conference decision. Further, Conference has agreed to continue discussions with DEWCOM in consultation the Chaplaincy Committee and ecumenical partners. The Presiding Bishop is requested to set up a small committee to prepare discussion documents for quarterly meetings and the 2016 Synods for reporting and decision at Conference 2016.

2.6 MINISTERS AND DIVORCE

Conference directs the Revision Committee to revisit the chapter on divorce as prepared by the Human Resource Unit in 2013, and request the Office the Presiding Bishop to set up a Standing Committee on Marriage and Family Life to investigate the phenomenon and its underlying causes and possible remedial actions and strategies, and report to Conference 2016.

2.7 NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION (NPO) AFFILIATION

Conference notes the challenges relating to the establishment, affiliation and partnership with NPO's and directs the Finance Unit to develop a regulatory framework for reporting to Conference 2016.

2.8 BAPTISM CERTIFICATES

Conference notes that the practice of designing localised Baptism Certificates carries a risk of Copyright Infringements and directs the Methodist Publishing House to explore the possibility of making available a copyrighted electronic version of the baptismal certificate as mandated by the Church Unity Commission and approved by Conference. Circuits and societies are also reminded of the importance of maintaining a Baptism Register (Refer L&D 1.13)

2.9 HOUSING AND MINISTERIAL ALLOWANCE

Noting the fluctuation of the housing market and that our housing allowance figure has not been reviewed over the last few years, Conference requests the Finance Unit to re-assess the recommended figure for housing allowances and other Ministerial allowances that affect the different offices of the Receivers of Revenue for reporting to Conference 2016.

2.10 MINISTERIAL FAREWELL GIFTS

Conference notes the concerns relating to the giving of gifts to ministers, including farewell gifts, and directs the Finance Unit in consultation with DEWCOM to develop policy guidelines for discussion at quarterly meetings and 2016 Synods for report to Conference 2016.

2.11 DISTRICT TREASURER AND DISTRICT AUDITOR

Conference re-affirms that the District Treasurer and the District Auditor be two separate people as outlined in the Policy on Effective Financial Management. In the case that a firm is appointed as District Auditor, the District Treasurer may not be an employee/partner/member of the firm and that the District Treasurer does not have any conflict of interest.

2.12 DISSATISFACTION WITH CHURCH INSURANCE COMPANY

Conference notes the administrative challenges experienced by some Circuits and directs Circuits to communicate all matters pertaining to the insurance of Church property with the Finance Unit and re-affirms the provisions of clause 9.40 of the Laws and Discipline.

2.13 STREAMLINING THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INSURANCE COMPANY

Conference re-affirms paragraph 9.40 of the Laws and Discipline and notes the concerns around claiming procedures with the current insurer. Circuits are advised that any concerns and queries should be referred to the Finance Unit for guidance and assistance.

2.14 SUPERNUMERARY FUND

Conference resolves that the trustees of the Pension Fund review the Pension Fund rules specifically focusing on the link between the *Define Benefit Fund* and the *Defined Contribution Fund* and to report to Conference 2016.

2.15 PENSION FUND CONTRIBUTIONS

Conference resolves that the Finance Unit in consultation with the Trustees of the fund investigate the impact of reducing the percentage of Circuit contributions to Supernumerary Fund Reserve & report to Conference 2016.

2.16 PENSION FUND MATTERS

Conference re-affirms resolution 14 of 2011, Yearbook 2012 and refers all Pension Fund related matters to the Finance Unit and the Trustees of the Fund. Conference draws the attention of all Districts to the Finance Unit roadshows planned for 2016 and advises Districts and Circuit to direct any other Pension Fund related matters for deliberation during these encounters.

2.17 UNSUSTAINABLE ESCALATING OVERHEAD COSTS

Noting the concerns about cost effectiveness at all levels of the church, Conference affirms the provisions of the MCSA's policy on Effective Financial Management and directs Circuits to always familiarise themselves with the provisions of this policy on matters of effective financial management.

2.18 SAFER TRANSPORT FOR CHILDREN TO AND FROM SCHOOL

Conference notes with concern the recent spate of accidents relating to the transport of children to and from school and refers this work to the Child Desk to investigate all

matters relating to the general safety of children, provision of safe transport and the enforcement of Government Policy provisions. In the light of our Connexional emphasis on education, Circuits are encouraged to be vigilant in their responses to this challenge.

2.19 CORRUPTION

Conference notes with concern the levels of corruption and lack of accountability in our public institutions, in particular issues such as Nkandla. Conference further observes that corruption knows no boundaries and calls on all Methodist people to promote stewardship, good governance and accountability through participation in anti-corruption campaigns such as Corruption Watch and Business Against Crime South Africa.

2.20 XENOPHOBIA

Conference laments the unfortunate acts of xenophobic violence and affirms the Presiding Bishop's leadership and statements as well as the positive responses of Methodist people and communities across the Connexion. Conference observes the complex socio-economic factors underlying these attacks on foreign nationals and directs the Mission Unit in consultation with Ecumenical Affairs Unit and DEWCOM to develop working materials to assist Districts, Circuits and Societies in addressing the issues of economic migration to ensure social cohesion, cultural integration, equality, peace and dignity of all people.

2.21 ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AFRICAN

Conference directs Districts, Circuits, and all formations, to engage the importance and embodiment of the African and Christian values of "Ubuntu", diversity, tolerance, nurturing, self-value, African community values, etc. Work has already been undertaken by DEWCOM. See the DEWCOM BlogSpot: <http://mcsadewcom.blogspot.co.za/>

2.22 RESOLUTION ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE CAMPAIGN

Conference notes the prevalence of substance abuse across our Connexion, especially amongst our young people. Conference directs the Mission Unit to heighten the pace of instituting District and Circuit working groups for MASA (Methodists against Substance Abuse) as well as co-ordinating annual awareness campaigns.

2.23 SUBSCRIPTION TO THE NEW DIMENSION

Conference resolves that every Circuit shall subscribe to a minimum of 25 copies of the New Dimension to promote unity and Connexionality. Conference directs the Communications Unit to explore web based applications of the newsletter and report to Conference 2016.

2.24 INITIATION SCHOOLS

Conference notes with dismay the increase of deaths in young males and the mushrooming of illegal initiation schools, and refers the matter to the Mission Unit in consultation with DEWCOM to develop practical, liturgical and pastoral materials to

assist ministers and our members in their response to initiation and similar cultural practices. The Unit is expected to report on progress at the 2016 Conference.

2.25 METHODIST YOUTH UNIT DISCIPLINE

Conference notes the concerns about disciplinary processes within Methodist Youth Unit and refers these matters to the MYU & the Revisions Committee for inclusion in the current discussions on the governance of the Youth Unit and youth formations.

2.26 RESOLUTION ON DELEGATES TO YOUTH SYNODS

Conference notes the concerns about the constitution of the Youth Synod and refers these matters to the MYU & the Revisions Committee for inclusion in the current discussions on the governance of the Youth Unit and youth formations.

2.27 CLEARANCE FOR PEOPLE WORKING WITH CHILDREN

Conference affirms the need for the protection and safety of children and the need for conscientiousness in appointing people to work with children. Conference directs the Mission Unit's Childcare Desk to advise the Youth Unit on guidelines and matters of screening and obtaining relevant clearances.

2.28 FUNDING FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Conference notes that in many instances children's work does not receive adequate financial support at District, Circuit and Society levels. Conference endorses the need to prioritise children's work across the Connexion and requests the Revisions Committee to include in the current discussions on the governance of the Youth Unit & Youth formations strategies for funding Youth and children's Ministries.

2.29 YOUTH PASTORS' TRAINING

Noting the continuing need to clarify the nature and function of Youth Pastors' work and the anticipated relationships with Circuit, District and Connexion, Conference requests EMMU in consultation with DEWCOM to determine whether the ministry of Youth Pastors is of covenantal or contractual nature.

2.30 HERITAGE

Noting that Conference 2015 declared 2017 as year of celebrating 200 years of Methodism in Southern Africa, Conference requests the office of the Presiding Bishop to establish a Connexional Heritage Committee to look into matters of Heritage, and issues such as potential name changes.

2.31 MISSION CONGRESS 2016

Conference resolves to hold the 2nd Mission Congress at the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary in November 2016 in order to 'reflect on the foundations, motives and the nature of mission as well as the missionary shape of our discipleship movement' (adapted from Presiding Bishop's Address to Conference 2015) with the view of nurturing mission

effectiveness through making every congregation a conduit of Connexional vision and facilitator of mission.

2.32 MISSION CONGRESS AND RESOURCING FOR MINISTRY

In the light of the Conference sub-theme of a church '*Shaped for Mission*', Conference observes that our stationing and resourcing for ministry are not suitably aligned with our missional focus of extending our ministry into new frontiers. Conference refers all matters relating to resourcing for ministry and developing missional streams of ministry to the Mission and Finance Unit for consideration at the 2016 Mission Congress.

2.33 PATRIARCHAL ATTITUDES AND SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN MINISTRY

Conference directs the Mission Unit in consultation with DEWCOM to develop guidelines and reflection tools as well as convene reflective sessions on the persistence of patriarchal attitudes at all levels of our church and report on progress at conference 2016.

2.34 STUDY RESOURCES FOR PROBATIONERS

Conference directs EMMU in consultation with the Finance Unit to investigate the possibility of making book allowances available for Probationer Ministers, and report to Conference 2016. Where possible, online Material should be made available to Probationers in Circuit, over and above the readers which are made available by EMMU.

2.35 LOCAL PREACHERS WITH DISABILITIES

Conference affirms its policy to be open to people with disabilities and notes the prior efforts in developing suitable material for visually impaired preachers. Conference requests EMMU to continue the development of audio material, and other such aids. All congregations are encouraged to be sensitive to this need.

2.36 MINISTERS IN THE CONNEXION

Conference notes the concerns around the possible shortage of ministers in the near future and requests EMMU, in consultation with HR, Mission Unit and the General Secretary to investigate the emerging issues relating to entrance into ministry, retention and retirement and to develop strategies for motivating young people of all races to consider becoming candidates for our covenantal forms of ministry.

2.37 WOMAN MINISTERS

Conference resolves to recognise and celebrate the ordination of Women Ministers for 40 Years, and affirms the work already done by the Presiding Bishop, especially by establishing a Task Team to lead these celebrations in 2016. As part of this celebration, Conference directs the Task Team in consultation with SMMS to develop a booklet on the history and stories of Women in Ministry. The Finance Unit is requested to make provision for the cost involved.

2.38 NOMINATION OF WOMEN MINISTERS INTO POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Noting that 2016 marks the 40 anniversary of the Ordination of Women, and the low number of Women ministers in leadership within the Connexion, conference refers all issues relating to involvement of women at all levels of leadership in the church to the Mission Unit for consideration during the reflective sessions planned for 2016. Conference further instructs Districts, Circuits and Organisations to be intentional about the inclusion of women in leadership and leadership development pipelines, such as leading conversations, Bible Studies or as Guest Speakers in all the 40th celebrations in 2016.

2.39 APPOINTMENT OF WOMEN MINISTERS AS SUPERINTENDENTS

Conference requests the Connexional Executive to be intentional about the appointment of women ministers as Circuit Superintendents as a means of enabling gender equality and inclusion in senior leadership in the church.

2.40 MINISTERIAL SESSION

While noting the need to deal with matters relating to theological and moral integrity as well as the general welfare of Presbyters, Conference observes that in light of our affirmation of our common ministry and the priesthood of all believers, re-introducing a ministerial session is not necessarily the answer. Therefore Conference directs DEWCOM to suggest a possible framework for dealing with matters relating to the order of presbyters within our current structures.

2.41 ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES BETWEEN THE ORDERS OF DEACONS AND EVANGELISTS

Conference notes the imbalances and the need for training on the differences between the Diaconate and the Order of Evangelism and directs the Human Resources Unit and Orders to investigate all issues including relationships and imbalances as well as the retirement age for members of these orders and report to Conference 2016.

2.42 POST-ORDINATION TRAINING

Conference instructs Bishops to ensure that structured Post-Ordination Training for ministers happens within districts to ensure continuous ministerial development and institutional competence. Conference directs EMMU in consultation with HR and DEWCOM to develop strategies and material for this work.

2.43 NON-ITINERANT CATEGORY OF MINISTRY

Conference recognises the recommendations of the consultative process facilitated by EMMU on the continuing relevance of the Non-Itinerant Category of Ministry and resolves:

- that the Non-Itinerant category of the ordained ministry be discontinued in its current form and no new candidate will be received.

- present clergy who fall within this category of ministry will continue and those still in training under this category of ministry be allowed to continue.

2.44 NEW MISSIONAL STREAMS OF LAY MINISTRY

Conferences resolves and directs EMMU in consultation with the Mission Unit to investigate the possibility of new streams of lay ministries with a missional focus, such as Missionaries and Church Planters as an alternative to the category of Non-Itinerant Ordained ministry.

2.45 MINISTERS TRANSFERRING FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

Considering the number and ages of those applying to transfer from other denominations or seeking reinstatement, Conference resolves that:

- All applicants for transfer must be able to serve the MCSA for at least ten years terms, including their years of training as ministers on trial.
- No application will be considered of people above 65 years of age, who apply to be considered Supernumeraries in the MCSA.
- The applicant`s denomination must be part of the traditional mission churches.

2.46 AGE OF CANDIDATURE AND RETIREMENT

Conference refers the issues of Candidature age and retirement age of Deacons alongside of those of Ministers to the Human Resources Unit and General Secretary with the help of EMMU, Lay General Treasurer and Mission Unit, together with conversations with the Orders.