

# **CHAPTER 2**

## **CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS**

### **2.1 PHOTOGRAPHS OF VULNERABLE PEOPLE**

In light of our current policies on ethical communication, Conference calls on all Methodist people to desist from the practice of taking photographs of vulnerable people who receive assistance from the church and directs the Communications Unit in consultation with relevant units to further provide ethical guidelines relating to the protection of identity and dignity, surrounding the taking and use photographs.

### **2.2 SUPPORT FOR PARENTS OF LGBTI CHILDREN AND SAME-SEX COUPLES**

Noting the continuing discrimination, judgement, and lack of support for Lesbian Gay Transsexual Bi-sexual Intersex (LGBTI) parents and children of same-sex couples with regard to adopting children and creating suitable family structures, Conference directs the Connexional Task Team on Marriage and Family Life to develop suitable tools for addressing misconceptions and deconstructing barriers to healthy pathways to parenthood and report on progress at the 2017 conference.

### **2.3 WESLEY GUILD AND METHODIST YOUTH CONSTITUTION**

Conference notes the consideration for fully establishing the Wesley Guild as an Organisation and directs the Revision Committee to include this matter in the current discussions on the governance of the Youth Unit and bring a report to Conference 2017.

### **2.4 WOMEN IN MINISTRY**

In recognising and celebrating the 40 years of the ordination of women in the MCSA (Res. 2.38, YB 2016, p. 104) and the challenges faced by women ministers, Conference directs the Office of the Presiding Bishop to appoint an inclusive Task Team to attend to all matters that will affirm and elevate the ministry of women within the MCSA. Amongst other things, these include the constitutive focus on women by the Conference of 2016 and substantive recommendations of the Women in Ministry consultation, namely; discrimination and justice issues relating to the ministry of women; representation of women in all structures of the church; reviewing and changing legislative and election processes; removing barriers to leadership; development of materials for addressing gender bias and sexism; and the holistic empowerment of women in the ministry.

### **2.5 PREACHERS WITH DISABILITIES**

Conference affirms resolution 2.35 of 2015 (YB 2016, p.103) and directs Education for Ministry and Mission Unit (EMMU) to explore the possibility of developing material for Preachers with dyslexia or visual impairments and report on progress at Conference 2017

### **2.6 RETIREMENT AGE OF MINISTERS AND DEACONS**

Conference affirms current legislation on retirement age of Ministers, and directs the Office of the General Secretary in consultation with the Human Resources (HR) Unit, to investigate and provide guidelines on how the skills of Supernumeraries can be utilized. This should include guidance on remuneration and to report to conference 2017.

### **2.7 RELATING TO MINISTERS BEYOND THE CONNEXION**

Noting the increase in the number of ministers seeking to serve beyond the Connection and the likely future shortage of ministers in our Connexion, Conference directs the Office of the General Secretary in consultation with the HR Unit to investigate why ministers chose to explore beyond the Connexion as well as provide guidelines on the nature of the relationship these ministers have with the MCSA for reporting at the 2017 Conference.

## **2.8 NON-ITINERANT CATEGORY OF THE ORDER OF DEACONS**

In light of the 2015 decision (res. 2.43 YB, 2016, p.105), Conference resolves in favour of the discontinuance of the Non-Itinerant ministry in the Order of Deacons and directs the Revisions committee to make the necessary changes in the Laws and Disciplines (L&D, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2014).

## **2.9 AGE OF CANDIDATURE AND RETIREMENT FOR DEACONS**

Conference affirms the 2015 Resolution 2.46 (YB 2016, p.105) and refers matters concerning medical aid and stipends relating to the Deaconate Order to the Revision Committee to be included in ongoing discussions and further consideration and report to conference 2017.

## **2.10 TRAINING AND MENTORING OF PROBATIONERS IN CIRCUIT**

Conference notes the need for consistent support encouragement, accountability and mentoring of probationers in circuit and directs EMMU to facilitate the implementation of this process. The following guidelines apply:

- The Superintendent of a Circuit where a Probationer is stationed shall annually appoint a Probationer Mentoring Committee consisting of five (5) people, i.e. Leaders of the Society/Section/Circuit, along with a Minister with whom the Probationer works closely.
- Unless there is a reason for change, the same committee is to walk alongside the Probationer until the ordination year or until s/he leaves the station
- A Minister will be a convener of the meetings and meet with the Probationer at least once a quarter.
- The committee is expected to compile a minimum of two (2) progress reports annually (April and October). This report should be signed by the Superintendent and sent to the District Supervisor of Studies.

## **2.11 SYNOD ORAL EXAM**

Noting the decline in the performance of Ordinands in the Synod Oral Exams, Conference resolves that in the year in which Probationers are recommended for ordination, they will do an Oral Examination. This Exam shall be assessed by a Synod Listening Committee appointed by the District Bishop as per EMMU guidelines. This does not replace the Ordinands Oral Exam on the floor of Synod in the year of Ordination.

## **2.12 WIDENING THE POOL: THE ELECTION OF FEMALE CLERGY TO POSITIONS OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP**

Conference notes that the ongoing failure of the MCSA to elect female clergy to the office of Bishop and other positions of senior leadership denies our understanding of what it means to be the body of Christ, impoverishes the church, undermines its witness and compromises its commitment to justice, healing, and transformation. Conference directs the Office of the Presiding Bishop to set up a task team to explore this ongoing reality and make recommendations for changes in the legislative processes of identifying, nominating and appointing suitable candidates for these roles that would address these concerns.

## **2.13 ECUMENICAL REPRESENTATION IN PROVINCIAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL COUNCILS AND RELATED GATHERINGS**

Noting the provisions 6.10.1 6.10.9 of the Laws and Disciplines, Conference resolves that:

- representation to Provincial and Regional Ecumenical Councils, Conferences and other such gatherings be appointed and authorized by the District Bishop; and
- where ministers or members are individually invited to such gatherings to inform (seek permission to attend) the District Bishop and the District Ecumenical Affairs Secretary.

#### **2.14 CANDIDATING INTO THE OF ORDER OF EVANGELISM**

In light of the unintended consequences for those considering candidating for the order of evangelism in the whole Connexion, Conference resolves to reduce the entry requirements for Biblewomen and Evangelist candidates to Grade 10 or its equivalent and further directs the Revisions committee to make the necessary amendments to the Laws and Discipline (Clause 14.4.6.)

#### **2.15 CONFERENCE VENUE**

While conference notes the 2012 Resolution (*Resolutions Booklet* 2016, pg. 124) and acknowledges the work done by the Finance Unit to investigate this matter, our current practice of rotating Conference enhances our connexionality and should continue.

#### **2.16 GIFTS POLICY**

In light of the 2015 resolution 2.10 (YB 2016, p.99), Conference receives the comments and recommendations from Circuit Quarterly Meetings and Districts Synods and directs the Finance Unit to consolidate this suggested framework to be referred to circuits and synods and to report to Conference 2017.

#### **2.17 SUPERNUMERARY FUND RESERVE**

Conference resolves that as of the ensuing financial year, the Circuit contributions to the Supernumerary Fund Reserve shall be reduced from a “two times” to a “one-time” contribution and no contribution to the Church Reserve Fund at present.

#### **2.18 PENSION AUGMENTATION FUND**

Conference resolves that Finance Unit creates a Pension Augmentation Fund and design guidelines for governing the fund and for the purposes of addressing pension justice issues. Any surplus from the Supernumerary Fund Reserve in any one year, as determined by the Actuary, shall be calculated and 10% to be set aside for addressing issues of justice through the Pension Augmentation Fund.

#### **2.19 SUPERNUMERARY RESERVE FUND AND CHURCH RESERVE FUND**

Conference directs the Finance Unit to develop a guiding framework for the administration of the Supernumerary Fund Reserve and Church Reserve Fund in a manner that prioritises matters of justice and mission and report to conference 2017.

#### **2.20 CIRCUIT ASSESSMENTS AND MISSION FUNDING**

In light of the ensuing Mission Congress (November 2016) and the ongoing work of the structures committee on the reviewing our polity, Conference directs the General Treasurers in consultation with the Mission Unit to develop a strategy for funding mission and report to Conference 2018

#### **2.21 DIFFERENCES IN STIPENDS AND OTHER ALLOWANCES**

Conference recognises the issues relating to the remuneration of the Orders of Diaconate and Evangelism and directs the Revision Committee in consultation with the Finance and HR Units to include these issues in the current discussions (Res.2.4, YB 2016, p.99) and bring recommendations to Conference 2017.

#### **2.22 STIPEND AUGMENTATION FUND**

Conference resolves that Ordained Deacons, who are stipendiary, are be eligible to receive benefits from the Stipend Augmentation Fund.

#### **2.23 PROPERTY PORTFOLIO**

Conference receives the recommendations of the consultation between the General Treasurers and District Trust Property Secretaries (DTP) and directs the finance unit to set aside the R1m

from the Connexional Property Fund for a year to set up a property division, including the appointment of a dedicated person, establishing its mandate and proposals for the its continued funding and report to Conference 2017.

#### **2.24 TRUST PROPERTY MATTERS**

Conference receives the following proposed amendments and recommendations of Ministerial General Treasurer and the Lay General Treasurer regarding the effective management of Methodist properties, including the consideration for a dedicated person at a circuit level to coordinate the oversight of properties on behalf of the Circuit Quarterly. Conference refers these matters to the Revisions Committee for consideration and reporting to Conference 2017.

#### **2.25 PROTESTS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Conference directs Mission Unit in collaboration with the Ecumenical Affairs Unit to create resources for training on peaceful means of expressing discontent and facilitating conflict resolution at all levels of the church. Conference further directs Districts in collaboration with Ecumenical partners to assist local communities in this.

#### **2.26 STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY AND JUSTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Noting that with the celebration of 22 years of democracy, South Africa is now confronted with a number of governance issues that are testing the strength of its governance procedures. The notable sense of unfairness, corruption, patronage and abuse of state resources that has often led to the agonizing sights of chaos and violence in parliament is regrettable.

Conference affirms the prophetic witness and action of the Presiding Bishop in responding to political and public issues. We affirm the program of the SACC's "Anchoring Democracy" with the Conference further calls on the office of the Presiding Bishop, SACC, and the ecumenical partners to continue calling on the government to ensure an equitable democracy that ensures that all voices in the public and political discourse are guaranteed space. This should also include an emphasis on the urgency of promoting good governance, ensuring accountability in public office and an accelerated delivery of essential services. (Refer to the SACC website for documents relating to the South Africa We Pray For)

#### **2.27 PARTY POLITICAL CHAPLAINCY**

Conference 2016 affirms the 2014 and 2015 resolutions not to appoint ministers as chaplains to political parties. Conference further affirms our stated position on the religion and politics (Miscellaneous Resolution 31, L&D, p. 223) along with the conviction that our ministry extends to all spheres including social, economic, political and environmental spheres of life. Conference directs DEWCOM to develop a guiding theological document and practical tools that will shape our response, describing amongst other things:

- the pastoral and prophetic nature of our ministry in the political and public space;
- possible expressions/forms of our ministry in the public/political domain including non-partisan ministry to political parties, governments, national parliaments, provincial, regional and municipal institutions and traditional spheres of leadership.

#### **2.28 ASCENSION DAY and OTHER CHRISTIAN HOLY DAYS**

Conference affirms 2012 resolution on Christian Holy days (p144 Resolution Book) and encourages Districts, Circuits, Societies and all MCSA institutions to commit to observing all the Christian Holy Days including Ascension Day. Conference directs DEWCOM to finalise

the guidelines on Christian Holy Days and liturgical guidelines for distribution as soon as possible.

## **2.29 PREGNANCY AND REINSTATEMENT CLASSES**

- (i) Conference notes with concern that the practice of suspension and consequent reinstatement classes of single women who are pregnant, which continues in some Circuits. This is contrary to our practice and the spirit of affirming the dignity of women. And Conference resolves that this practice must be discontinued immediately. Superintendents and Organizations are directed to approach this matter pastorally.
- (ii) Conference also acknowledges DEWCOM for the resources their ongoing work on human sexuality and family life and directs District and Circuits make use of these resources in facilitating discussions and shaping their pastoral responses. See the DEWCOM Blogspot <http://mcsadewcom.blogspot.co.za/>
- (iii) In the context of the changing landscape of family and human sexuality, there is a need to discuss all the above issues in relation to our understanding of 'sin', 'Law of God' and Church discipline (L&D Para. 11.2)

Conference further directs the Connexional Task Team on Family Life in consultation with DEWCOM to include all these issues in their deliberations and report on progress at the 2017 Conference.

## **2.30 PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

Noting growing statistics of sexual abuse and the sexual exploitation of children including child abuse images, conference strongly condemns all such and related acts. Conference calls on all Methodist people to be vigilant in reporting these criminal and harmful acts as they constitute serious violations of fundamental rights, in particular of the right of children to the protection and care necessary for their well-being. Conference directs the child care desk to highlight available resources in this regard.

## **2.31 LOGISTICAL DELAYS IN DISTRICT DISCIPLINARY PROCESSES**

Conference notes that our current disciplinary procedures make no provision for situations where a District Disciplinary Registrar (DDR) fails to perform his or her duties resulting in detrimental delays in the processes of discipline. In light of Resolution 2.1 & 2.2 (YB 2016, p. 89), Conference refers all issues of timing relating to Discipline to the Revisions committee. While the Revision Committee does this work, Conference resolves to grant the Connexional Disciplinary Committee power to condone late submissions.

## **2.32 THE DISTRICT SUPERVISOR OF STUDIES AND DISTRICT STATIONING COMMITTEE**

Conference notes the important role played by the District Supervisor of Studies (DSS) in the formation and training of probationers and resolves that where necessary the DSS shall be invited to the District stationing committee.

## **2.33 STATIONING OF MINISTERS IN CONEXIONAL UNITS**

Noting the calendar differences between Conference, Connexional units and church institutions and how they complicate the timing of appointments to these entities, Conference calls the Connexional Executive to align the processes of all ministerial appointments, ensuring that Connexional units and SMMS are finalised by Conference. Conference further directs the Office of the General Secretary in consultation with Human Resources Unit to develop appropriate mandates for interviewing, constituting interview panels as well as procedures for ensuring transparency and accountability of process and outcomes.

### **2.34 ORDER OF DEACONS**

Conference receives and refers to the revisions committee the following changes to the L&D relating to the order of Deacons:

Para. 13.1.1 should be amended to read:

Delete: “Deacons belong to an ordained ministry of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.”

Insert: *“A deacon in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa is ordained for the ministry of word and service.”*

Para. 13.2 should be amended to read:

Delete: Members of the Order are known as “Deacons” a term reserved for the Methodist Church of Southern Africa for members of the Order of Deacons.

Insert: *“As members of an ordained ministry, members of the Order of Deacons are addressed as “Deacon.”*

### **2.35 DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION**

Conference commends DEWCOM and other Units for the resources and documents they produce to assist the church in legislation, training and teaching and shaping mission. Conference further notes that the church has no intentional strategy of making the educational resources produced by DEWCOM and other entities available to local communities. Conference instructs the Communications Unit in consultation with other relevant Connexional Units and committees to explore strategies for distributing important educational resources and information endorsed by Conference. This should include importing all endorsed documents to the MCSA website.

### **2.36 MISSION SYNODS**

Conference calls on Districts whose borders extend to the member countries, Swaziland, Lesotho, Namibia and Botswana, to annually convene a Mission Consultation to focus on public issues, ecumenical collaboration, as well as the relevant alignment of resources with missional priorities specific to that country. Conference directs the Revision Committee to develop the necessary provisions for reporting and accountability for this work at District Synods, Mission, and Ecumenical Units respectively.

### **2.37 MCSA REPRESENTATION IN LESOTHO, BOTSWANA, NAMIBIA AND SWAZILAND**

Noting the complex missional, ecumenical, socio-economic and political realities facing the countries of our Connexion, Conference calls on Districts, whose boundaries extend beyond one country to develop meaningful structures for missional cooperation, administration, and engagement on public issues. Conference refers this resolution back to the Structures and Revision Committees including consideration of legislation in those countries establishing structures for formal representation

### **2.38 STRATEGY FOR TRANSFORMATION AND EFFECTIVE CONNEXTIONALITY**

Conference notes the importance of strengthening Connexionality, accelerating processes of transformation and the implementation of Conference decisions and mandates, and directs the Structures Committee to develop guidelines for assisting Districts and Circuits to effect transformation and strengthen accountability.

### **2.39 EVANGELICAL CRUSADE**

Conference notes that the word ‘crusade’ within the Christian tradition carries unpleasant connotations and calls on the Local Preachers Association and all other Entities to always use concepts and themes that are in line with our Methodist ethos.