



CONNEXIONAL COMMITTEES

DOCTRINE, ETHICS AND WORSHIP COMMITTEE

BISHOP MTHOBELI MATYUMZA

The work of DEWCOM encompasses engaging with current issues pertaining to doctrine, ethics and worship. Members of the committee consider it an honour and privilege to serve the Methodist people in this manner. Therefore this committee should be understood as a resource for the Church through Conference, also as a conscience that seeks to serve and assist the MCSA to be theological proactive and contextual as she responds to contemporary yet very complex challenges in this era, and as we navigate into the future. We have to learn as a denomination to be guided by our theology in taking decisions avoiding the tendency being reactive and emotional in decision making, and regret later.

Methodist people are reminded that documents produced by DEWCOM are available for viewing and/or downloading at: www.mcsadwecom.blogspot.co.za.

DEWCOM notes with sadness the deaths of the Rev. Prof. Neville Richardson, Rev. Neill Robinson, and Rev. Dr. Simon Gqubule. At one point, during their years of ministry, these great theological giants of Methodism and gifted ministers served in this committee. Their enormous contribution to the life and ministry of the church will be sorely missed. The committee also notes the death of the Rev. Constance Oosthuizen, whose 40th anniversary of ordination is being celebrated in the MCSA currently. Her struggle for acceptance into the ministry of the MCSA and courageous witness for the gospel should never be forgotten.

1. MATTERS REFERRED BY CONFERENCE

1.1. **Party political chaplaincy** (2016 Yearbook, para. 2.5, pg. 99)

DEWCOM notes that the Presiding Bishop appointed a committee that prepared a document in this regard. That document was circulated to circuits for discussion and feedback. DEWCOM calls upon the MCSA to continue with respectful dialogue pertaining to this matter. DEWCOM is currently producing a paper on the role of the church in the political sphere. It is envisaged that this paper will inspire the church to debate the matter further and come to a sound theological understanding of its role in the political sphere.

1.2. **Ministerial farewell gifts** (2016 Yearbook, para. 2.10, pg. 99)

DEWCOM notes that the Finance Unit produced a document pertaining to this matter and circulated it for discussion at Circuit Quarterly Meetings. DEWCOM advises against legislating ministerial farewell gifts as our church operates in diverse cultural contexts. Having said that, giving gifts to ministers should be done in a moral and ethical manner. Personal benefit should not precede the gospel imperative of sharing with the poor. Ministers should resist the temptation of enriching themselves at the expense of mission in their circuits and societies.

1.3. **Xenophobia** (2016 Yearbook, para 2.20, pg. 101)

DEWCOM acknowledges the complexity of this issue and awaits the finalisation of the discussion document by the Mission Unit. This issue raises the question of whether the MCSA has a clear theological understanding of how the least, the last and the lost should be treated. DEWCOM, through the liturgy sub-committee is working on producing liturgical material that seeks to dispel xenophobia and create cultural integration of all **Initiation schools** (2016 Yearbook, para. 2.24, pg. 102)

DEWCOM awaits finalisation of the work by the Mission Unit. Production of liturgical material that will assist our ministers in their response to initiation and similar cultural practices is underway. Production of a discussion document on the subject is underway as well. DEWCOM advises the Mission Unit to include a discussion on initiation in the agenda of the upcoming mission congress. DEWCOM undertakes to introduce a standing item on this issue in their agenda for discussion.

1.4. **Youth pastors' training** (2016 Yearbook, para. 2.29, pg. 102)

DEWCOM submits to Conference that youth pastors are lay staff and therefore their relationship with the church is contractual and not covenantal. Our theology of ordination, which does not apply to youth pastors, calls for a life-long intent and commitment of the one ordained to ministry. This is not the case with youth pastors and other lay agents.

1.5. **Patriarchal attitudes and sexual discrimination against women in ministry** (2016 Yearbook, para. 2.33, pg. 103)

DEWCOM advises the Mission Unit, as per the resolution from Conference, to place the issue of patriarchy on the agenda of the upcoming Mission Congress. DEWCOM is developing papers for discussion and publication

on the pervasiveness of patriarchal attitudes as well as gender discrimination. Furthermore, DEWCOM commits to publish some articles in the Dimension that highlight these issues. DEWCOM notes that the 40th anniversary of the ordination of women in the MCSA offers the church a unique opportunity to reflect on these issues and to take steps in addressing them.

1.7 Ministerial session (2016 Yearbook, para. 2.40, pg. 104)

DEWCOM advises Conference to explore experimental formulae that could address the need for ministerial engagement. For example, certain districts within the Connexion have set up clergy convocations where they deal particularly with issues pertaining to theological formation, moral and ethical behaviours and accountability of ministers. While ministerial sessions are not a solution, space is needed where theological integrity, accountability and ongoing formation happens amongst colleagues. This could happen at a district level. DEWCOM is in the process of drawing up the framework for dealing with matters relating to the presbyteral order within our current structures.

2. DOCTRINE

2.1 Same-sex relationships

DEWCOM advises Conference of the necessity to keep the conversation on this matter going. The resource “In search for grace and truth” remains valuable in facilitating the conversation. DEWCOM encourages the church to use the “profession of the MCSA’s unity in diversity” (Book of Order 2014:216-218) in our services as a method of acknowledging the diversity of opinions regarding this matter.

2.2 Diversity and Interpretation of Scripture

DEWCOM is pleased to announce that a document on the diversity and interpretation of scripture is ready for tabling at Conference 2016.

2.3 Definition of Christian marriage

DEWCOM is pleased to announce that a document on the theology of marriage is ready for tabling at Conference 2016.

2.4 Order of Deacons

The Methodist Order of Deacons, through the General Secretary, presented a document of amendments to chapter 13 of the Book of Order. Relevant to DEWCOM were only clauses 13.1.1 and 13.2.

13.1.1 should be amended to read: **“A deacon in the MCSA is ordained for the ministry of word and service.”**

13.2 should be amended to read: **“As members of an ordained ministry, members of the Order of Deacons are addressed as “Deacon” .**

3. WORSHIP AND LITURGY

DEWCOM wishes to report to Conference that the liturgy sub-committee, under the leadership of Bishop Anderson, will convene a meeting with a view to revise the membership of that committee as well as charting a way forward regarding liturgy production and publication.

4. RESOLUTION TO CONFERENCE

DEWCOM wishes to submit the following resolution to Conference, for consideration:

Widening the pool: the election of female clergy to positions of senior leadership in the MCSA

DEWCOM 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. DEWCOM therefore requests Conference to set up a task team to explore this ongoing reality and make recommendations of changes in the processes of identifying, nominating and appointing suitable candidates for these roles that would address these concerns.

5. NOMINATION OF DEWCOM COMMITTEE FOR 2017

DEWCOM wishes to propose the following to serve in the committee in 2017:

Bishop Mthobeli Matyumza (Chairperson), Bishop Jonathan Anderson, Bishop Dinis Matsolo, Rev. Diane Worringham, Rev. Vusi Vilakati, Rev. Jenny Samdaan, Rev. Pumla Mtshiselwa, Rev. Tim Attwell, Rev. Luvuyo Sifo (Secretary), Rev. Roger Scholtz, Mr. Anele Siswana, Rev. Purity Malinga, Rev. Norman Raphahlela, Rev. Simphiwe Mthembu, Rev. Nomvuyo Mpuqa, Rev. Prof. Wessel Bentley, Rev. Madika Sibeko, Rev. Dr. Ndikhokhele Mtshiselwa.

WOMEN IN MINISTRY

MRS J.E. NOMVUYO MPUQA

“Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked”. (Psalm 82:3-4)

SHE WAS FOR FORTY YEARS!!!

It was on the morning of the 4th July 2016 that the Methodist Church woke up to the sad news of the passing away of the woman who dared to fan into flame the vision God put in her heart as God was weaving her together in her mother’s womb – the vision to *“bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery to the blind, to set free the oppressed and to announce that the time has come when the Lord will save God’s people”*.

If it was not for her refusing to let the vision die, and instead heeding God’s call to full time Ministry of Word and service and later Word and Sacrament, Women in this church would be rocking the swing chair of regret and waving a white handkerchief to the music of “if only”. But thanks to Reverend Constance Oosthuizen, this year the MCSA is celebrating forty years of ordaining Women to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament! We give God all the glory and honour for her life which was well lived as a true ambassador of Christ! May her soul rest in peace and rise up in glory!

WORK OVERVIEW

This year we are celebrating forty years of ordaining Women into the Ministry of Word and Sacrament in our church. What are we celebrating as Women in the ordained Ministry?

We are celebrating the fact that God chose us, called us and anointed us, to journey with all those who are marginalised by society with a heart that understands what they are going through and remain a beacon of hope to them as we come across to them as wounded healers! We celebrate the church that afforded us the limited space to offer that much needed Ministry to those who need it most!

ACHIEVEMENTS

It was only ten years ago that we celebrated thirty years of ordaining Women in the MCSA at Natal Coastal District. We celebrated on our own, not many people in the Connexion were even aware of the event, but in 2015 Conference made the following resolutions:

- To recognize and celebrate the ordination of Women Ministers for 40 years, and affirm the work already done by the Presiding Bishop, especially by establishing a Task Team to lead these celebrations in 2016. As part of the 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.
- Noting that 2016 marks the 40th 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.
- 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 (*italics mine*).
- Conference directs EMMU 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.

CHALLENGES

Despite the above 2015 Conference Resolutions, Synod 2016 still elected male bishops even in Districts where there was a female candidate! What is even more sad is that the very Conference will ratify the elections. Women Superintendents are just tokenism. Most of these women's voices are silenced. Males, even those that are not in active Ministry, remain "The Voice" in all matters affecting the Circuit where the Superintendent is according to our Book of Orders, the official head of the Church in the Circuit (BOO:78)

The question we need to ask is "How many people in leadership are even aware of these resolutions? Do these cascade to the grass roots? Who is the watchdog of Conference Resolutions?"

CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude by thanking all the Districts, Circuits and Societies for acknowledging and affirming Women Ministers in 2016 by creating spaces for them in their celebration events where they have asked them to be guest speakers or conduct Bible studies. May God continue to bless you all!

To Districts who have elected women to top leadership positions e.g. Vice-chairperson, Secretary of Synod etc, we salute you!

Let us all continue in our respective spaces to convene reflective sessions on the persistence of patriarchal attitudes in our Circuits. May the Holy Spirit guide us!

Shalom!

METHODIST ARCHIVES REPORT TO 2016 CONFERENCE MS MEG HARTZENBERG

A very interesting acquisition for the Archives in 2015 was two scrapbooks compiled by Rev William J. Marris (1842 – 1926) of Bradford, Yorkshire. He collected autographs, mainly in the form of letters, of all the Presidents of Conference from 1793 to 1920 and arranged them in a scrapbook with a portrait or photograph of each person. Included in this collection are two original letters written by John Wesley and one written by Charles Wesley, with the envelopes in which they were posted. The letters from John Wesley were written to Miss Peggy Dale of the Orphan House, Newcastle on 1 April 1766 and to Tommy Roberts of the New Room, Cork in 1789. The letter from Charles Wesley was written in 1778 but the name of the recipient is illegible. The second scrapbook contains newspaper cuttings and portraits or photographs of ministers.

The two scrapbooks were discovered in a filing cabinet in the Museum at Kingswood College in 2014 and have been entrusted to the Methodist Archives at the Cory Library, Rhodes University where they will be preserved in a temperature controlled and dust free environment. Their history is not known, but it is speculated that when Rev Marris died in 1926 a family member must have inherited them and they later on found their way to Kingswood College, possibly through Rev Howard Kirkby who was the Chaplain there for many years.

During the period July '15 – June '16 the following requests were received: Marriage records, 62; Family tree information, 7; Baptismal records, 25; Historical research, 31 & Burial records, 2.

There has been a big increase in the number of requests for marriage records, mainly from people needing to get unabridged marriage certificates from the Dept. of Home Affairs. Unfortunately many churches and ministers have not sent their marriage, baptism and burial registers to the Archives which means that there are extensive gaps in the holdings. For example there are no church registers in the Archives for the whole of Johannesburg and surrounding areas later than 1949. These registers are an invaluable research tool and should ideally be in the Archives where they are accessible to everyone. In 2014 the Connexional Marriage Officer instructed all Marriage Officers in the Methodist Church to send all their used Marriage Registers to the Archives for preservation. To date only 44 ministers have responded.

There is also a growing interest in writing down the history of Societies and Circuits celebrating anniversaries and wanting to produce brochures for the occasion. There is a scarcity of information available about individual churches and any brochures or pamphlets that are produced should be sent to the Archives. Churches should encourage the writing down of their history by those who have been members for a long time, before such institutional memory is lost. A valuable reference source is the set of Minutes of Conference dating back to the early 1800s which is available in the Archives, as well as the index to the obituaries which appear in the Minutes each year and which are useful in finding information about the life and work of specific ministers. Also available in the Archives are back numbers of Dimension and The Methodist Churchman which are useful for historical research.

Please do not send to the Archives financial records such as bank statements, old cheque books, financial reports etc., as they take up a lot of space and are not of general interest. Only financial reports of specific or unusual interest will be kept.

Requests for information from the Archives come from all over South Africa as well as neighbouring countries and overseas. Many people visit the Archives themselves and make use of the material there to do their own research into family histories. Thank you to the staff at the Cory Library for their friendly assistance in accessing material and finding information.

CONNEXIONAL COMMITTEE ON CHAPLAINCY BISHOP THEMBA MNTAMBO

INTRODUCTION

A Chaplain is a member of the Clergy who provides spiritual and religious services to an Organisation or an individual, usually appointed by the church to which the member of clergy belongs and is accountable for his or her ministry. Such people remain members of the church, and are not necessarily members of the Organisation to which they are appointed. Their work is largely limited to what the church determines, except for some administrative matters peculiar to the Organisation they are appointed to serve. In the case of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, the church appoints chaplains to the Department of Correctional Services, the South African National Defence Force and the South African Police Services. All ministers appointed to these chaplaincies understand that they conduct ministry on behalf of the church, they are expected to represent the church and maintain the ethos and values the church holds.

LOCAL CHURCH INVOLVEMENT

All our chaplains are expected to be involved in the local church, especially in worship and other areas where their ministry may be exercised. We are happy to report that all our chaplains are indeed involved and have been well received in the Circuits to which they belong. Most of them have made themselves available to assist local ministers, and where they have been requested to do so they have been a great asset to the church.

CHAPLAINCY TO OTHER SECURITY SERVICES

We have not been successful in our attempts to include ministers who offer spiritual services to other security services such as Metro Police and Emergency Services within the Connexional Committee on Chaplaincy. We continue to seek to open discussions with these Organisations. At the moment such ministers fall under the category of seconded ministers.

PASTORAL COMMITTEES AFTER 10 YEARS OF SERVICE

A number of chaplains are due for Pastoral Committees to review their work and recommend whether they should continue in chaplaincy in the next year. These will be arranged with the Bishops of the District in which they reside (see Book of Order p. 161, par. 15.4).

APPLICATIONS FOR CHAPLAINCY

In the year under review the Committee received 6 requests for and enquiries about permission to apply for posts available in the chaplaincy. Four of the six withdrew their requests, one is still in process, and one has been appointed to the Department of Correctional Services. There continues to be a number of inquiries from ministers wishing to explore chaplaincy and it has come to the notice of the Committee that many of these inquiries come at a time when ministers are not sure whether they will have a station in the following year. It is a concern for the committee that such ministers wish to enter chaplaincy not out of a call to this ministry but as an attempt to secure some employment in the event that they are not stationed. We have at all times referred to the Pastoral Committees who screen applicants to ensure that the applicant evidences a clear call to the ministry of chaplain.

IRREGULAR APPOINTMENT OF A CHAPLAIN

The Committee has had to deal with a case of one of our ministers who took up an appointment to the Department of Correctional Services without following proper procedure. The matter has now been resolved after a Pastoral Commission in the District in which the minister resides, followed by a meeting with some members of the Connexional Committee on Chaplaincy. Due to the fact that the minister had initially resigned from Connexion with the MCSA, and then later applied to be reinstated, this matter also had to be considered by the Synod. Synod then recommended her reinstatement and her continued employment with Correctional Services. The Committee

agrees with the recommendation and has no objection to her continued work with Correctional Services. In order to fulfil the requirements for the appointment of chaplains, the minister will have to go through the procedure of application as all others do.

AGE LIMIT FOR APPLICANTS

Clarity has not been received from one Security Service whether the age limit for the appointment of chaplains has been relaxed. So we continue to implement the provisions of the Book of Order page 162, paragraph 15.5.2. The committee requested Conference last year to allow ministers over the age of forty to apply for chaplaincy after having followed the church process for application. We confirm that the committee will continue to give such permission and leave it to the security service concerned to decide whether they may employ such ministers.

RESERVE CHAPLAINS

The Committee has received a number of inquiries from ministers wishing to apply for appointment as Reserve Chaplains, particularly in those command areas where the full time chaplain cannot service the area meaningfully. Thus far the church has not had any regulations to govern the appointment of Reserve Chaplains. Guidelines for the appointment of such chaplains have now been drafted and have been presented to the Revision Committee for consideration.

LETTERS OF GOOD STANDING

All Methodist Chaplains receive letters of good standing from the church annually. This is specifically required by the South African Police Service but letters are given to all chaplains in every service as a matter of course. All our chaplains have had these letters submitted to the Human Resources Departments of their respective security service.

THE COMMITTEE

The following are members of the Connexional Committee on Chaplaincy in terms of The Methodist Book of Order (Laws and Discipline) page 161, paragraph 15.2 for the time being: The Presiding Bishop (Rev. Zipho Siwa), the General Secretary (Rev. Charmaine Morgan), the Bishops of three Districts (Revs. Themba Mntambo, Jonathan Anderson and Gary Rivas of whom Rev. Mntambo is the chairman), the Principal Chaplain (Rev. Nzingo Noto), the Liaison Chaplains of the three Security Services (Rev. Molefi Matsane – Correctional Services, Rev. Morake Finger – Police Services), three ministers who are not chaplains (Revs. Lentikile Phokontsi, Raymond Keet), and three lay persons (Mesdames Ans Grobler, Matsie Morolo and Colonel Simon Shabangu). One more minister still needs to be appointed and the committee requests Conference to allow us to continue to search for a suitable person. The Committee proposes that the persons named above continue to serve in this capacity.

PRINCIPAL CHAPLAIN AND LIAISON CHAPLAINS

The Rev. Nzingo Noto continues to serve as Principal Chaplain. He has served in this capacity since 2014 and the Committee proposes that he continue to do so. The Revs. Molefi Matsane and Morake Finger serve as Liaison Chaplains for the Department of Correctional Services and the South African Police Service respectively. The Committee proposes that they too continue to serve in this capacity.

RETIREMENT AND PROMOTION

The Rev. Bana Setshedi retired as chaplain in the South Africa Police Services at the end of 2015, having reached the mandatory retirement age as per regulations of the SAPS. Conference 2015 stationed him in Maseru, Lesotho and he has settled in and adjusted well to Circuit work after more than 20 years in the chaplaincy. This is one of the success stories of reintegration back to Circuit. We have observed over the years that some chaplains find it difficult to readjust after they have been appointed to Circuits.

We congratulate the Rev. Thsidiso Moerane, one of our chaplains in the Police Services who has been promoted two ranks, from Captain to Colonel. This is due to the fact that our chaplains have evidenced a commitment and competence for their work.

RETREAT

All chaplains are required to attend a Chaplains' Retreat usually planned for November of every year. It has been a pleasure to see the chaplains take this part of their discipline seriously, and over the past two years we have seen an increasing number attending the retreat. The theme for last year's retreat was about integrity of call and proved to be helpful and encouraging to all who attended. Plans for the 2016 retreat are already in an advanced stage and will be led by the Rev. Stephen Barry at the Kilnerton Centre.

CONCLUSION

It is the Committee's belief that this is significant ministry the church offers to the world, and that our ministers should be encouraged to consider the call to chaplaincy, not as the place to go when they do not have a station but a place of specialised long-term ministry to which they need to commit themselves. We continue to receive very good reports about our present chaplains who are able to perform well above those of other denominations. We believe this is due to our training for ministry and our insistence on chaplains being called to this work and not simply appoint those whom we cannot station or we regard as surplus to our requirements. The committee will continually endeavour to identify the most suitable candidates for this work and challenge them to hear the call and accept the church's sending them to chaplaincy.

Shalom, Grace and Peace

STRUCTURES COMMITTEE BISHOP MICHEL HANSROD

Introduction:

The committee appointed by Conference for a three year term works within the terms of reference as described from time to time by the conference to deal with all structural proposals to assist the church in attaining its Missional goals and serving as a conduit for its Missional Strategy.

Year under Review:

During the year under review the committee has undertaken the following tasks-

1. Ensuring that all structural changes proposed have been promulgated and included as new legislation in the 12th Edition of the Laws and Discipline as well as the Revised Edition.
2. Receiving and monitoring the submission of reports on matters referred to various units and organisations by Conference pertaining to structural matters.
3. Establishing and overseeing the work of the Connexional Boundaries Committee as a Structures sub-committee.
4. Proposing New Regulations in respect of Elections of Bishops

Connexional Boundaries Committee:

The Connexional Boundaries Committee undertook the following tasks during the past year-

1. Facilitated conversations with Botswana representatives in respect of a 2012 resolution of the Limpopo District to establish a District in Limpopo. This conversation is ongoing, with a Report to the 2016 Conference.
2. Prepared a Missional Survey for all District in respect of Boundaries Conversations.
3. Convened a Connexional Conversation on Boundaries with representatives from across the Connexional with a view to of ascertaining how best the Missional Strategy of the Church may be implemented through our present boundaries or possible redrawn boundaries. This includes, resourcing, demographics, staffing, vision and strategic missional planning and implementation.

Connexional Structures Committee:

Conference of 2015 appointed the following as members of the Connexional Structures Committee for the period 2016 -2018:

Bishop Michel Hansrod (Convenor), Presiding Bishop, General Secretary, Lay General Treasurer, Lay President, Directors of Finance, Mission, and HR Units, plus 5 members of which one will be from a sovereign state: Rev Mzwandile Molo, Mrs Thobile Dlamini (Swaziland), Rev Lea Marumo, Rev Mogomotsi Diutwileng, Mr Vusi Chuta.

CONCLUSION

The Connexional Structures Committee will actively engage in the process of the 2016 Mission Congress to establish how best the Structures of the Church can become the conduit to encourage, facilitate, resource and implement the Strategy, Vision and Missional Goals of the church to best serve the present age.

**METHODIST PUBLISHING HOUSE
CONFERENCE REPORT 2016
FOR THE PERIOD JULY 2015 to JUNE 2016
MR DEON SWANEPOEL**

BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

The financial year under review has not been an easy one. The economic growth rate, the weakening of the Rand against the USA Dollar and the British Pound have impacted South African retail in general, and even more so our business. We, like the rest of the world are experiencing the global economic crisis, and this has affected economic growth in South Africa over the last four years, with the last 6 months being especially difficult.

With an economic growth rate of just over 0.5%, we have been in a difficult position to balance gross profit margins, with customer expectations. Disposable income has declined and we are in the speciality retail sector which made it even more challenging. Growth in the retail sector has in fact been negative at -0.6%, with the GDP at -1.2%.

Many of our existing retail stores, Christian Connexion, are poorly located, and we would ideally want to relocate them as soon as possible. Capital expenditure on new sites however is high, and the relocations have thus been postponed.

Our primary function remains to share in the mission of the church, to spread the Gospel. We will continue to do so, and by doing so we have to ensure quality products and excellent books at reasonable prices whilst continuing to grow market share.

Unfortunately we had to close our store in Benoni as it was not economically viable to keep trading from the location. This has left a gap in the market which needs to be filled as soon as possible.

OBJECTIVES

- Fully implement a balanced scorecard (Performance Appraisal System).
- reduce gross profit margins to between 50% to 52%.
- Find new suppliers and source new products.
- Reduce stock holding.
- Increase stock turn.
- Enhance replenishment.
- Training of all staff.
- Implement a merchandising policy.
- Re-establish and reposition the publishing division.
- Create a sense of pride and passion amongst all staff.
- Set realistic, achievable and measurable goals.
- If at all possible open one new store.
- Open "Franchise" stores or agencies.

We are grateful to announce that our total turnover for the period under review has only slightly decreased from R18 663 160 to R18 616 408, and our net profit from R2.4m to R1.8m. (Figures quoted are not yet finally Audited). The reduction in the net profit is mainly as a result of decreasing the gross profit margin in an effort to remain competitive.

Our strict adherence to a healthy gross profit margin as well as the passion and hard work of our whole team, in the stores and at head office, as well as the opening of two new Stores have assisted in the reduction in sales not being more substantial.

Looking forward we would look at relocating both our Johannesburg CBD store as well as our Bloemfontein store. Opening new stores as agencies will be our main focus in enlarging our footprint.

We will also actively investigate locating in neighbouring countries like, Namibia, Lesotho and Swaziland, Namibia and Mozambique.

ACHIEVEMENTS

We have opened two new Stores; BT Ngebs Mall in Mthatha and Maponya Mall in Soweto.

The publishing division have secured rights to print, translate and publish books from two major publishing houses in Europe and the United States of America. This will strengthen our sales to the trade in general.

The following works were published during the period under review;

- 2016 MCSA Year Book
- Live and Learn
- Indodana - Thembekile Gqwaka
- Without Apology – John de Gruchy
- The Volmoed Journey – John & Isobel de Gruchy
- Between Heaven and Earth – Isobel de Gruchy
- Izone zethu zalahlelwa eKalvari - Rev Ndzamela

We have secured the distribution rights for the new NIV God's Justice Bible.

Although the wholesale division has been under pressure this was largely due to poor decision making and selection of whom we supply to as well as the closure of our distribution and warehouse company, On the Dot. We have entered into an agreement with a new distribution company and we are confident that we will be able to offer a far better service to our customers and our stores.

Our new corporate look has made an impact on the market and we are pleased that more and more people are looking at Christian Connexion as their Christian book store of choice. We will continue to create awareness of our brand, expand our publishing division and keep looking for new business opportunities.

We want to however appeal to our Clergy to support our stores. Yes, we cater for all believers but we are Methodists and we are part of the church. We cannot operate a successful retail division if we do not have the support of all our Clergy and all our members. In the last 24 months more than one appeal has been made and we unfortunately have seen very little change in support from not only our Clergy but all the other Units in the church. It is evident that there is a proliferation of suppliers of copyright protected material, from books to Bible bags bearing our logo, and this is a matter that needs to be addressed by Conference.

The Methodist Publishing House and Christian Connexion most certainly do not want total control but we have to protect our brand, the churches' name and insignia, and urge Conference to make a decision regarding the unauthorised production of shirts, blankets, jackets and the like, without consultation with the Publishing House.

THE STIPEND AUGMENTATION FUND

This report will be submitted together with the Finance Unit Report