Methodist Church of Southern Africa

Internal Communications Policy

Introduction
Communication takes on many forms and is fundamental to the success of any organisation, including the church. Good internal communication is one of the vital ingredients in making an organisation successful in achieving its goals. Research shows that effective communication within an organisation significantly improves morale, organisational culture and performance.

This policy outlines the internal communications framework which we intend to adopt, the principles and objectives which will underpin it, and the roles of staff and Unit Leaders in establishing effective internal communications within the MCO.

Who is covered by this policy?
In this policy, “internal communications” refers to formal communication with and between the following:

- All MCO staff; all internal and external stakeholders including Methodist bishops and ministers and their spouses; members of the MCSA and other service providers.

Principles
The guiding principles of this Policy are:

- to ensure staff are fully informed of all MCSA activities relevant to their functions, to enable them to be as effective as possible in their role and to support the strategic direction of the church- which is a Christ Healed Africa for the healing of nations.
- to ensure all staff are aware of their responsibility for maintaining good communication practice that is open and honest but maintains confidentiality; communication that is timely, proactive, and empowering.
- to provide effective methods of communicating during an emergency.
- to ensure respect and dignity of all in all communication/correspondence.

Categories of information

Day-to-day work related information
- This is the information staff members require to carry out their day to day work. It is the responsibility of individuals and their colleagues and line managers to communicate this information effectively
- This is also including office related information that shall be communicated through the office of the Office Manager

MCO and MCSA wide notices
This is information that all MCO staff and or Ministers and Leaders in the MCSA can benefit from and this can be generated by any unit within the MCO and shared on letterhead through the Communications Unit. Such information may include news items; adverts; forthcoming events.

Communication channels

Primary Channels

1. Face-to-face communication
   Communicating in person with colleagues is considered to be the most beneficial method of ensuring information and knowledge is shared effectively. The conversational nature allows for greater engagement and understanding. It is ideal for discussions requiring immediate feedback or when complex issues need to be unpacked. However, it may not be feasible for large group communication or when information needs to reach a wider audience. Face-to-face communication is particularly valuable in building relationships and fostering cultural understanding. It offers opportunities for informal discussions and can enhance team cohesion.

A Christ-healed Africa for the Healing of Nations

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Lay General Treasurer: Mrs Thini Ngonyama
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understanding of the context of the message, encourages reflection, questioning and feedback. As part of the working environment, staff is encouraged as often as possible to meet with colleagues or use the telephone to discuss issues verbally, rather than relying on just email or printed material. Whilst it is important to manage the amount of time spent in meetings, well-managed meetings or discussions are an effective and efficient way of sharing knowledge, solving problems and ensuring common understanding and appreciation of issues. This mode of communication can then be buttressed through written communication which documents what was said face-face for future reference.

2. Email
   - Email is one of the most common methods of communicating within the MCO and with our stakeholders in the wider MCSA family. Emails serve to provide a paper trail should one be required in the future but netiquette is essential. Netiquette refers to network or internet etiquette. This simply means the use of good manners in online communication such as email and social media.
   - All staff working at the MCO should have the mandatory signature that shows, name and designation of the individual, contact information plus the church logo and name.
   - All emails sent out on organisational email shall be professional, that is, begin with a greeting, use size 11 or 12 font in black; written in lower case (except where the use of capital letters is grammatically correct).
   - All members of staff shall be alert to the kind of information they commit to email—confidential information should be treated with utmost sensitivity. Be aware also of who you CC and BCC in emails – ascertain the need to copy these individuals and also when replying to emails wherein several individuals are copied-check the need to respond to everyone.
   - Turnaround time, as far as possible for all emails, should be 48 hours. During absence or when staff will not be able to respond in a reasonable time, staff should provide an autoreply to their emails with details of an alternative contact person.
   - Your position/designation may give you access to your immediate supervisors’ emails—always consult before responding to some of the emails and in your response apply due diligence.
   - If a time-bound response from a client/service provider/ bishop etc. is not received by you within a specific time, follow up with another email plus a phone call.

3. Telephone
   - Professionalism in speech, tone and language is essential when communicating with our stakeholders via telephone. Regardless of the height of provocation—ours is to maintain a calm demeanour and serve our stakeholders as best we can.
   - Avoid the temptation to do someone else’s job and thus share incomplete information.
   - Do not repeat rumours.
   - You may be privy to information that it is not your job to impart, maintain confidentiality.

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4. **Printers:** Every member of staff shall be given their private access to main printers so that they alone have access to their print jobs

**Professionalism in communication**

In all communications, staff is reminded of their responsibility to serve the interests of the MCSA and ensure appropriate content at all times. Communication is undertaken on behalf of the church and is therefore subject to the Methodist Book of Order and the churches vision and mission; the key principles being the maintenance of respect and dignity in all correspondence.

**Messages:**

Our messages should be:

- Polite, purposeful and tailored to the audience (both in delivery and content- do not CC unnecessarily or add unrequired information)
- Timely- responses to enquiries should be within 48hours- even if only to say that I am working on your query.
- Consistent- the tone of all correspondence/communication must be courteous at all times
- Streamlined – messages from the MCO should speak the same language and share the same facts. Contradictory information will only serve to make us look incompetent- we should all have each other’s backs.

**Social media as a Secondary means of Communication**

Social media is recognised as a popular means of communication. However:

- Only the official MCSA sites shall be used to communicate the stance/position of the church on any issue
- Staff members of the MCSA are encouraged to resist the temptation to express their opinion on church related issues on their personal pages as these may be misconstrued as the ‘official voice’ of the church. Also any utterances diametrically opposed to the values espoused by the church may lead to some disciplinary action being taken even if expressed on personal pages.
- Those posting on behalf of the church shall check their facts and information and acquire the necessary permission before posting.
- Texting and whatsapping shall be considered an informal, secondary channel of communication-unless it’s the only one possible due to unforeseen circumstances.

**Expectations and Responsibilities**

As a member of staff, you can expect to be:

- provided with relevant information and kept informed of relevant developments;
- consulted on issues relevant to your area and the wider organisation;
- given the opportunity to raise questions or issues of concern relevant to your work. Your questions should be treated seriously and respectfully and should be answered either immediately or within a reasonable period.

As a member of staff, you should:
raise relevant questions or problems with your supervisor or line-manager (or through other channels if necessary) – your questions should be treated seriously and respectfully;

- attend meetings where requested
- read relevant emails or notices.

**Supervisors**

As a supervisor, you can expect to be:

- allowed to communicate most issues (particularly relating directly to your own area) to your staff yourself;
- briefed on any sensitive or significant issues in advance of your staff being informed, so that you are in a position to answer questions from your staff;
- consulted on proposed developments which will affect your area, to ensure that proposals are “workable” on the ground;
- asked by your line-manager for feedback and concerns from your staff on any relevant issues;
- kept informed of general developments by your line-manager or senior managers;
- You are also expected to raise any significant problems or issues of concern in your area (which you cannot resolve) with your line-manager and,
- be as informed as you can be about the issues relevant to your area and your staff;

All members of staff are expected to familiarise themselves with the Staff Handbook; Conflict Resolution processes and procedures; Harassment Policy; the MCSA Identity/Brand Policy; the Social Media Policy and the Crisis Communication Guidelines.

This policy shall be reviewed biannually (2018)