



The Methodist Church of Southern Africa

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Dear Colleagues

At the end of Conference 2018 I greet you in the Name of our Lord Jesus. Conference was held, for the first time in 129 years, in Maputo, Mozambique from 12 to 16 September. The District warmly welcomed the Conference and were delightful hosts.

Conference met under the theme, "Shaping Tomorrow- Today." The Presiding Bishop's address, which can be found on the methodist.org.za website (together with a number of other reports), was in the context of Matthew 18. In calling the Church to bring Children and Youth to the centre of the ministry of the Church, the Presiding Bishop stated: "The disciples had willingly abandoned their fishing and tax collecting businesses to follow Jesus. They were the closest circle of Jesus' friends; the inner circle. Now their concern is appraisal. Who will be the greatest? This is a fair question in life's daily struggles where the greatest is respected and treated with pomp and ceremony. Without saying anything, Jesus reaches outside the circle, and picks up one of the most vulnerable present at the time, a child, and puts him in the centre. The inner circle is disrupted and the child becomes the centre of focus. Jesus speaks: "Whoever becomes as humble as this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:4). An emphasis is placed on change in disposition and habits; on a new configuration and arrangement and this turns the disciples' world view upside down."

Reflecting on how the Disciples tried to keep the children away from Jesus, the Presiding Bishop asked: "What are the imaginary/ invisible barbed wire fences we put around the church to keep the children in our churches at bay and from distracting us from our programmes? It is the command of the Lord that doors be opened for children. It is the command that we knock down any barriers between the church and the little ones. In this way the church can play a significant role in shaping tomorrow- today!"

This year, from Conference 2018 to Conference 2019 is the Year of Youth and Children. Let this become part of every agenda and every aspect of the mission of our church, in districts, Circuits and Societies.

In line with the Year of Youth and Children, the Youth Coordinator's Circuit stipend is being partially subsidised by the Mission Resource Fund for 2019, in order that he can spend some dedicated time to the work of the Unit. The Unit's name has also changed to Methodist Children and Youth Unit. The structure of the Unit has been revised and will form a new portion of L&D Chapter 8.10 and Appendix 6A.

Our Bible Studies were conducted by Rev Mantima Thekiso, and these rich and challenging studies can be found on the church website.

District Boundaries was on the agenda of Conference, after a thorough consultation process throughout the Connexion. It was resolved effective 1 January 2020 the following new Districts are established: Karoo District, Namibia District and Botswana District. Effective 1 January 2021 the following new Districts will come to life: Aliwal North District and Mpumalanga District. Further conversations will also take place.

We will cease referring to Districts to describe the Mission areas of the Connexion, and use the term, Synods.

Mission Synods will be held shortly in the areas where new Districts will be established, to facilitate the formation of the new structures.

The Connexional Executive (with the help of the Mission Resource Fund and the Millennium Mission Fund) has appointed Bishop Michel Hansrod as full time Shaping for Mission Enabler, for a period of three years, who will deal with the all the facets of implementing the new structures. R 1 million from the Church Reserve (as per 2017 Resolution) was approved to assist in the setting up of the new Districts.

Regarding **appointments** of Conference, we congratulate Bishop Michel Hansrod on his appointment to the office of the General Secretary of the MCSA as from January 2020.

A Christ-healed Africa for the Healing of Nations

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The next Presiding Bishop election will be held at Synods 2019, as Bishop Siwa is heading toward retirement age. The same will be true, for the same reason, for the Northern Free State and Lesotho and Natal West Districts.

Continued Ministerial formation is now firmly on the agenda of the Church, and Convocations in 2019 will receive the report on Ministers' continued training, and implementation of Review of Ministry process, the guiding document of which all Ministers have already received.

Regional Superintendents' Consultations will be held in 2019. The Consultations will, we trust, help in building our collective ministry and understanding of mission locally, and together with the two processes already outlined and begun this year, continue to build a formidable team leading this Church and its Circuits in the task to which we believe we have been called to. Dates reflect in the Connexional diary, and Bishops are consulting on the issues of logistics.

The Connexional Executive have approved the inclusion in the Laws and Discipline a document entitled "Principles Guiding Clergy Conduct". This guiding document is not new, but is a compilation of all that has been, for a very long time, expectations of Ministers, but now contained in one document, with one addition regarding the ministry to children. The document will be in the 2019 Yearbook in Chapter 4, but is also attached to this letter.

Key resolutions which may affect Circuits, include:

1. Probationers' stipends for those who enter Circuits from January 2019, will be standardised, with no additional stipends. (the motivation and detail will follow in the list of Resolutions).
2. Circuits are strongly discouraged from appointing Ministers' spouses as Circuit or Society Stewards.
3. Deacon Candidates must now also, be under the age of 50.
4. Synods will set up Teams to hear cases of harassment of female Ministers.
5. Until 40 % of Bishops, Presiding Bishop, General Secretary and Lay President are women, we will only appoint women to these positions.
6. CQM's and Synods will receive a resolution to enforce the 40-40-20 principle or representivity, for report back and decision by Conference 2019.
7. The Wellness policy as contained in the 2018 Yearbook was endorsed.
8. Circuit Statistical Secretaries should be appointed.

Notable Changes to the Laws and Discipline, to come into effect January 2019 include:

11.6 If the District Discipline Registrar decides that the complaint does not demand a charge and hearing the District Discipline Registrar shall inform the complainant accordingly within Fourteen (14) days and may refer it to another appropriate forum of the Church. The Complainant may appeal to the Presiding Bishop in writing, against the decision, who will refer the complaint to another DDR. The decision of the referred-to DDR shall be final. If the DDR decides the complaint warrants a charge and a hearing, he/she refers the matter to the original DDR for processing in the normal manner.

11.16a add the following:

"In the event of harassment cases the complainant may appoint a member to be present without participation (refer to the Harassment Policy L&D App 15: 6.5.1 which reads, "Although not required, the parties to the complaint are welcome to bring a personal supporter of their own choosing to any interview proceedings to provide emotional support and act as an observer."

To those who were Ordained last Sunday we say Congratulations.

To those Candidate who have been accepted, we say Welcome.

To those Superannuating we pray God's blessing as you continue to live fruitful lives, serving God in different ways.

To those who are moving to new Stations, we pray that your good-byes will leave you with good memories, and that you will be ready, with energy and love, to lead God's people in another part of our Connexion.

Yours in Christ



Charmaine Morgan
General Secretary

APPENDIX 3A
PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE PRESBYTERS' CONDUCT IN THE MCSA

THE PREAMBLE:

The Methodist Church understands ministry as the task of the whole Church because all believers are baptised into Christ as His followers and servants. All Christ's followers are called to minister, to be fishers of people (Mark 1:17), to be witnesses of Christ (Acts 1:8) and to be where Christ is as servants (John 12:26). They are also a community of priests (1 Peter 2:9). They represent the priesthood of Jesus Christ in their lives as they serve people and the world on behalf of God.

Whilst all who follow Christ must exercise ministry and priesthood, the Church sets apart Presbyters who are called by God, by the act of ordination.

Whilst the ordained share the same commission to minister, ordination places them in a relationship with Christ and with the church that is different. The Presbyters in particular, are set apart to serve as pastors and overseers of the flock of Christ and for the ministry of Word and Sacrament. They are given authority to care, to teach, to lead and to equip the people of God for ministry and mission. They have spiritual oversight of the congregations and are to preach Christ in word and in deed, and model themselves on Him who is the good Shepherd. It is therefore incumbent upon them and expected that they be exemplary in:

- actively living as disciples of Christ ,
- exhibiting exemplary moral and religious character,
- modelling of humility and servant leadership ,
- modelling Methodist discipline, doctrine and Wesleyan spirituality.

The following Principles are reaffirmed as the traditional hallmark of the Methodist experience and understanding of discipleship which is "watching over each other in love". These principles also help Circuit Superintendents, Bishops and all those involved in the task of guiding and holding the Ordained and Probationer Presbyters in the MCSA, to account.

THE PRINCIPLES:

1. As Members of the Christian Community, the MCSA presbyters are guided in their behaviour and conduct by the law of Christ, "the law of Love". (Methodist ethos) (Mark 12:30-31)
2. **As Members of the Methodist Movement, the MCSA presbyters are guided in their conduct by the Rule of Life** drawn by John and Charles Wesley in 1743, that of ;
 - "Doing no harm, avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is more generally practiced"
 - "Doing good by being merciful after one's own power, doing good of every possible sort to the bodies of people as well as their souls, as far as possible to all".
 - "Attending upon all the ordinances of God". (L&D, 12th edition Revised, 3.5)
3. **As Preachers in the Methodist Movement, the MCSA presbyters are guided in their conduct by the Twelve Rules of a Helper outlined by John Wesley for Methodist Preachers in 1744 :**
 - Be diligent Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never while away time, or spend more time at any place than is strictly necessary.
 - Be serious. Let your motto be "Holiness to the Lord". Avoid all lightness, jesting and foolish talking.
 - Be guarded in your conversation and friendships lest you be led into temptation.
 - Take no steps towards marriage without solemn prayer to God, and consulting your colleagues.
 - Believe evil of no one unless fully proved; take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction you can on everything. You know the judge is always supposed to be on the prisoner's side.
 - Speak evil of no one. Keep your thoughts to yourself till you come to the person concerned.
 - Tell everyone what you think wrong in them, lovingly and plainly and as soon as may be else it will fester in your own heart.
 - Do not pretend to be of high station. A preacher of the Gospel is the servant of all.
 - Be ashamed of nothing but sin. Regard nothing as beneath you.
 - Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And do not mend our rules but keep them, and that for conscience' sake.
 - You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always not to those who want you but to those who want you most.
 - Act in all things not according to your own will but as a child in the Gospel and in union with your colleagues. (L&D, 12th edition Revised, Appendix 3)
4. **Regarding Ministry to Children, we heed the words of Mr Wesley:**

'[W]e must meet them at least an hour every week; talk with them whenever we see any of them at home; pray in earnest for them; diligently instruct and vehemently exhort all parents at their own houses. Some will say, "I have no gift for this." Gift or no gift, you are to do this, or else you are not called to be a

Methodist Preacher. Do it as you can, till you can do it as you would. Pray earnestly for the gift, and use every help God hath put into your way, in order to attain it. Preach expressly on the education [once a year].”

5. **As the Ones who have received the Divine call to set examples of Christ-like life for believers** (1 Timothy 3 : 1-7) and as ones set aside and authorised by the church to act in its name, the MCSA presbyters are guided in their conduct by **the Methodist discipline** obligations of :
 - Exemplary Moral and Religious character.
 - Believing and teaching sound Christian doctrine as held by the Methodist church.
 - Observing and enforcing Methodist discipline
 - Having competent abilities for the work of a minister. (L&D, 12th edition Revised. App. 5, 5.4)

6. **As the Ones Ordained to the office and work of the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, the MCSA presbyters are guided in their conduct by their ordination vows i.e.**
 - Being faithful in personal prayer, meditation and study of Holy Scriptures.
 - Submitting to the discipline of the church.
 - Providing an example to all God’s people, of one in whose life the fruit of the Spirit is seen to be growing.
 - Caring for one’s own family as a sacred trust and duty.

7. As the Ones in a Covenantal relationship with the Conference / Connexion, sharing a fellowship of each other, enjoying the care and protection of the Conference, the MCSA presbyters are guided in their conduct by **the undertakings they make when they are received into Full Connexion** – that of ;
 - Adhering to the Laws and Discipline and all other policies, decisions, practices and usages of the church.
 - Accepting and obeying the discipline and decisions of Conference and the Connexional Executive
 - Going to whichever circuit or station they are appointed.
 - Not maligning the MCSA, its ministers, doctrines and practices.
 - Not conducting another ministry in the area to which they are appointed when they leave the MCSA ministry.
 - Not encouraging members to follow them when they leave the MCSA.
 - Accepting the decision of CE or of the Presiding Bishop governing the termination of service and occupancy of church property when they leave the MCSA. (L&D, 12th edition Revised 4.46)