

# INDUCTION INTO THE LAY PRESIDENT OFFICE – MCSA

16-01-2022

## RESPONSE – XHANTILOMZI THOBELA (IMITHETHO) MHLUBULWANA

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Madam – Presiding Bishop, Rev. Purity N. Malinga

General Secretary Sir, Rev. Michel Mandla Hansrod

All Connexional Executive Members Present

Unit Directors at MCO, GT

Bishops

District Lay Leaders

District Executive Committee's

Superintendents and Circuit Executives Present

All Ministers and their Spouses

Circuits and Society Executives

Mothers, Fathers, Brothers and Sisters

All people of God, present here and all those who are joining us virtually

***Warm greetings to you all***, I am deeply humbled by the trust placed on me by Methodist people to serve in the MCSA Lay President Office effective this year 2022. I do not believe I am worthy '*so much as to gather up crumbs under thy Table*' but I humbly accept this task to serve ***trusting only*** '*merciful Lord*, the Angel of the Lord that came to Abraham (Gen. 22:15), a messenger of our salvation, ***Shiloh*** (i.e., peacemaker, Gen.49:10), the rock of my salvation (2 Sam.22:47). The redeemer who is the rock foundation of our faith, Rock of Ages, our Strong Rock of Refuge. Here, in him and based upon His merit and atoning grace I stand to humbly accept to serve. I am attracted not in the position '*to warm the chair ... literally*' but the task and the responsibilities attached. As a matter fact, I am not the position, I remain '***Xhanti'lomzi Thobela'imithetho Mhlubulwana***', that's my name. The Lay Presidency is an office and not my new name, I serve in that position, please do not change my name and how you call me and or how you relate and or how you refer to me. '*The Donald Trump like*' personalities are created

...

I am **trusting only**, *thy manifold and great mercies ... thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy*'.

I am weak, only in Him, Jesus I am strong '... wounded for our transgressions, He who bore our sins in His own body on the tree.' The light of the morning (2 Sam.23:4)

I concur with Rick Warren - "What gives me the most hope every day is God's grace; knowing that his grace is going to give me the strength for whatever I face, knowing that nothing is a surprise to God."

It is Martin Luther King Jr. who states *"If you can't fly, then run, If you can't run, then walk, If you can't walk, then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward."*

I do not believe I am worthy, nor deserving in anyway what soever ... to walk on the footsteps of groundbreakers, forebears, elders, and giants who walked humbly with God. I join a heritage and tradition of leaders, not only within the MCSA but ecumenically who were called by God as Leaders, who served in various capacities: Mr. Zandile Jakavula, Dr. Brigalia Bam, Ms. Lindeni Madlala, Mama Virginia Gcabashe, Mama Lindi Myeza, Ms. Bakhombisile Mkhwanazi, Mr Colin Woolacott, Mr Fungile Dotwana, Mr James Nkosi. Many many other Methodists have served faithfully, silently ... Mr. Barney Mtwisha, Mrs Mtwisha (uSis-Lulu), Mr Bruce Tashe, Mrs Tashe (Sis-Yoli), Mr. Mbulelo Bikwani and Mrs Nombulelo Bikwani, Yako's, Nokele's, Ntate P Tjemolane, Mdu Dlamini ... Ms. Mbali Mbuli and many more ...

In Management Sciences we are taught, we practice, and we believe **"What Gets Measured, Gets Done!"**

"What the MCSA chooses to measure is its north star. ***It guides how She learns, improves, and innovates.*** What we choose to measure as the MCSA is the basis for how success in ministry is defined and how mission resources flow." {www.leapfrogtovalue.org}

Methodists, "Our greatest fear should not be of failure but of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter." - Francis Chan

I argue that, ***"What the MCSA chooses to measure is its north star. It guides how She learns, improves, and innovates ..."***

***What is the Methodist Barometer? We need Milestones. A milestone reveals one or two things:***  
***i) it can reveal how far we've come in accomplishment and give cause for celebration Or ii)***  
***Milestones can expose how far we've drifted and urge us to turn around. Milestones represents a point where we take an objective measurement. We STOP, look back and recall***

**why we began the journey in the first place. We need to remember and restate our original objectives, then ask, “Are those goals still ours? Are we on target?” ‘... To Pause and Evaluate whether or not a drift is taking place. Because a Church without milestones will drift. And like Soil Erosion, we will not see it occurring if we don’t look for it. Erosion is always slow, silent, subtle.’**

**Looking at a Church ... and remembering Why we here! (Swindoll, 2010:4-5)**

**Does the MCSA still have Strategic Mission Stations? What determines a Strategic Mission Station?**

### ***I argue that the agent task confronting the MCSA today***

- a) ***Re-imagining the Church during and post Covid-19*** (Corona Virus) Global Pandemic (crisis of existentiality, risk of becoming irrelevant as the Church): – Polity and Doctrines (including sacraments); on-line churches (eService);
- b) ***Re-imagining doing and being Church***, amidst increasing Poverty, Inequality and Unemployment as well as under-development.
- c) ***Beyond Compliance with Annual Numerical Returns, How does the MCSA Use of public raw data at church disposal, information and knowledge for strategic mission response, ministry and decision-making (data-driven decisions and mission-focus, evidence based leadership, outcomes based leadership)***

It is Saint Augustine who argues, "**God loves each of us as if there were only one of us**" – What does that mean for the hungry, homeless, unemployed? What does salvation mean for the poorest of the poor? What does Sacrament mean for the poor in our society? Have Churches become Ivory Towers where we preach to each other, compete with material things?

**Guided by Gods Mission: ‘Re-imagining Healing and Transformation’**, - What are the Milestones, Measures for Transformation in the MCSA ? How far are we ?

### ***Re-imagining Social Holiness, Sustaining Hope and Healing ...***

- What are the Programmes .... targeted strategic, high level, high impact mission and ministry interventions and or activities

- What are the measurements? Milestones? Barometer? What evidence are collecting?
  - PB in Kimberly 2021 called the MCSA to prioritize,
    - **Poverty Eradication and Food Security** (have we taken stock of where we are per Society, Circuit, District, Mission Group)
    - **GBV interventions** – Our Spaces GBV Safe, ‘the sanctuary and the altar becoming mobile to the community, our homes, the manses, taxi ranks and train stations!
    - **Education**

I argue that every Circuit Superintendent Minister and Circuit Executive should dedicate 20% of their time on the MCSA Connexional Priorities as adopted by Conference at Kimberly in September 2021. 20% Means 1 Day a Week, 08 Hrs. in a 40Hr Week and 04 Days in a Month. Time of using themes as if its slogans has come and gone. District Bishops and District Executive Committees should do the same “dedicate 20% of their time on the MCSA Connexional Priorities as adopted by Conference at Kimberly in September 2021.

- The Connexional Executive should perhaps consider Milestones to ensure coordination and alignment of the body ...
- Circuit Reports to Synod should talk to this ... so are the District Reports to Conference

A further 20% should be spent on the MCSA Giving and Solidarity Campaign ... considering Mission/Ministry Resourcing ...that futureproofs the MCSA from Disasters and Disease Outbreaks ..... Just imagine if we had followed the dream of Rev. Dr. Mvume Dandala “Millenium Mission Campaign – towards A Christ Healed Africa for the Healing of the Nations” the Dream of Mr. Zandile Jakavula on the” Priesthood of all believers – Crisscrossing the MCSA Connexion to Teach, Capacitate, To Preach” Rev George Irvine & Dr. Khoza Mgojo “Let the Flames Burn-On”; Rev. Ross Olivier “The Next Step – Turning the Vision into Realities”

***Connexional Executive where the books, guidelines and Training Manuals to support the calls made by PB in 2020/21; 2021/22 through the Conference Themes ? – Publishing Research and Development ploughing it back to Ministry Formation. To inform intentional change of Organizational Culture in the MCSA.***

- ***Shift from events to Programs, beyond Sunday, beyond conventions, annual synods gatherings and conferences to being church ... and to being of influence to society***

**District Executive Committees, it should be standard annually to:**

- **Circuit Stewards consultation and capacitation** ... EMMU Circuit Stewards and Society Stewards Training Manual Review. Perhaps this work should now include Class Leaders and Mission Group Organisational Leadership Focus
  - Staircase ... Raw Data, Information Mx, KM, Institutional Memory ... (Layering Approach)
  - ***Shared Leadership - Beyond Every Member Ministry ... Interdependency, Mutual Dependency, Many Parts Forming One Body, Partaking in One Loaf***
- **Leadership Retreats** – CE, DEC, Cir. E, Soc. Exec.
- **Conducting Mission Audits** – Inform Circuit Profiling (Std Guide/Template)

**We need to rediscover our leadership as a calling enabled by Grace, driven by compassion that passion reimagine:**

- **Review Yearbook to ease invitations** ... (Independence of Cir. Stewards)
  - Indicate Years of stay in Circuits
- **HR Systems** – MCO Vacant Director; LinkedIN for Ministers for ease of Invitation.... Minister Profile accessible electronically.
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- **MCSA Giving and Solidarity Campaign** - African Solutions to African Problems ...
  - Rhona/Malihambe as a vehicle to re-engineer viability
- **Re-imagining assessment modeling** ... inequity, our connexionally (Mozambique, Molopo, Namibia, eSwatini)
  - a clarion call to action, to concerted effort 2017 assessment remodeling
  - Ministers as cost Centre ... ministering to those who have versus the 'have nots' – inequity in the body of Christ
  - Structural design drivers of inequity within the MCSA
  - Railways, Highways, National Roads, Rivers, Mountains, and borders .... look closely ...
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- **Care and Welfare of Ministers** ... basic services to manses, water and sanitation services, electricity, and backup thinking, going off the grid, water supply and backup ...
- **Sustainability in Churches** – Investments on Solar, Rainwater Harvesting, Attention to Storm Water Control
  - Church as a source of life in the community
- **SMMS** – Content, Context, Capacity, Commitment and Coalition (IDO) ...
- **LEAN** - Local Ecumenical Action Networks

- **Mission – Mission – Mission:** Beyond Soup Kitchens and Food Parcels to FOOD SECURITY and LIVELIHOODS ... Employment Assistance Program, Entrepreneurship and Business Coaching and Mentorship, Project Management, Space for students to study with volunteer teachers supervising ... Churches as White Elephants ... What Services do we offer to the community?
- **Context Matters:** Urban City Centre Churches ... Rural Churches
- **Risk, Health and Safety in Churches**
- **Illegal Structures ...**
- Urban, Township, Rural and City Centre Ministry variety of demands – as a specialty
- What it means to be church in these various contexts differs are we forming fit-for-purpose ministry (both lay and clergy)
- Pushing back man-made limitations, bias, prejudice on giving
- Removing our faces, posters, personality at the Centre of the alter and bring back the empty crucifix ...
- ***A Module on Resourcing Ministry and Mission at SMMS at all levels of formation ... perhaps examined failure to do so might mean closure of more once viable stations***
- **Our Approach to Evangelism** needs reimagination in the context of rising competition, not only from the mushrooming charismatic churches but also competition from African Indigenous Churches .... Wesley Must Be Born in Africa ... 2003 EMMU Work needs to be revisited
- How do we manage escalations from Societies, to Circuits, to Synods ...? From Circuits Directly to MCO

## IN SUMMARY

### FOCUS AREAS FOR THE PERIOD 2022, 2023 & 2024

- ***Reimagining the Church during and post Covid-19 pandemic.***
- ***The increasing stationing dilemmas in the life of the MCSA***, closing mission stations that were once upon a time viable, applications for reduction of mission agency by circuits.
  - The decline in strategic ministerial mission agency stationing in the MCSA.
  - The average duration of stay by agency in the previously Black Circuits and the impact thereof on mission development.

- **Contribute to the development of adequate human resources for the task of growing the future church through practicing and training in Christian Leadership and Management.**
- **Facilitate the development of the Culture of Mission in the MCSA**, conducting mission audits, leading congregation's missionary, etc.
- **Mapping and root-cause analysis of Conflicts in the life of the Church**, trends and remedial through capacitation.
- **Contribute to the adherence, compliance, AND DESIRED RESULTS** with the MCSA ethos, polity, doctrines in mission strategy, structure, and practices.
- **Entrenchment of good governance practices in the life of the MCSA** through practicing and training in Christian Leadership and Management.

"Life is wasted if we do not grasp the glory of the cross, cherish it for the treasure that it is, and cleave to it as the highest price of every pleasure and the deepest comfort in every pain. What was once foolishness to us—a crucified God—must become our wisdom and our power and our only boast in this world." - John Piper

"IF GOD IS OUR PARTNER, LETS MAKE OUR PLANS BIG!" - D.L. MOODY

LETS GO **BIG** METHODISTS - **BRIDGE** IMPLEMENTATION **GAPS**

"THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS NOT A CONSTANT HIGH. I HAVE MY MOMENTS OF DISCOURAGEMENT. HOWEVER WE HAVE TO GO BACK TO GOD IN PRAYER ... AND SAY, '**GOD,**' OR '**HELP US.**'" - BILLY GRAHAM

"RELYING ON GOD HAS TO START ALL OVER EVERYDAY, AS IF NOTHING HAS YET BEEN DONE." – C. S. LEWIS

**TO GOD BE THE GLORY, HONOUR AND POWER! AMEN!**