

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa



# EVERY MEMBER IN MINISTRY

A Study Booklet for Leaders' Meetings  
and Small Groups

**Together**



Transforming Discipleship Movement



## **CONTENTS**

Introduction

How to use this book

Chapter 1: The Biblical evidence

Chapter 2: Spectators or participants?

Chapter 3: Square pegs in square holes

Chapter 4: Getting involved

Chapter 5: The marks of an every member ministry church

## INTRODUCTION

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”  
Matthew 28:19,20

The great commission challenges us all to play a role in making disciples, equipping, teaching and bringing followers of Christ into the Christian body – the Church. These are words for all Christians, not just an elite or professional few. Our ministers are not a specially privileged or superior class of Christian. There are no ‘ordinary’ members in the church of Christ. Everyone has a role to play in the ministry and mission of Jesus' church. The theological term for this is “The Priesthood of all believers”.

Are you a priest? Yes you are! And hopefully once you are done with this booklet you will have an understanding of your role as a priest. This study will use Biblical evidence to convince you of your role as a priest. By the end of this study, we hope you will want to move from being a spectator to being a participant in your congregation's ministry, in your particular context, with your gifts and role being a little clearer to you.

As you begin this study and as you seek to further understand and live your role as a priest, it is our prayer that we will see the marks of transformed members of the MCSA, transformed Churches, leading to transformed communities for the healing of nations.

Though our Church has reserved the performance of the sacraments to those who are ordained, we are all charged with making disciples as all believers belong to the priesthood!

***Pumla Nzimande***

***Kenneth Leverton***

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

“It cannot be that the people should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading. A reading people will always be a knowing people.” John Wesley

Continuous and lifelong learning is a necessity for our ever changing world. It is the only way in which we can remain relevant as the church. This Every Member Ministry booklet is aimed at ensuring that every member is indeed aware of their call to be active participants in the Ministry of Jesus Christ. This book can be used for:

- Personal study and reflection
- Leaders’ Meeting discussion
- Bible study groups
- Class meetings
- Confirmation groups
- Orientation groups
- Synod lay training meetings.

At the end of each chapter there will be an opportunity for you to reflect or to discuss. The method that we will use for this section is the “See, judge and act” method. This method asks the following critical questions:

### See:

- \* What do you observe? \*What is happening in your context?
- \* Who are the role players? \*Who benefits from the current situation? \*Who loses from the current situation?

### Judge:

- \* How do you feel about the situation? \*What does your faith say about the situation? \*What can be done? \*Should the status quo be upheld?

### Act:

- \* What do you resolve to do? \*Is it the best action? \*What other actions can you take?

## CHAPTER 1: THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

“Every member in ministry.....” It sounds so good! Every member of the church engaged in some kind of ministry, not just the ‘religious professionals’. And that is the kind of ideal situation envisaged in scripture.

In Old Testament times, a particular class of men were set aside as priests. Their task was to exercise certain religious functions. In essence they operated as a kind of mediator standing between God and human beings, representing the people before God and offering the various sacrifices prescribed by the Law. They were the ‘religious professionals’ of the time. It was generally believed that ordinary people could not have direct access to God and that any approach to God had to be mediated by some member of the class of priests, who alone could approach God. The duties of priests were clearly outlined in Numbers 18:1-7. Note especially these verses:

<sup>5</sup>“You are to be responsible for the care of the sanctuary and the altar, so that my wrath will not fall on the Israelites again. <sup>6</sup>I myself have selected your fellow Levites from among the Israelites as a gift to you, dedicated to the Lord to do the work at the tent of meeting. <sup>7</sup>But only you and your sons may serve as priests in connection with everything at the altar and inside the curtain. I am giving you the service of the priesthood as a gift. Anyone else who comes near the sanctuary is to be put to death.” So Priesthood was by selection!

But even in the Old Testament there are hints that all people could fulfill role of priests. In Exodus 19:6, as the newly liberated slaves assembled before God in the desert, God addressed them through Moses and said, “You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”. A kingdom of priests – all members of that “holy nation” would be priests, or at least would exercise a priestly function. They would not need to relate to God through a religious professional, but could do so directly themselves.

This hint comes to full fruition in the New Testament. The death of Jesus Christ heralded the end of an “exclusive priesthood.” The curtain to the holy of holies which could only be accessed by priests was torn asunder when Christ hung on the cross (Matthew 27:51). That which was reserved for priests was now accessible to all people.

Now we find the term "priest" being applied to all believers. For example 1 Peter 2:9 speaks of "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation". And Revelation 1:6 says that Jesus "has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father." (also Rev 5:10.) All believers are priests with free access to God. So the service of God is not just to be performed by a single class of people. The attitude which says "We pay the minister to do the ministry" is completely unscriptural. The correct way of looking at it is **not** for the laity to support the minister in his/her ministry, but for the minister to support the laity in their ministry. There's a church notice board somewhere which states the name of the church and the name of the pastor, and then says "Minsters – the whole congregation". That's how it should be.

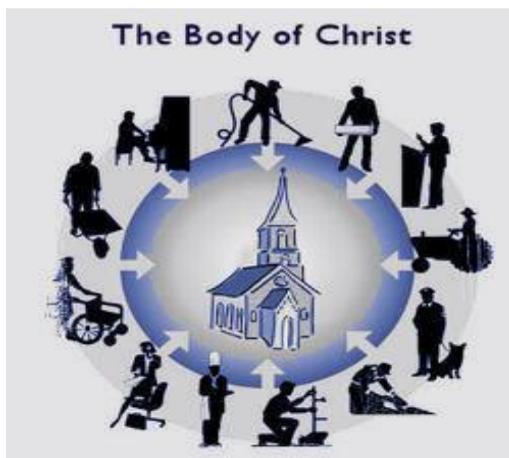
We shouldn't forget that the Christian Church was founded by lay people for lay people. The twelve disciples of Jesus were all lay people ... fishermen, tax collectors – in the eyes of the world, a band of nobodies. Christ himself was a lay person. Archbishop Temple once said the following: "The function of the clergy is to stimulate in the laity a sense of responsibility, and to remind them of the claims of the Christian Faith in various departments of life. But the actual leavening of the worlds' lump with the energy of the kingdom of God must be done by the layman." What Archbishop temple states becomes so evident when one reads the Acts of the Apostles and realises that it was ordinary people, men and women who spread the good news of the risen Saviour and led to the birth of the Church. Not one of them was ordained, the odds were stacked against them, some of them were slaves, outcasts and nobodies, they had no intellectual theology and yet they understood the mysteries of God with such depth.

Methodists have long spoken about 'the priesthood of all believers' as a cardinal principle of our existence. Perhaps the use of the word 'priesthood' has contributed to obscuring the intention of this doctrine, which was to emphasise that it is not only the 'priesthood', i.e. those who might be considered the 'religious professionals', those 'ordained ministers' amongst us, who are responsible for ministry within and outside of the church. All believers have a priestly role to play. All believers have a ministry to fulfil.

From the outset, Methodists have relied on the ministry of lay persons, not just clergy. It had to be this way as there were not enough ordained clergy to

do everything. So over time, we moved from the Old Testament limitations which stipulated who could be a priest and who could not. Our theological reflection and discernment has led us to a much more inclusive approach to priesthood and ministry. We therefore have women in leadership, Local Preachers, Class Leaders, Class Meetings where members cared for each other, ministries to the poor and prisons, organisations and mission groups, the development of Sunday Schools – all of which was largely in the hands of lay people. In Methodism, the laity discovered new ministries and hence a new significance.

Paul's metaphor of the church as the 'Body of Christ' in 1 Corinthians 12 further stresses the every member ministry concept. Every part of the body has a role to play if the body (i.e. the church) is to be healthy. It couldn't be clearer that Paul believed that within the church, every member had a ministry, and that the work of ministry could not just be left to one class of so-called professionals. While the "professionals" have a role, it is certainly not to do the whole work of ministry. In fact we could say that Christ has given the 'professionals' to equip the people (the laity) for *their* ministry and this is the only way that the body of Christ will be built up and reach maturity (Ephesians 4:11-12). The body of Christ is made up of ordinary men and women!



## REFLECTION



**See:** Think of your own congregation. Think of a regular Sunday at Church....who performs most of the tasks that need to be carried out? Who prepares the sanctuary for worship? Who welcomes people? Who keeps Church records? Who delivers the sermon? Who reads the notices? Is it mostly the Ministers or Lay people who perform these tasks?

**Judge:** Are people more receptive to ministry from a Minister or from a lay person? What do you think is the reason for people's preference?

**Act:** Is there anything that you will change in your attitude, behaviour, stereotypes and bias now that you know that all people are called to be priests?

## CHAPTER 2: SPECTATORS OR PARTICIPANTS?

If you've been to a soccer or rugby or cricket match, you'll know all about this sort of thing – maybe even done it yourself. “Why didn't he pass??” “What a stupid shot!!” “Are you blind Mr ref??”

It's so easy being on the sidelines isn't it. The spectators always know better than the players, and are not short of advice. To criticise takes no effort – and very often takes no experience or knowledge either! And unfortunately, most churches have plenty of 'helpful' spectators sitting on the sidelines, very willing to offer their critical advice for free.

In the first Chapter of this booklet, we noted that we are all priests who can stand boldly before God. We should not forget what an awesome privilege this is, one we often take far too lightly. In the Old Testament, it was not just anyone who could stand before the presence of God. Read and reflect on the following verses so you may understand the depth of what it meant to stand in the presence of God:

[Isaiah 6:5](#) - Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

[Genesis 32:30](#) - So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved."

[Judges 13:22](#) - So Manoah said to his wife, "We will surely die, for we have seen God."

It is through Christ who is our high priest that we can stand as priests before God. What an honour! This honour however, comes with a great responsibility. Our responsibility is to move from being mere spectators – just observing God from a distance – to being participants, co-workers with God.

What is a spectator? A spectator is an onlooker. A spectator is interested in what is going on but is not involved. A spectator may make a lot of noise but offer nothing that will actually change the situation. Spectators exert no energy, do no work, just watch others working themselves to a standstill, exhausting themselves on the playing field, while the spectators offer criticism, advice and occasional encouragement.

One of the best known images that Paul uses to describe the church is the image of the body. **Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31** again. Obviously, for the body to function optimally, all parts must contribute. No part can be a spectator. If the hand or eye decided that they wanted to watch the rest of the body get on with things rather than being involved, the body would be severely handicapped. And if the heart decided to become a spectator – well, the body would have a major problem! And the same can be said for any other organ or limb.

All parts are necessary. We sometimes ask why the church doesn't seem to make the impact on the rest of the world that it could or should, and the reason is pretty clear – the body is not functioning as it should because too many parts of the body are spectators. Perhaps sometimes, the answer to the question "Why doesn't the church ...?" is "because I don't, you don't, we don't."

There's no doubt that there are so many needs 'out there', so many ministries waiting to be fulfilled. Everyone needs to be a participating member of the team. If they are not, we must simply accept that the church will be ineffective, a shadow of what it is supposed to be. Are we really prepared to accept that? Is that the value we place on what God has done for us?

It's true of course that participants, players, sometimes get hurt. When that happens it can cause withdrawal, and in the case of the church, resentment towards the church and an unwillingness to get involved again. But that is not how God models participation for us.

**God as an example of a participator**

God, of course, has always been present in the story of the world and its inhabitants. God is a participant *par excellence*, always involved in God's world. God imparted Godly attributes to men and women so that we become God's image bearers in the world (Genesis 1:26-28). When sin came into the world, God did not withdraw or abandon creation. God refused to renounce humanity and continued to participate, even to the extent of sending God's Son, Jesus Christ, to show us the way. Even when Jesus was rejected, God still refused to be a spectator and instead actually used the gruesome death of Jesus on the cross to utter profound words of healing, renewal, forgiveness and hope.

God is an initiating and participative God and because we are made in God's image, we are called to participate in God's mission. A mission that is clearly articulated the words of the prophet Isaiah 61:1, which Jesus took as his own manifesto: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free." So in one way or another we are called to participate in the sharing of the good news with the poor. We are to participate in the proclamation of freedom to all who are in seen and unseen prisons. We are charged with helping the blind – those who can't or won't see the truth. We are to participate in the breaking of every chain which oppresses humanity and creation.

**What type of person are you?**

They say there are three types of people in the world: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who wonder what happened. Perhaps in the same way, there are three types of Christians; which one are you?

The doer	The watcher	The wonderer
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Takes initiative</li> <li>2. Not easily discouraged</li> <li>3. Mission driven</li> <li>4. Prayerful</li> <li>5. A Team player</li> <li>6. Can see the bigger picture of God's mission</li> <li>7. Willing to sacrifice for sake of the Kingdom</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is a spectator</li> <li>2. Quick to criticise</li> <li>3. Easily discouraged</li> <li>4. No idea that God wants to use them</li> <li>5. Unwilling to sacrifice</li> <li>6. Too busy</li> <li>7. Resists change</li> <li>8. Negative</li> <li>9. Maintenance driven</li> </ol>	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No interest</li> <li>2. Couldn't care less.</li> <li>3. No concept of God's mission</li> <li>4. I'm comfortable, so don't rock the boat</li> <li>5. Lazy</li> <li>6. No confidence</li> <li>7. The others are doing great!</li> </ol>

Remember:

We were created to be co-creators with God and not spectators.  
Many can accomplish more than a few!!

“Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies have no sense.” (Proverbs 12:11)

“All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.” (Proverbs 14:23)

“Work as if everything depended upon work and pray as if everything depended upon prayer.” (William Booth)

## REFLECTION



### **See:**

Can you add to the characteristics of the doer, watcher and wonderer?

DO any of those characteristics apply to you?

What percentage approximately of your congregation are participants in some way or another?

### **Judge:**

Consider your own church. What things could be done better or differently?

### **Act:**

Are you just going to criticise, or could you do something about the situation?

What steps would you need to take to actually do something about it yourself?

## CHAPTER 3: SQUARE PEGS IN SQUARE HOLES

It may be a cliché, but it is surely true, that where God calls God equips.

So, does God call? – and if so, how?

A quick glance at scripture should make it abundantly clear that our God is a calling God. When God has something to be done, God calls an individual, a group or even a nation to accomplish God's purpose.

From Abraham and Moses, through the prophets, to Mary, the disciples and Paul, God has called and, as many today will testify, God continues to call. Ephesians 2:10 says that those in Christ (i.e. all Christians) have been created "to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do". There are some things God especially wants us to do – each one of us. And in order to alert us to that, God calls us. Once again, we need to make it clear that God does not only call the religious professionals, but everyone.

How does the call come? There is no single answer. For some, through words of scripture; for others through the recognition of a need; for yet others through the words of friends or colleagues; for still others through recognising that they have certain gifts or skills; and for some simply through a deep, persistent inner conviction.

So if we are to be more than spectators, we need to consider the possibility that God may be calling us to perform some task, fulfil some ministry. And something to be remembered is that however the call comes, God does not then abandon us and say 'Get on with it'. God stands with us and equips us with all we need to enable us to respond to the call.

Sometimes God gives us people to work with us. This is one reason why it is always a good idea to talk with others about any sense of call you may be experiencing. Does anyone else share that sense of call? If so, that is probably a confirmation that the call really is from God. And, it immediately offers assistance in the fulfilling of the call. A team will invariably be able accomplish more than an individual.

And sometimes God endows us with what are known as 'spiritual gifts'. Some of these are listed in 1 Cor 12:7-11 and Rom 12:3-8. We shouldn't see these lists as being exhaustive. There are no doubt other gifts as well. A spiritual gift may be given for our own edification. Or more often, it is given for the "common good", for the benefit of others. A spiritual gift is an ability, talent, skill, to which God, through the Holy Spirit, adds unusual power and effectiveness. Identifying our spiritual gift/s may be one way of knowing what it is to which God is calling us.

So it is critical for people to be aware of their spiritual gifts and engage in the ministry for which God has equipped them. If people are forced into a ministry for which they are not equipped, they will probably not enjoy it, and will not achieve very much. Yet often people get pushed into a ministry because 'there is no one else'. But there probably is someone else with the right gifts who is simply not responding to God's call into ministry. When we do what we are equipped to do, we learn, we grow, and we find fulfillment. The church's weakness is sometimes due to the wrong people trying to perform the wrong ministries.

**Spiritual Gifts**  
**according to the Bible --**

**a special divine empowerment**  
**(1 Cor. 12:4-6; 1 Pet. 4:11)**

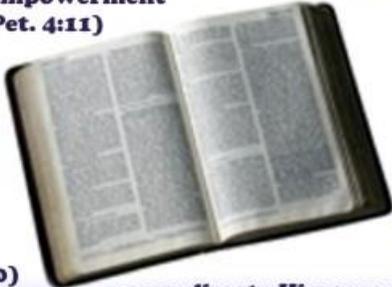
**bestowed on each believer**  
**(1 Cor. 12:7, 18; 1 Pet. 4:10)**

**to be used within**  
**the context of the**  
**Body of Christ**  
**(1 Cor. 12:7;**  
**Eph. 4:12; 1 Pet. 4:10)**

**by the Holy Spirit**  
**(1 Cor. 12:7-9, 11)**

**to accomplish a given**  
**ministry God's way**  
**(1 Cor. 12:4-6)**

**according to His grace**  
**and discernment**  
**(Rom. 12:3-6; 1 Pet. 4:10)**



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## HOW CAN I DISCOVER MY SPIRITUAL GIFT/S?

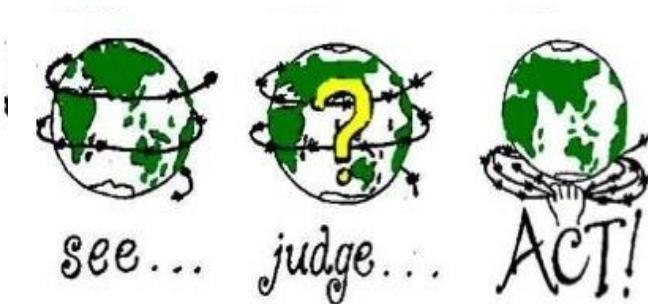
1. Pray: Pray to God to reveal your gifts.
2. Ask others to let you know: There are things that we do not see in ourselves that other people may observe. Find one or two trusted people and ask them to tell you about any gift or talent that they see in you that you may not have observed.
3. Search scripture: As you read and meditate on scripture, God may speak through the written Word.
4. Look around you. What needs do you see – in your church and in your community? Do any of these speak to you, touch you, challenge you? Sometimes our gifts become apparent when we're not focusing on ourselves but focusing on serving.
5. Test the call. Get involved. Is this really a call from God or just my own idea? Am I equipped for this? Sometimes our gift only becomes clear when we are actually doing something and seeing if we can be effective. Just do it!
6. Explore: Do not just develop and exercise those gifts that you are aware of but try different areas in ministry and branch out. God may surprise you. Try something new and discover unknown gifts.

### REMEMBER:

No gift is too small or unimportant to be used.

The ultimate aim is to match gifts with needs. A square peg in a round hole is never a good fit.

## REFLECTION



### **See**

What needs do you observe in your church that are not being adequately met?

What needs do you observe in your community that are not being adequately met?

### **Judge**

What kind of talents, skills, gifts would be needed to address any of these needs?

Would some form of training be a help?

### **Act**

Do I have any idea what my gifts are?

Am I using them?

Do any of the needs listed under 'See' above speak to me? If so, share them with the group. Do any others relate to that? Will you do anything about it?

## CHAPTER 4: GETTING INVOLVED

Hopefully, you have by now been challenged to get more involved in some form of ministry. This is where ‘the takkie hits the tar’!

You may be asking yourself the question, “How do I get involved in ministry as a lay person?”

You could think of the Church as a vehicle. Vehicles need many components in order to move. There are two components that play a role in the mobility of this vehicle. These components are: the various Organisations in the church, and mission groups. Do explore the organisations and mission groups with an aim of plugging in and becoming active in ministry and mission. Below is a list of these organisations, lay orders and mission groups:

- Local preachers association
- Wesley Guild
- Women’s Association
- Women’s Auxiliary
- Womens Manyano
- Young Mens Guild
- Men’s League
- Young Womens Manyano
- MethSoc
- Nzondelelo
- Music association
- Order of Evangelism

There are also many courses and programmes that you can involve yourself in such as the Walk to Emmaus and Alpha. Do speak to your minister for additional information.

But apart from getting involved in existing organisations or ministries, maybe there is the possibility of starting something new. So what are some ministries you may be able to initiate or in which you may be able to become involved? Here are some suggestions to prompt your thinking. Please add to the list.

creative – banners, art work, dance, drama  
 secretarial/administrative  
 music  
 prayer – commit to support other ministries  
 poverty relief – soup kitchen, 2<sup>nd</sup> hand clothing, vegetable garden  
 youth/children  
 pastoral – care for sick, elderly  
 social – including catering for funerals, shut-ins; arranging social ‘get-togethers’  
 church garden upkeep  
 finance/fundraising  
 homelessness  
 gender issues  
 employment creation  
 special issue support group (e.g. divorce, bereavement, parenting)  
 bible study, class meeting, cell group leader (start one)  
 church building maintenance  
 practical maintenance or shopping for elderly or shut-ins  
 Other .....

## REFLECTION



### **See**

Look at your church. What is being done? What needs to be done?  
 How is your church contributing to God's mission?  
 Can you identify where you are presently involved in your church?

***Judge***

Do you feel you are gifted for the role you are involved in?

What gifts/talents do you have? What do you enjoy doing? Does this suggest any area where you could become involved?

Do you have any negative feelings towards any of the organisations?

Do you sense the possibility for anything different or new?

***Act***

Do you feel there is anything you should or could do?

Sound a call – does anyone else sense the same need and is willing to join you?

Chat to your minister.

What would be needed to launch a ministry? – money, time, people, support, training? Can any of this be organised?

Will you just talk, or will you **do**?

## CHAPTER 5: THE MARKS OF AN EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY CHURCH

- Worship is real and relevant
- Sense of unity – a shared overall vision
- Clear goals
- Prayer ministry taken seriously. Everything that is happening needs prayer support
- Everyone has a sense of belonging, because everyone is involved and working together. Everyone is a stakeholder.
- People encouraging one another – hence less jealousy, conflict, pettiness
- Seeing the bigger picture – God’s mission – not inward looking
- No leadership burn-out. Not too few people trying to do too many things

In general much more effectiveness in witnessing to the Kingdom of God. Much more likelihood of making an impact on the community.

**REFLECTION**

Which of the 'marks' mentioned above are present or missing in your own congregation?

What would it take to improve things?

What can you do?