

Leadership in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa



The journey to holiness envisaged by Wesley is to take place in a community, not only for the sake of encouragement, but also for the sake of accountability. Over time as Methodist Societies became larger and more resourced there was a need for people to exercise leadership and responsibility for the work.

In the very early stages of the Methodist movement the locus of responsibility and authority was clearly vested in John Wesley himself. He was responsible for evaluating preachers, he set the theological frameworks, and he took out loans and serviced them for property. However very quickly the need for local stewards, other preachers, class leaders etc was clear and suitable roles were defined and people were encouraged to assume leadership.

In the Methodist Church of Southern Africa at this point in time we have different types of leadership. Our theology is clear that no particular role is better or worse than any other - all people are called to serve and be active in the world and in the church, differences are functional not value based.

The easiest way to frame the discussion is in terms of numbers of people in those roles.

Lay Leadership

Each and every society must by necessity be led by lay people (ie. not ordained) who respond to God's call to be responsible for the affairs of the Society to which they belong AND to serve God through their daily living. There are a range of different lay leadership roles in any given society:

Class leaders (would include all leaders of Classes, Junior Classes, Home Bible Study and Fellowship Groups) - appointed to have spiritual oversight of a number of Members and should be trained for such work (L&D paragraph 7.42)

Mission Group Leaders (and those who lead ministries) - The Society Mission Groups report to the annual Society Meeting but are accountable to the Leaders' Meeting. The following activities should be part of every Society's life and the annual Society Meeting should appoint Mission Groups which best promote them: Spiritual formation; Mission and extension; Youth; Justice, service and reconciliation; Property; Finance (L&D para 7.31)

Stewards of the Poor Fund - these are also our communion stewards, they are also to "inform the Minister of any who are ill or in distress and to collaborate with the Minister in caring for them and in making disbursements from the Poor Fund" (L&D para 7.48.3)

Leaders of the Various organizations - Women's Auxiliary, Women's Association, Women's Manyano, Young Women's Manyano, Young Men's Guild, Wesley Guild, Namibia Women's Fellowship, Men's League.

Sunday School Leaders - those who minister to and teach our children.

Local Trust Property Stewards - responsible for all matters relating to church property.

Local Preachers - Those who have heard God's call to preach, have completed the training as required by the Education for Mission and Ministry Unit and who submit themselves to the discipline of the Local Preachers' Quarterly Meeting. The Local Preachers are responsible with the Ministers for the worship life of the Circuit.

Society Stewards - they are the executive Officers of the Leader's Meeting of the Society to Which they belong (L&D para 7.40). They are to co-operate with the Ministers and Leaders of the Society to promote its spiritual and temporal welfare (L&D para 7.41.1)

We will discuss the exact nature of the responsibilities of Stewards next week, however in this discussion we need to note what the Stewards are mandated to be responsible for:

7.41.2 to attend the Leaders' meeting of which they are members.

7.41.3 to ensure that all appointed Collections are duly made at the proper time.

7.41.4 to take charge and keep an account of collections for Circuit and Connexional funds and remit them without delay.

7.41.5 to pay the Circuit Stewards all funds due to the Circuit.

7.41.6 to write or sign all Notices for the pulpit.

7.41.7 to make proper arrangements for Baptisms;

7.41.8 to be in attendance in the vestry to receive the Preacher;

7.41.9 to make the best arrangements for the service should the Preacher appointed fail to keep the appointment or send a supply.

Circuit Stewards - They are the Executive Officers of the Quarterly Meeting. They are also the Officers through whom all communications affecting the appointment of Ministers are addressed by the Connexional Executive (para 7.17). Their duties are as follows:

7.18.1 to provide for the effective operation of the Circuit subject to the direction of the Quarterly Meeting.

7.18.2 to manage all Circuit funds on behalf of the Quarterly Meeting and in conjunction with the Circuit Finance Committee where this exists. No other person shall perform this duty and the Circuit Treasurer, where appointed, shall operate under the direction of the Circuit Stewards.

7.18.3 to open a Banking Account in the name of 'The Methodist Church of Southern Africa ... Circuit' and jointly to operate thereon. The signatories of the Banking account may include the Superintendent or a duly appointed deputy.

7.18.4 to pay to the Connexional Office the amounts due to the Connexional Funds and the stipends and other allowances of the Ministers, and all other claims on Circuit funds;

7.18.5 to keep proper accounts of income and expenditure, and to submit them to each Quarterly Meeting.

7.18.6 to have the annual financial schedules audited and submit them to Synod.

- 7.18.7 to consult the Ministers and Society Stewards so as to know the needs and wishes of the Societies and the Ministers in connection with the stationing of Ministers in the Circuit;
- 7.18.8 to convene and form part of the Circuit Stationing Committee and to correspond with Ministers concerning invitations to labour in the Circuit.
- 7.18.9 to nominate to the Quarterly any Minister for invitation to labour in the Circuit, and to advise the Bishop of the decisions of the Circuit Stationing Committee and of the Quarterly Meeting in connection with invitations to Ministers.
- 7.18.10 to correspond with the newly-appointed Minister immediately after the Connexional Executive has made the appointment, to meet the Minister on arrival in the Circuit and to facilitate the removal;
- 7.18.11 to ensure that, if the Minister is to occupy a Circuit house, it is ready and fit for occupation and is adequately furnished.
- 7.18.12 to take turns in attending Synod as a representative;
- 7.18.13 to be ex officio members of all Mission Groups in the Circuits and the Societies;
- 7.18.14 to be available for appointment to the Circuit Sunday School Council.

All the above leaders are appointed by the Leaders' Meeting or the Annual Society Meeting (in the case of Circuit Stewards the Quarterly Meeting). Some are appointed, some are nominated and elected.

Lay Staff - There is an additional category of folk who exercise leadership as lay people - these are pastoral staff appointed by Society Leaders' meetings and would include youth pastors, worship pastors and pastoral assistants. These people are accountable to the Leaders' meeting.

The Order of Evangelism

Evangelists and Biblewomen who belong to this Order are all commissioned Lay people.

Evangelists - The Order of Evangelists exists to provide for more effective service by lay workers in the Church and the community (L&D para 14.1). The duties of an evangelist include:

- 14.2.1 to preach regularly as planned, giving prayer, study and thought to the preparation of the services.
- 14.2.2 to convert unbelievers and bring them into active membership of the Society and the Class.
- 14.2.3 to seek backsliders and try to bring them to repentance;
- 14.2.4 to visit those who are in any sort of need, especially those who are falling into sin;
- 14.2.5 to equip the people to resist false doctrine, and to promote fellowship among all Christians.
- 14.2.6 to inform the Minister of all who are in need.



14.2.7 to encourage Christian work among young people;

14.2.8 to be concerned primarily with pastoral work and preaching and not to be involved in the finances of the Church unless specifically requested by the Superintendent.

14.2.9 to teach the people to give to the Church as a means of sharing in the work of Christ.

Evangelists are in the employ of the church in a full-time capacity. They undergo a training period of at least 3 years and then are commissioned.

Biblewomen - these are auxiliary pastoral and evangelistic workers in the Circuits.

14.26 The Biblewomen work under the direction of the local Minister and the Circuit Quarterly Meeting. As an auxiliary pastoral and evangelistic worker she assists in furthering mission and growth in the Circuit.

Her work includes the following:

Teaching

Caring, ie. visiting the sick, elderly, bereaved etc.

Leading worship - preaching

Sharing of faith (evangelizing) eg. Bringing back of backsliders, new converts etc.

Organising prayer teams and bible study groups.

Counseling

She does not have to do all of the above. Depending on the needs of the Circuit and in agreement with the Minister and the Circuit Quarterly meeting the Biblewoman plans her work accordingly.

Biblewomen serve fulltime and the Circuit is responsible for caring for them financially.

Presbyters

The basic theology relating to ministry is included in paragraph 1.23.5 in L&D

The Ministry and Ordination the source of all ministry is Jesus Christ, who is the true minister (Mark 10:45) and bishop (1 Peter 2:25) and priest (Hebrews 9:11). The Church, as the Body of Christ, carries on Christ's ministry to the world, so that the Church as a whole is "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9; Exodus 19:6). The call of God is first and foremost into membership of the Church (1 Peter 2:9, 21; 5:10), so that the Church may glorify God (Ephesians 1:4-6), preach the Gospel (Philippians 1:5, 7) and show the service and love of Christ to all who are in need (John 13:14-16).

From the beginning certain persons were called and appointed to particular forms of ministry, of various kinds and for various purposes, but all directed towards the up building of the Church (1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 5:11-16). Though the New Testament provides evidence for several possible lines of development, it witnesses to the fact that appointment to office is due both to the call and gift of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Ephesians 4:11) and to the Church itself through its ministerial representatives (Acts 6:6; 14:23; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Timothy 1:6). Persons so appointed are as a result set in a new relationship both with Christ and with the Church, and are representative both of the Church and of Christ Himself.

The development in subsequent centuries of the institutional ministry of the Church, already apparent in Acts and the Pastoral Epistles, was in line with the teaching of the New Testament. In the developed pattern there emerged a threefold order of bishops, presbyters and deacons, in



which the bishop was seen as the focus of unity, linking the local church to the Church universal, of which he was the chief minister in each place. In Methodism, as in certain Reformation Churches, the threefold order of ministry was not retained, but we believe our pattern also to be in line with the teaching of the New Testament.

Ordination describes the act by which Christians are authorised by the Church to act in its name and on its behalf in certain ways. By the same act the ordained persons receive the grace of God in response to the prayers of the Church to enable them to fulfil the ministry to which they are ordained. **In the Methodist Church they are set apart for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments and the pastoral oversight of the People of God.**

Because of its importance the rite of ordination has always been accompanied by certain outward signs, which have always included the laying on of hands with prayer. The ordaining Minister has been the one who best represents the fullness of the universal Church. In episcopal Churches the Minister of ordination has therefore all along been the Bishop. In the Methodist Church the ordination is authorised by Conference that represents the wider Church and is performed on its behalf by the Presiding Bishop and other presbyters. The ordained Minister is recognised as being ordained to the ministry of the Church of God, and not simply of the Methodist Church.

The ordained Minister is one of the outward signs of the unity of the Church in space and time. For this reason ordination is one element among many in the concept of apostolic succession, whereby the Church today is linked to the Church of previous centuries and to the time of the New Testament.

Ordination places ordained Ministers in a new relation both with Christ and with the Church. Under Christ they are the leaders and teachers of the congregation, setting forth in their own life the headship of Christ over themselves and over the Church.

As president at the Holy Communion, the presbyter represents the whole Church and shows the Communion to be the act of the whole Church as it offers unceasing worship of God.

In the life and ministry of the ordained Minister is focused the calling of every member of the people (Laos) of God, so that though the ordained Minister has a different commission and authority from other members of the Laos, the distinction must not be overstressed.

When a person feels the call of God to serve exclusively in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa they offer themselves as a candidate for the Order of Presbyters (Elders). The local circuit must support their candidature - they need to agree that the person evidences a life of holiness in response to the inner

experience of the grace of God. They must show evidence of a growing life of faith and they must show forth the fruit relevant to the specific calling. They then travel a process of discernment. Presbyters are not employed by the church, they are in a covenantal relationship - the church recognises and affirms their calling and gives them authority to exercise their ministry within the MCSA and the church at large. The church also agrees to care for the minister (presbyter or deacon) and their family. For their part a minister promises to go where they are sent, to be held accountable for their moral and religious character and to be under the discipline of the church.

Deacons

Paragraph 13.1.1 (L&D) Deacons belong to an ordained ministry of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Their ministry may include working in a pastoral context in a Society or Circuit, or, working in



secular employment e.g. education, health care, welfare and social upliftment organizations. Deacons seek to be Christ's servants in the world and encourage the Church community to a ministry of servanthood. Apart from local pastoral ministry or church planting projects some practical aspects of service that the Order of Deacons could engage in are: poverty alleviation; care for the sick and dying; care for the aged or youth; evangelism and mission outreach; parachurch organisations.

In theory Deacons can be appointed as Itinerant or Non-Itinerant, stipendiary or non-stipendiary - unfortunately currently circuits do not recognise the value of the ministry of Deacons and so not many itinerant stations are available.