

**DISCERNING WHICH CHURCH TRADITION ONE IS CALLED TO:  
EXPANDING THE INPUT AT THE SCHOOL OF VOCATION AND POST ORDINATION  
TRAINING:**

**RATIONALE:**

It would seem that many<sup>1</sup> of our ordained and long-standing ministers do not fully grasp the Wesleyan nature of Connexionality within the MCSA. Many express ministries which is more akin to congregationalism than our Methodist ethos within our common rich connexional family. Many of our Ministers seem to have forgotten that our membership is with Conference and not the local church.

*“We affirm our Wesleyan Connexionality as an **expression of unity, of oneness, ‘I am because you are’**. We affirm that we hold our every dream, vision, work, aspiration and material resource in common, as guided by our Creator. None of these are the possession of any person or group of persons, but our common God given gifts.”* MCSA Message 2017 Conference.

This perceived tension between congregationalism and Wesleyan connexionality seems to bring unhappiness to many ministers who detest anything that expresses the mind of the District Synod and the collective discernment of the Connexion through our annual conference. The constant mantra that this is a top-down approach, shows what is perhaps a lack of commitment to Wesleyan Connexionality.

My view is that when there is unhappiness and a disturbance of Spirit within one, that it is perhaps an indication that one’s calling is not in the MCSA, but in another ecclesial expression of the Body of Christ and Church Universal. (MBO Chapter 1 paragraphs 1.1 to 1.7)

*Within the Christian Church, ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’, which is the Body of Christ, the Methodist Church holds a true place, and cherishes this not alone for itself as an organised community, but for its members wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ and in obedience to the Spirit. - And by implication other ecclesial expressions also hold a true place in the Body of Christ.*

Perhaps such ‘troubled and unhappy ministers who often display out right cynicism and hostility toward the MCSA *Wesleyan Connexionality*, is an indication that such ministers need to be helped to move to an ecclesial expression (Another part of the ‘body of Christ) more akin with what will make them more content. <sup>14</sup> *Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.* <sup>15</sup> *If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body”<sup>2</sup>.*

It must be difficult and emotionally and spiritually draining if one is an ear trying to be an eye. In other words, if one is so committed to the local congregation within an expression of *Wesleyan Connexionality*. This must be hard – when the collective Connexion discerns that God is asking the whole to see things in a certain way through the annual Conference theme and the overarching vision

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<sup>1</sup> Hopefully a minority

<sup>2</sup> ,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. It must be difficult and draining if you are a hand and if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

and mission of the MCSA and the local congregation wants its own theme<sup>3</sup>, and ignores the discerned message of God from members of the body of Christ who represent 16 Districts and six countries. (To ignore the collective discernment through conference, is this not a sign of one who is more suited to congregationalism)?

MCSA *Wesleyan Connexionality*, expressed through our itinerant system, which when done well brings a rich experience for both congregations' members in Circuit and society. Each minister brings a unique charism to the Local church; Circuit, District and Connexion.

Given this anecdotal observation<sup>4</sup> I propose the following:

**BEFORE ENTERING MINISTRY VIA CANDIDATING? Discerning the calling to ministry?  
Which ministry?**

**At every school of vocation** input is given from a knowledgeable person/s who is able to explain:

- The universal nature of the Church and the peculiar contribution of the Wesleyan expression and contribution based on Wesley's sermon the "Catholic Church" and MBO Chapter One.
- the diverse ecclesial expressions of Christianity with special reference to the CUC churches
- the covenantal agreement with the CUC churches:

*The MCSA has been one of the member churches of the Church Unity Commission (CUC) from its inception in 1968. This is a South African ecumenical structure that has focused on issues of ecclesiology and doctrine, with the aim of achieving organic union between the so-called English-speaking churches i.e the Anglicans, Methodists, Congregational, Uniting Presbyterian Church in South Africa the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Africa and recently the Dutch Reformed Church... While the union has not been achieved, there are milestones that have been achieved and worth remembering, celebrating and living out. They include:*

- *The free transfer of members between these churches;*
- *Mutual Eucharistic hospitality – the open table;*
- *Mutual acceptance of ministries of Word and Sacrament; and*
- *Forming united churches.*

*From 'Ecumenism Defined'*

**The relevance for those seeking confirmation of a calling into full time ministry**

The agreement means that with the "Mutual acceptance of ministries of Word and Sacrament" that as ordained minister we are able to serve in any of the CUC churches.

However, when one is still considering and discerning the call through the school of vocation, it be emphasised that the calling to ministry may not be within the MCSA and could be in any of the CUC churches which may possibly be akin with the seekers own sense of calling. The seeker should carefully and prayer fully consider each ecclesial option before settling on the MCSA path to ordination.

**The relevance of the CUC covenantal agreement to the ordained long-standing ministers**

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<sup>3</sup> The Annual Society Meeting is where any member can have their voice heard. This does not mean we do what is said but what is said can shape the idea e.g., the Conference theme going forward for the Circuit and our local society. Then it moves to each subsequent space of leadership, Circuit; District and Connexion

<sup>4</sup> based on 41 years of ministry 9 of which was as Bishop, I

Such ministers displaying and expressing constant dissatisfaction with the Connexional nature of the MCSA (This is different to some one's critique of the MCSA to improve our Connexional web and spiritual riches) are encouraged to discern with an assigned teams whether they are in the right church and ministry?

After a session (or two) where input is given from a knowledgeable person/s who is able to explain:

- The universal nature of the Church and the peculiar contribution of the Wesleyan expression based on Wesley's sermon the "Catholic Church and with reference to the MBO chapter one.
- With special reference to 1.41 The ordained minister is one of the outward signs of the unity of the church in space and time... this is not meant to mean the local church alone but of the church universal in general and the MCSA Connexion in particular.
- the diverse ecclesial expressions of Christianity with special reference to the CUC churches
- the covenantal agreement with the CUC churches:

### Questions to be considered

Are the ministers who express constant dissatisfaction, discontent and or hostility toward MCSA Connexionalism perhaps experiencing a disturbance of the Holy Spirit that the minister needs to pay attention to, and consider that the MCSA is not where God wants them to be.

They should then be helped to move to another ecclesial expression more suited to their charism within ministry.

- In other words, a minister could move to
  - the Congregational<sup>5</sup> and or Presbyterian<sup>6</sup> church which would better suit those ministers who wish to have longer tenures and local congregational driven ministries in parochial settings?
  - Or when one is more liturgically & episcopalian inclined, that the Anglican church may be more suitable.
  - We should also consider non-CUC members like the Baptists; Salvation Army and Pentecostal churches – perhaps this is where dissatisfied disturbed by the Spirit ministers would find contentment for their souls?

**NB:** All of the above should be in keeping with MBO Paragraph 4.46.6 and 4.46.7

Peace & Grace

Rev Mike Vorster

Director of the Ecumenical Affairs Unit (2018-2022)

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<sup>5</sup> Each Congregational Church has total control over its own affairs. Each congregation decides which minister to call or dismiss, how to allocate its funds, and what rules and regulations shall govern its worship life. [What is a Congregational Church? – University Congregational Church \(ucchurch.org\)](http://ucchurch.org)

<sup>6</sup> Presbyterianism refers to the system of church government of the church. The church name comes from the system of government the religion uses. Representative assemblies of elders, which are called presbyteries, govern the church. In comparison, bishops govern the Episcopal Church and congregational church is government by congregations. [Presbyterians - 10 Things to Know About Their Church Beliefs & History \(christianity.com\)](http://christianity.com)