

DOCTRINE, ETHICS AND WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Rev Sidwell Mokgothu

1. Introduction

DEWCOM considers praxis – the reflective-practice cycle as an important approach of doing theology – including reflection and practice on the doctrines, ethics and worship of the Church. It is our conviction that praxis is the task of the whole Church – clergy and laity. Whilst the clergy are the bedrock of doing theology in the Church, DEWCOM seeks to move us from the exclusive ‘clerical paradigm’ to an inclusive one priesthood of all believers. This praxis must, in our context, be liberative. It must be transformative of systems and structures [starting within the Church] and also healing of individuals, families, communities, and nations of our Connexion and the world.

In reimagining its work, DEWCOM, committed itself to being informative and empowering of all God’s people and being responsive to Church and public issues. The elements of this report talk to that commitment.

2. RE-AFFIRMATION OF THE TWOFOLD PATTERN OF ORDAINED MINISTRY

DEWCOM’s submitted paper on the re-affirmation of the twofold pattern of ordained ministry in the MCSA to the 2020 Connexional Executive. The paper was sent to circuits and synods as part of an information and education resource. Following that, DEWCOM hosted a seminar to share the MCSA position. The discussion was broadened by listening the following presentations:

- a. Rev Dr Don William who shared on his PHD on the decolonization of Ordination in the MCSA
- b. Rev Canon Dr Vicentia Kgabe, who shared on the Anglican understanding and practice of episcopacy
- c. Rev Dr Wesley Mugruder, a UMC missionary, who presented on the United Methodist’s theology and practice of ordination and episcopacy.
- d. Rev Nomphitizelo Sibidla, Warden of the Order of Evangelism who shared on the progress regarding the work to synergise the Evangelism and Diaconate Orders within the MCSA.
- e. Rev Raymond Keet presented DEWCOM’s paper on the re-affirmation of the twofold pattern of ministry.

A summary of these presentations is shared an annexure A of this report.

3. Crisis in Mozambique

The DEWCOM public seminar on the crisis in Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado region, followed the Presiding Bishop’s hosted meeting of the Mission Unit which was attended by leaders in the different formations of the Connexion. Input was received from the Mr. Borges Nhamires of the Institute of Security Studies in Mozambique and Bishop Matsolo who both provided an analysis on the violent conflict in the region.

The shared on the complex nature of this violent conflict in the region which include the intersection of crime and terrorism, the underlying conflation of religion and radicalization of Muslim youth and involvement of foreign countries and business and economic interests due to the existence of natural resources like gas and rubies. This has led to the murder of thousands of people as well as an increase in poverty and hunger through the displacement of many people.

Whilst there are macro political and military interventions that are being pursued at regional, continental and international level, there is also need for help regarding the humanitarian crisis. This includes the need for humanitarian relief, building and promotion of peace and psycho-social as well as pastoral-spiritual support. The MCSA has, through the Mission Unit, has made a Connexional mission appeal for Methodists to provide financial assistance.

4. Crisis in Eswatini

The seminar on Eswatini was addressed by leaders of different institutions/sectors [Council of Churches, Women, Media, and Academia] in the country. They provided clarity on the history, the manifestation of the problem and the current situation relating to the demands of the people and the reaction of government. They gave the history of the ruling absolute monarchy and its system of the *Tinkhundla* system and the struggle for a constitutional democracy and the violent counter suppression by government.

The presenters reported on the current violence in the country where property has been destroyed and people have died, allegedly, at the hands of government's security forces – both police and the army.

There has been a call for a roundtable dialogue of government and different stakeholders representing the people to talk of a new dispensation. There are also calls for government to account for those who have lost their lives in the situation.

A call was made to the Church to provide Christian solidarity to the people of Eswatini and lobby regional, continental and international Church bodies such as the SACC, FOCCISSA, AACC and the WCC as well as multi-lateral bodies such as SADCC, AU and the UN to put pressure on the Eswatini government to accede to the demands of the people for an inclusive dialogue as well to stop the violent suppression on the protesters. A specific call was made for the MCSA to provide prayerful pastoral support. The Church leadership was encouraged to exercise ministry of visible presence through a pastoral visit of a delegation of Connexional leaders. The MCSA was encouraged, because of its standing in the Kingdom of Eswatini, offer to mediate towards a peaceful resolution of the challenge in Eswatini. Working with the Church in the country, the MCSA was encouraged to consider developing a peace monitoring initiative.

5. Crisis in South Africa

The conversation on South Africa followed a period of two weeks of violent looting and destruction of businesses – malls, warehouses, factories, trucks and other infrastructure. Although the imprisonment of Former President Jacob Zuma is understood to have been the

trigger of this, the panel of presenters pointed out how complex and multi-layered the crisis is. This has been traced to the political factions in the ruling African National Congress to the long developing ticking bomb of the decline in the socio-economic material conditions of the people with high levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality. A representative of *Abahlali baseMjondolo* [a Shack dwellers movement] pointed out that, whilst there is concern about the current concern about the violence on property, there has been violence on the poor and yet there has been utter silence. It was argued that any long-term solution must deal with the root causes of poverty and inequality. The huge loss of life, especially through racial killings in the Indian communities of Phoenix and Chatsworth have complicated matters.

The presenters and participants called for the building of an inclusive nation with the promotion of the rule of law, understanding of constitutional democracy and the introduction of the Basic Income Grant as start of providing social security and livelihoods. Leaders of all sectors were encouraged to avail themselves to address the communities. Partnerships of different sectors were encouraged engage in a dialogue in building an inclusive economy that finds expression at the local level. The Church was encouraged to work at the local level through Local Ecumenical Action Networks [LEANs] of the SACC. These are vehicles for community cohesion and provision of such mission interventions as community development, healing of memories, food security and income generating projects.

Further calls included:

- Calling on government to set a Restoration Fund to assist small businesses
- Government to provide transparent public accountability on what happened and why there was security lax and conflicting messages from the security cluster
- Moral call to business to share the economic pie with communities
- Conversations with labour on how to move forward
- Call for moral and spiritual leadership
- The development of a common South Africanness
- The Church to engage itself with life questions rather than just its survival

6. Struggle for Basic Income Grant

The long existing deep socio-economic challenges poverty, unemployment and inequality in South Africa have been exposed by the ongoing COVID-19 and the recent violent looting in parts of Gauteng and Kwa Zulu Natal. It is only now the many have come to appreciate the how God's People have been struggling with living life and livelihoods as the food insecurity and hunger have become so visible.

DEWCOM's public seminar on the Basic Income Grant [BIG] follows the resurgent calls for the grant by even many unlikely sectors of society including some in government have come to show that now is just the right moment for grant to be considered. Big must be located within the struggle for the outstanding realisation of the socio-economic rights as contained in South Africa's constitution. Rev Keith Vermeulen and Ms Rosa Namises traced the history

of the struggle for BIG in South and Namibia respectively. Ms Namises share of a pilot project supported by the Lutheran World Federation in a rural community in Namibia. After a year of providing all adults with a cash amount, it was discovered that life of that community changed as violence decreased, people engaged in income generating projects and the parents were able to pay for their children's school fees.

The Church's participation in the multi-sectoral struggle for BIG will be an "effective expression of God's Heart." The Church must understand BIG as a practical realisation of Christ's manifesto of bringing good news to the poor. This is a manifesto that was launched after Christ's own hunger in the wilderness and was grounded on Christ's mother Mary, who declared in the Magnificat of the God who has "filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty." Part of the Christian prophetic tradition is of taking care of the poor: the widow, orphan and foreigner.

Economist, Duma Gqubule has argued that BIG must be understood as fiscal stimulus that is meant to inject money into the economy to address the current humanitarian crisis. He counselled; "BIG is not a silver bulled solution to all the problems in the SA economy. It is not an isolated technocratic fix. It should be the first step towards transforming the whole economy." It must be implemented together with other long-term interventions like universal public services, universal social security and job guarantee.

A draft resolution to Conference is shared as Annexure B of this report.

7. Conclusion

The current crises in different parts of the Connexion have exposed the need for the MCSA to do more in familiarising itself with public issues in all countries of the Connexion. There is need for an intentional structural mechanism of engaging in such work.

DEWCOM remains committed to being a servant-resource to the MCSA structures of Conference, Units, Synods and Mission Groups for production of any theological reflection of our doctrines, public-ethical issues and liturgical work.

8. Nomination of Committee Members for 2021

Rev Sidwell Mokgothu (Convenor and Chairperson); Rev Luvuyo Sifo (Secretary); Rev Tim Attwell; Rev Lauren Matthew; Rev Raymond Keet; Rev Dinis Matsolo; Rev Pierre Naude; Rev Dr Roger Scholtz; Mr Peter Frow; Mr Anele Siswana; Rev Sondlile Nkwanyana; Rev Juliet Windvogel; Rev Ralph Afghan; Rev Dr Martin Mostert; Rev Nozipho Mcineka; Rev Brenda Timmer.

Appendix A

DEWCOM REPORT ON THE WEBINAR ON EXPOLORING ORDINATION AND EPISCOPACY

1. Introduction

DEWCOM hosted a webinar to inform and empower Methodists on the understanding of the twofold pattern of ministry in the MCSA. This followed the paper that the Committee had submitted to the 2020 Connexional Executive and was forwarded to Circuits and Synods for popularisation.

The theme of the Webinar was: Ordination and Episcopacy: Exploring the Orders of Ministry within the MCSA. Different panellists, moderated by Rev Nozipho Mcineka addressed the theme from different perspectives and traditions.

2. The Decolonisation and Africanisation of Ordination - Rev Dr Don Williams

Rev Dr Don Williams began the webinar input session by unpacking the usages of ordination within the MCSA, which he explained comprises three elements that form the MCSA usage of ordination. Firstly, the Act of ordination. Which he describes as follows: “Ordination is “the act by which Christians are authorised by the Church to act in its name and on its behalf in certain ways” (2016:20).” (Williams 2021) The second element is the Relationship entered into through ordination between the MCSA Conference and those Presbyters and Deacons ordained into Full Connexion within the MCSA and their Orders of Ministry. With ordination to the respective Orders, the Order of Presbyters, those ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament and the Order of Deacons, those ordained to the ministry of Word and Service. The third element that Williams shared was that the ordained are confirmed as being in Covenantal Relationship with the Conference, whereby both the Conference and the ordained have appropriate privileges and responsibilities. (Williams 2021)

After unpacking the MCSA usage of ordination, Williams went on to explain that there is an inseparable relationship between ordination and Full Connexion, and that this has to be remembered in the discussion relating to a 2-fold or a 3-fold Order of ministry, and the role of Bishops within the MCSA. Williams went on to explain that over the past 32 years since the 1989 change of the term of Office from Chairman of District to Synod Bishop, previously District Bishop, that Bishops and the Presiding Bishop occupy an office for a term and are not ordained into a third order of ministry for life. Williams concluded this part of his presentation, but suggesting that the MCSA has a three-fold Order of Ministry with a two-fold ecclesiology, as a result of the regulated and the adopted practises active within the MCSA around the place of the *episkopos* and accountability by those ordained within the MCSA. Williams concluded his presentation by briefly presenting his view that an African epistemology and African spirituality need to be considered in the Africanisation of both our doctrine and practices of ordination within the MCSA.

3. An Anglican Perspective and Practise of Ordination and Bishops - Rev Canon Rd. Vicentia Refiloe Kgabe

Rev Canon Rd. Vicentia Refiloe Kgabe, Rector of the Anglican Seminary, Transfiguration, shared on the process of Ordination and ordering of ministries as per the principles of Cannon Law within the Anglican Church Provinces, particularly the practice of Ordination within the Anglian Church of Southern Africa. Kgabe shared that the Anglican practice is that of a three-fold Order of ordained ministry, the Order of Deacons, the Order of Priests, and the Order of Bishops. Those ordained to the Order of Deacons can be either be a Permanent Deacon, who will remain in this order until retirement, or a Transitional Deacon, a transitional ministry to a later ordination after discernment to the Order of Priest. Kgabe then highlighted the distinction of usage and terminology used for the ordination of various types of Bishops within the Province, and the Ordination of Bishops and their role within the Anglican Church structures.

4. A United Methodist Church perspective - Rev Rd. Wesley Magruder

Rev Rd. Wesley Magruder, shared as an ordained clergy person within the United Methodist Church (UMC) on Ordination and Episcopacy. He shared the history and development of ordination within the UMC from the time of Rev John Wesley to present practice. Magruder expanded on the introduction in 1996 of a two-fold order of ordained ministry within the UMC. These being the Order of Elders and Order of Deacons. With those ordained into the Order of Elders being ordained to the ministry of Word, Sacrament, Ordering of Ministry and Service. Those ordained to the Order of Deacons being ordained to the ministry of Word, Service, Compassion and Justice. Magruder highlighted that Bishops are considered as a special ministry of oversight and not as a sperate order of ordained ministry. With Bishops having life tenure in most of the Conferences within the USA, but not in Central Conferences out of the USA.

5. The Origin and Progress on the Synergising of Work Conversation - Rev Nomphitizelo Sibidla

Rev Nomphitizelo Sibidla, Warden of the Order of Evangelism, shared the ministries of the Orders of Evangelism and the Diaconate within the MCSA, as found within the Methodist Book of Order. Sibidla, highlighted the longstanding discrepancies and injustices that have been perpetrated by the MCSA between recognition and the place occupied within the life of the MCSA between these two orders of ministry, whose primary ministry of Word and Service being the same. This has resulted in the Synergising of Work Conversation between the two orders. Sibidla then went on to highlight the progress of the conversation and future hopes of the ongoing conversation.

6. Affirming the Current MCSA Stance on Two-fold pattern of Ordination within the MCSA - Rev Raymond Keet

Rev Raymond Keet, member of DEWCOM, then shared the current MCSA Stance on the Two-fold pattern of ordination. Keet read through and highlighted the current stance of the

ordering of ordained ministry within the MCSA as found in the 2021 Yearbook page 258 to 259, Appendix 3 of 2020 DEWCOM Report.

Conclusion

This was a very educational and thought-provoking webinar, which spoke well to the continuing conversation on the two-fold pattern of Ordained Ministry and Episcopacy within the MCSA. One significant observation was the keen interest, as seen through the many questions brought by some who attended, both on the Zoom platform and via Facebook, which was the perspective of Africanising the theology and practice of ordination within the MCSA. Perhaps this is a crucial ingredient in the furthering of this conversation.

Appendix B

RESOLUTION ON THE BASIC INCOME GRANT

1. Background

For more than 20 years, civil society organisations and religious bodies in Southern Africa have been sounding the call for the implementation of a Universal Basic Income Guarantee – commonly referred to as a Basic Income Grant (BIG) – as a key intervention in helping to combat the blight of poverty and reduce the ravaging effects of joblessness.¹ More recently, these calls for a BIG have intensified, especially in light of the devastating economic impact of the COVID pandemic and the civil unrest and looting in KZN and Gauteng. Extensive research and thorough economic modelling have been conducted on the effectiveness and affordability of a BIG within South Africa.² The strong and growing consensus is that a BIG, properly financed and implemented, would be a cost-effective systemic tool that can help to alleviate poverty, reduce hunger, enhance social cohesion, and ultimately strengthen the economy in a sustainable way.

Beyond the compelling economic arguments for implementing a BIG, there are moral, ethical and biblical imperatives for doing so. Poverty, unemployment and inequality are not simply economic challenges – they are an affront to our common humanity and the values of the kingdom of God. The very first guiding principle named by Jesus in his ‘mission manifesto’ was the priority of bringing good news to the poor (Luke 4:18). In doing so he was standing squarely in the long and rich covenant tradition of ancient Israel that sought to offer particular protections for those most at risk within its midst (cf. Lev 23:22; Deut 15:7-11). Following his resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, the early church gave tangible expression to the hope and promise of this way of Jesus by ordering their common life such that no-one among them was in need (Acts 4:32-35). The consistent witness of the biblical revelation is clear and unequivocal – we have a God-given responsibility to care for the most vulnerable members of our society, and the extent to which we honour or ignore this obligation will ultimately shape the kind of nation we become and the common life we will share.

In this fraught moment in our history, when the deepening crisis of poverty, hunger, destitution and joblessness simply MUST be resolved, the MCSA needs to find its full-throated voice and do everything in its power to help bring about the economic justice for which we are called to work and pray. A renewed sense of urgency, determination and strategic action in pursuing the implementation of a BIG is one key way in which the MCSA can take a bold stand against the crime

¹ The Basic Income Grant Coalition, formed in June 2001, included the following members:

Age-in-Action, AIDS Consortium, Alliance for Children’s Entitlement to Social Security (ACCESS), Black Sash, Children’s Institute, Church of the Province of South Africa, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), Co-operative for Research and Education, Development Resources Centre, Diakonia Council of Churches, Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation (ESSET), Gender Advocacy Programme (GAP), Community Law Centre (UWC), Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC), South African Council of Churches (SACC), South Africa New Economics Foundation (SANE), South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO), Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), Young Christian Workers National Secretariat (YCW).

² An excellent example of such research and modelling is the policy brief on a Universal Basic Income Guarantee released by the Institute for Economic Justice in March 2021, accessible at https://www.iej.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/IEJ-policy-brief-UBIG_2.pdf

and violence of poverty, and to seek to align this society more closely to the values and desires of God's heart.³

2. Resolution

In light of the above, the Conference of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa resolves the following:

1. The MCSA calls for the immediate implementation of a Universal Basic Income Guarantee – commonly referred to as a Basic Income Grant (BIG) – by the South African government, drawing on the expertise and best practice economic models already available within civil society. Being a **universal** BIG, there would be no means test as a prerequisite for receiving this grant, and no citizen or resident of the country would be excluded.
2. The MCSA affirms the resumption of the Social Relief of Distress Grant ("Covid-19 grant") and calls for it to be retained, as an interim measure, until a BIG is implemented.
3. Societies, Circuits, Synods, EMMU, DEWCOM, SMMS, the Mission Unit and the Communications Unit are urged to do all they can to educate the Methodist people on the benefits and workings of a BIG, and to mobilise them to pray, work and advocate for its implementation.
4. DEWCOM to design liturgies that respond to social and economic justice issues that shall include BIG
5. The MCSA, through the Mission Unit, shall join with other ecumenical partners and civil society organisations that are advocating for the implementation of a BIG, in order to strengthen those efforts.
6. The MCSA is not naïve in assuming that a BIG would be a remedy for all the economic challenges besieging us at this time; nor that the funding thereof will be straightforward and painless. But viewed as one part of a broader economic recovery strategy, a BIG can play a vital role in prioritising and addressing the needs of the poorest amongst us while building social cohesion and fostering a greater sense of unity, dignity and solidarity among all the people of our land. Whatever the cost of implementing a BIG may be, the cost of not doing so will be exponentially greater.
7. While this resolution focuses on the implementation of a BIG in South Africa, we recognise that there are similar underlying needs within the other countries of our Connexion, and that comparable economic justice initiatives within those countries also require the MCSA's advocacy, prayer, strategic action and support.

³ The Conference of the MCSA has already called for a BIG in 2003 and 2005.