

This document forms part of the Doctrine, Ethics and Worship Commission's ongoing work. It is not an official DEWCOM or MCSA document, until adopted by the Conference of the MCSA. Please consult the MCSA's Yearbooks for official documents.

REVIEW OF THE PROCESS OF THE ELECTING BISHOPS

DEWCOM notes that the current practice of electing Bishops within the MCSA predominantly privileges male clergy over women clergy, often gives a 'home field' advantage that encourages territorial selection of leadership, and rather than affirm our historic *episcopate* and itineracy as a step towards visible unity and a strengthening our communal, collegial and personal of oversight (episcopus).

DEWCOM further recognises apart from: (i) the duties and functions of Bishops as outlined in the Laws and Discipline of the MCSA (para. 6.9- 6.11.4); the historical work done during the transition from *Office of the Chairman of the District* to that of the *Office of the District Bishop* and the *Office of the President of Conference* to that of the *Office of the Presiding Bishop* from between 1985-1989; and (iii) the recent **Statement on the ministry of oversight**, no subsequent re-envisioning of the theological and missional implications of our episcopacy has been done.

Resolution

DEWCOM therefore requests conference to set up a task team to study all aspects of the episcopacy in relation to the mission, identity and nature of MCSA and with the intention to re-envision the character, understanding and practice of the ministry of oversight in our contemporary church and public context. The scope of the task force will include but not be limited to:

- plans for prioritising a gender balance at senior leadership of the church, especially the appointment of women bishops – for example a five year leadership development strategy for balancing gender in the election of Bishops or districts could be mandated to nominate two names, male and female and Conference to appoint one from those names
- The theological and missional nature of episcopal leadership
- Election and determination process, appointment and compensation of bishops. For example a system through which Bishops are nominated by Synods and Conference reserves the right to appoint to any district within the connexion.
- A clear leadership development strategy for those appointed as Bishops including subject of leadership, general oversight, supervision and how the office of Bishop is authorized to observe, teach and guard the faith, order, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the Church.

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DISTRICT MINISTERIAL CONVOCATION

The current probationer formation process has, as its overarching goal, the holistic training of current and future presbyters. All phases of the probationer's development, including a focused 3 year period as a full time resident at Seminary, comprises a three pronged approach to training: academic learning, vocational skills training (preaching, accounting, etc.) and character development. At its best, the training, during a probationer's formation seeks to be an introduction into lifestyle of learning, reflection and discernment. Seminary education and in-circuit probationer formation are designed to provide an introduction to the background, realms of theory, principles and fundamental practices of the Christian Church, Faith and vocational life.

To assume therefore that this process of formation is in itself complete at ordination and to not provide the formal space, platform and institutional culture for continued post-ordination development that would hone the skills acquired during probationer formation, not only undermines the value of the years spent in formation but also renders the entire training process ineffective. Can a church survive with ministers who have only invested in the building of foundations and nothing more?

Current research and the demands of our immediate reality suggests that the current context of ministry requires more deliberate platforms and interventions that would facilitate and encourage continued training and formation after ordination, than that which is currently available. This is evident through escalation of moral and ethical quandaries, the moral failures that have heightened the contemporary interrogation of ministerial integrity, the influence of pluralism, secularism and moral relativity, and our seeming inadequacy within the emerging complex and missional chaotic context.

All these are substantive motivation for the MCSA to seriously consider a structure for continuous development and formation of her ministers beyond seminary.

Resolution

DEWCOM therefore requests conference to formally establish the **Ministerial Convocation** as a formal structure of the MCSA with a legislative framework in the Laws and Discipline and accountable to the Annual Synod. The mandates of historical ministerial session and

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contemporary considerations for the formation of minsters can be considered in the institution of this work.