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## PARTY POLITICAL CHAPLAINCY

*Second draft paper (DEWCOM)*

### 1 Introduction

The issue of the participation of clergy in party politics necessitates that we have a theological reflection on "party political chaplaincy" in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA). The reflection in this paper is mainly based on the 2016 conference resolution (2.27 Party political chaplaincy):

Conference 2016 affirms the 2014 and 2015 resolutions not to appoint ministers as chaplains to political parties. Conference further affirms our stated position on the religion and politics along with the conviction that our ministry extends to all spheres including social, economic, political and environmental spheres of life.<sup>1</sup> Conference directs DEWCOM to develop a guiding theological document and practical tools that will shape our response, describing amongst other things:

- the pastoral and prophetic nature of our ministry in the political and public space;
- possible expressions/forms of our ministry in the public/political domain including nonpartisan ministry to political parties, governments, national parliaments, provincial, regional and municipal institutions and traditional spheres of leadership.

Based on this resolution the present paper sets out to offer a theological reflection and guidelines that may shape the discernment and position of the MCSA on the issue of "party political chaplaincy." Worthy of note in the debate of church and party politics is a compelling argument that:

Politics is unavoidable. The likes of Luther, Calvin, Barth and others have indicated on several occasions their inclination to be biased towards democracy. Decisions about the economy, society and beliefs are taken in the political realm. Thus, the absence of a Christian in politics implies that a Christian is not part of this decision-making process and, because what affects the individual in the Christian community also affects the same individual in the civil community, the idea of the Christian from politics is in fact absurd.<sup>2</sup>

Said differently and most importantly from a Methodist theological perspective, the ministry of Christians extends to the political sphere.<sup>3</sup> It may thus be decisively argued that the incarnate Christ is at work in the political sphere through the presence and ministry of the Church, which in essence is the "Body of Christ." However, the possible ministry of the Church in the political and public space is rather complex because the members of the MCSA affiliate to different political parties and due to the point that the closer relations between the church and political parties could compromise the independence of the Church in its witness to the Gospel. It is thus critical that we discern the pastoral and prophetic nature of the

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<sup>1</sup> MCSA, *The Methodist Book of Order: The Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa*, (Cape Town, Methodist Publishing House, 2014), 223.

<sup>2</sup> Rothney Tshaka and Boitumelo Senokoane, "The Christian politician? An investigation into the theological grounding for Christians' participation in politics," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72/1 (2016): 1-7.

<sup>3</sup> MCSA, *Methodist Book of Order*, 223.

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ministry of the MCSA as well as the possible expressions of that ministry in the political and public space. Various factor may therefore be discussed in this paper and are not limited to 1) History of the MCSA in the political sphere; 2) The theological rationale for Christian involvement in party politics; 3) Pastoral and prophetic nature of ministry in the political and public space; 4) Methodist ecclesiology on the "duties of ministers" and its implications; and 5) Guidelines for party political chaplaincy.

## **2 History of the MCSA in the political sphere**

The literature on the history of the Church in Southern Africa reveals that the MCSA has directly and indirectly been involved in politics. A cardinal question to ask is what has been the historic pastoral and prophetic nature of ministry of Church, especially the MCSA in the political and public space? In its nature, the idea of politics is about the governance of people. The church believes that God's people should be governed well, with truth, justice and peace as well as with common good. In case where politics did not provide truth, justice and peace to God's people the Church historically raised her concerns. Prior to 1994 democratic elections in South Africa, for instance, the Church was concerned with the apartheid system which was oppressive to the majority of the South African people. An account of how the church fought against the system that was evil to human kind is well documented.<sup>4</sup> In the epoch of apartheid the MCSA took her political stand as early as 1948: "The Methodist Conference that same month (in 1948) stated that no person of any race should be deprived of constitutional rights or privileges merely on the grounds of race, morally binding contracts protecting such rights should be regarded on the high level of a pledges word."<sup>5</sup> This commitment became compelling during the struggle against a system that was oppressive to many a South African person as it called for a society where all the citizens of the country had dignity. The theology that all human beings are equally made in the Image of God informed the commitment to criticise the governing political party which entrenched inequality and injustice. The church rejected racism and came with a statement that it is God's will to be a "one and undivided" church.

In 1981 the MCSA held a conference which later came to be known as Obedience '81. The Conference made a declaration of its conviction "that it is the will of God for the Methodist Church that it should be one and undivided." This was a re-affirmation of the 1958 Conference decision that the Church should be "one and undivided" in opposition to the apartheid state's intentions to segregate the nation, and the Church. Since then the Church has attempted to remain intentionally united. The adoption of this moto expressed a clear intent to keep people of different races, ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds united within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. The Obedience '81 decision came at the height of the oppressive and violent enactment of apartheid in South Africa. Subsequent to Obedience '81 was Journey to New Land which shaped the Church's identity between 1992 and 1995. This was a clear response to the winds of change which were engulfing the South African political landscape at that time. A case in point here is that the MCSA recognized that it had a responsibility to participate in the social and political changes of that period. It may thus be deduced that the MCSA has historically offered a positive contribution in the political sphere of Southern Africa.

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<sup>4</sup> De Grunchy 1986

<sup>5</sup> De Grunchy 1986:54.

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Furthermore, the MCSA offered a positive contribution in the struggle against apartheid as a member of South African Council of Church (SACC). Worthy of note is the point that the SACC issued a historic statement "Message to the People of South Africa" which rejected apartheid as a "pseudo-gospel" and called Christians to obey God rather than man.<sup>6</sup> The statement was made during a period where some churches in South Africa supported the system of apartheid. A closer look at such a period shows that the solidarity of some churches with the governing political party compromised the independence of the Church in its witness to the Gospel. Segregation of the people was in contrast to the will of a triune God who wishes human beings to live in harmony and peace with each other.

Furthermore, the direct link of the MCSA to the political parties which condemn the apartheid system provides evidence of the Church's historical participation in politics. At the core of the establishment of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1912 was the involvement of the Church and her leaders. The ANC was influenced by faith and church people who had a conviction that core of the struggle was the idea of inclusion of all people, moral progress, common citizenship and non-racial society and nation.<sup>7</sup> At that time the leadership of the ANC that was influenced by Christian values was committed to social justice. This is against the background that the ANC had its first meeting in a Methodist Church building in Bloemfontein. The point that both Methodist ministers and laypersons historically led and openly participated in party politics, particularly the ANC is indisputable. These persons include Rev Dr E. J. Mqoboli who was appointed as chaplain of the ANC; Rev Zaccheus Richard Mahabane, who led the ANC as its President in 1924 to 1927 and 1937 to 1940. Rev Mahabane was an ordained minister of the MCSA.<sup>8</sup> In the years 1940 to 1949 Sefako Makgatho, a lay leader and preacher, was elected the President of the ANC.<sup>9</sup> Other Methodist ministers became presidents of other liberation political parties. Rev Dr S Mogoba was elected President of Pan African Congress in December 1997 after being a longest serving Methodist minister as executive secretary, and then as President/Presiding Bishop of Methodist Conference. It is clear therefore that the MCSA clergy and laity have historically been active in party politics and more importantly they have offered valuable contribution to party politics.

With respect to chaplaincy specifically in the ANC, the Methodist clergy historically provided a three dimensional ministry. First, the clergy person(s) provided spiritual direction and ministry. In this case, prayers for the members of the ANC were offer. Also, the ANC became the recipient of the Word of God from the chaplain. Secondly, the clergy person(s) provided pastoral care. The members of the ANC who were in hospitals were visited and prayed for. Also, the members who were left in the country when their loved ones were in exile were offered counselling. Third, the members of the ANC were provided education on morality. Teachings on "revolutionary morality" were offered by the chaplain. It may thus be deduced that on the capacity of being chaplain the Methodist clergy historically offered a positive contribution to party politics. This observation does not rule out the possibility of a negative contribution. None the less, what can we say of the continued participation in party politics? Is there any theological rationale for the involvement of Christians and their leaders in party politics today?

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<sup>6</sup> Villa-Vicencio 1986:200

<sup>7</sup> Lwason (2010)

<sup>8</sup> Mbeki 2013

<sup>9</sup> Kumalo 2010

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### **3 The theological rationale for Christian involvement in party politics**

Interestingly, the argument that Christians in general may be active in "politics" is less problematic as compare to the one that they may participate in "party politics."<sup>10</sup> Put differently, it is easier to accept the participation of Christian in general "politics" than to accept their involvement in "party politics." This is because politics in the context of party politics is a contested space especially in the democratic countries. However, if political parties are constituted by human being who are made in the Image of God, it make sense to argue that the expression of Christianity and the ministry of the Body of Christ – the Church – should extend to all aspects of life, including the political sphere. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that "to lead a spiritual life is to live as the people of God in all aspects of life."<sup>11</sup> A case in point is that the lordship of Christ that "extends to all of life, including the political, social and economic areas of our existence" holds water.<sup>12</sup>

Political governance "implies deliberations, aspiration for rationality, and subjecting governance by folkways to questioning and criticism."<sup>13</sup> If this is the case, it is then reasonable for Christians in general to be part of the preceding process of deliberation. In an instance where the "decisions about the economy, society and beliefs," among other issues, are made in the political sphere, especially within the political parties, it makes sense for Christians to be involve in such a process of decision-making. Importantly, the point that many of the members of the MCSA are affiliated to political party suggests that the Church is already involved in party politics.

The MCSA does not refute the participation of Christians in party politics. The theological reason for the MCSA not to condemn the participation of her members in party politics lies in the theology of "free-will." No doubt, "God created human beings with freedom of choice." Thus, it may be said that Methodist people may choose to affiliate to any political party and subsequently support any political ideals. However, as Methodism insists, it is imperative that the concept of "free-will" be coupled with the idea of Christian responsibility and obligation. Importantly, the juxtaposition of the concept of "free-will" and the idea of "freedom of choice" insist that "each person's freedom to choose" should not be "disadvantaged by someone else exercising their freedom."<sup>14</sup> That is, one's freedom of choice should not infringe the freedom of other people. Thus, the participation of Christians in party politics should be guided by the biblical principles which urge Christians to live according to the will of God.

The contribution of Christians to party politics is not only spiritual but also morally. Christians are best fit to offer a positive contribution towards the moral behaviour of a political party. "Christians cannot stand aloof, believing that politics is a dirty game, and complain about moral deterioration but failing to point the way for others in the leadership of

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<sup>10</sup> Tshaka and Senokoane, "The Christian politician," 1.

<sup>11</sup> Tshaka and Senokoane, "The Christian politician," 1.

<sup>12</sup> MCSA, *Methodist Book of Order*, 224.

<sup>13</sup> L.S Hulled, *Christianity and modern politics*, (Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 13.

<sup>14</sup> Rowan Williams, "Christianity: Public Religion and the Common Good," (Paper read at the St Andrew's Cathedral in Singapore, 12th May 2007), 1.

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political parties.”<sup>15</sup> It becomes clear that “politics cannot be separated from ethical considerations.”<sup>16</sup> As such, Sexwale's remark comes to mind:

Please – you must squat in our offices if we are not providing shelter to people... The church must keep as close to us as saliva on the tongue. If you forsake us, if you abandon us – we will sin; we are just human.<sup>17</sup>

The latter remark implies that politicians are not immune from the sinful nature of human being. The possible immorality of the politicians necessitate a ministry on the part of the Church to call them to repentance and a sense of striving for perfection, as John Wesley would say. Additionally, as Karl Barth argued, “the Civil community as such is spiritually blind and ignorant” and it has neither faith nor love nor hope.<sup>18</sup> Since the “Civil community” includes both the state and political parties, it therefore becomes critical that Christians occupy the political space, and more importantly the sphere of party politics to offer wisdom and guidance on issues of moral behaviour that is informed by their relationship with Christ. Because it is possible that Christians could offer harm to the “Civil community” as they are also sinful human beings, the contribution provided by Christians needs to be within the framework of the doctrine and policy of the church. The contribution of the Church to party politics should thus reflect both a degree of faithfulness to its head who is Christ and dependence on the Holy spirit for guidance.

Noteworthy, some of the South African theologians warned against the privatisation of Christianity by arguing that:

If we as Christians, who make up a statistical majority of 70% of South African society, do not commit ourselves to significant processes of people-centred development, anti-racism and church-re-unification, but continue in our lukewarm and comfortable private Christianities, we should not be surprised when South African society at large leaves us behind or even splits us out.<sup>19</sup>

Put differently, choosing “not to participate in community activities (including the community of political parties) may lead to isolation and a failure to witness the gospel.” It becomes important that the church-community creates room for the gospel in the world.<sup>20</sup> The warning against the privatisation of Christianity is relevant in the discussion of party politics in the context of the MCSA.

It is argued that, “the object of the promise and the hope in which the Christian community has its eternal goal consists of (according to the unmistakable assertion of the New Testament) not an eternal Church but the *polis* (community) built by God and that has come down from heaven to earth.”<sup>21</sup> This observation is based on Revelations 21:2; 24: “the nations shall walk in the light of his glory” and Matthew 25:31ff: “in the *basileia* (reign) of God – in the Judgment of the King on the throne of his glory.” “Deducing from the teachings

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<sup>15</sup> Tshaka and Senokoane, “The Christian politician,” 3.

<sup>16</sup> Tshaka and Senokoane, “The Christian politician,” 2.

<sup>17</sup> Tokyo Sexwale 1995:11.

<sup>18</sup> Karl Barth, *Church and state*, (London, Student Christian Movement Press, 1939), 150.

<sup>19</sup> Boitumelo Senokoane and JNJ Kritzing, “Tambach remixed: ‘Christians in South African Society’,” *HTS Theologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 63/4 (2007): 173.

<sup>20</sup> D Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, (Minneapolis, MN, Fortress Press, 1995), 355.

<sup>21</sup> Tshaka and Senokoane, “The Christian politician,” 1-8; cf. Barth, *Church and state*, 154.

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of the gospels as well as from the Letter to the Romans, Christians are called to offer 'supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings' for all of humanity and, in particular, for kings and all those in positions of authority."<sup>22</sup> "It is imperative to note that the church does not do these duties chiefly because it can come into good term with the state, but because it is called for to perform so."<sup>23</sup> The calling of the Church to extend the lordship of Christ in the political sphere therefore becomes the fundamental rationale for the involvement of Christians in party politics. A critical question to ask is: Should the involvement of Christians to party politics be limited to members of the Church or should it include the Methodist clergy?

#### **4 Methodist Ecclesiology on the "duties of ministers" and its implications**

The bearing that the duties of Methodist ministers have on the debate on "party political chaplaincy" needs to be investigated. The duties<sup>24</sup> include:

4.76. Ministers, as those who have been overwhelmed by the saving love of Jesus Christ, are called to proclaim by word and by deed this saving love for all people. As the Lord has accepted all sinners without condition, so Ministers must declare unconditional acceptance and forgiveness for all. A Minister's duty is to use the pulpit to preach this Gospel and this Gospel only, preaching both pastorally and prophetically. Therefore they must faithfully nurture their own spiritual life, they must be diligent in preparation and in studying the Scriptures and other material which will provide equipment for their Calling, and their homes must be led in such a way as to be a witness to the Gospel. Ministers are to be servants of all Christ's people by being pastors to them in their homes and in every other situation. The Minister's duty is to set before the people by precept and example the ideal of Scriptural Holiness, and to instruct people in Christian faith and life.

4.77. Ministers are to preach and to perform all acts of Worship, to exercise oversight and to apply the Methodist Discipline, in the churches or other places of worship already erected or to be erected in the Circuit to which they are appointed.

4.78. Ministers shall administer the Sacraments but shall not, without the approval of the Bishop, use set forms of worship for the Sacraments other than those that have been authorised by Conference.

4.79. Ministers shall observe and implement the provisions of Laws and Discipline and all other policies, decisions, practices and usages of the Church.

4.80. Ministers shall use every effort to maintain Class Meetings, directing both public instruction and private pastoral influence toward this object.

That "a Minister's duty is to use the pulpit to preach this Gospel and this Gospel only, preaching both pastorally and prophetically" highlight the critical use of the pulpit in ministry.<sup>25</sup> A Methodist minister is therefore an interlocutor of the Gospel of Christ. Based on the Methodist theology and polity, the point that the Gospel is partly meant to be conveyed in the pulpit emphasises the pivotal role that preaching has in ministry. A Methodist minister is

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<sup>22</sup> Tshaka and Senokoane, "The Christian politician," 4.

<sup>23</sup> Tshaka and Senokoane, "The Christian politician," 4.

<sup>24</sup> MCSA, *Methodist Book of Order*, 41.

<sup>25</sup> MCSA, *Methodist Book of Order*, 41.

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thus a person who appropriates scriptures in a manner which is both pastoral and prophetic. What this means is that the bridge between scripture and society which is established by a minister from the pulpit. Since some of the Methodists are members of various political parties, the pulpit becomes a space where a clergy person may first and foremost minister to both members and leaders of political parties. In this space the clergy person assumes a pastoral and prophetic role in a way that allows the Church to equally minister to political parties. However, the argument that the usage of the pulpit as a sole way to convey the gospel of Christ is inconclusive mainly because the great commission directs the Church to go the world to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mat 28:19). As such, the Gospel may be extended to the people outside the pulpit and more importantly in other spheres of life where people are socially, economically and politically located.

The view that "Ministers, as those who have been overwhelmed by the saving love of Jesus Christ, are called to proclaim by word and by deed this saving love for all people" is critical in understanding the ministry of a clergy person in the life of the Church and community.<sup>26</sup> Because the proclamation of the saving love of Jesus Christ need to be made to the all people the MCSA's belief that "the lordship of Christ extends to all of life, including the political, social and economic areas of our existence" is compelling.<sup>27</sup> The Methodist clergy person is thus one who avails the lordship of Christ to all people. In this case, not only does the Methodist theology provide a reason for the involvement of the clergy in the political sphere, it also calls for ministry in the political spheres. The point that the phrase "all people" is inclusive is in contrast to a selective and exclusive model of ministry is decisive. In the context of party politics, the implication of Methodist ecclesiology is this: the lordship of Christ needs to be availed to many a political party rather than to a single party. In other words, a situation where the Church, through her clergy persons, ministers to a single political party stands in discontinuity with the Methodist ecclesiology. Methodist theology on the church also insists that ministry should be extended to governments, national parliaments, provincial, regional and municipal institutions and traditional spheres of leadership.

The view that "Ministers are to be servants of all Christ's people by being pastors to them in their homes and in every other situation" supports the call for ministry in the political sphere.<sup>28</sup> Given the point that political parties influence the lives and moral compass of the Methodist congregants, particularly in the political sphere, and most importantly, based on the Methodist ecclesiology, it is therefore imperative that the Church, through her clergy, occupy the political space. As the MCSA puts it, "In the Providence of God Methodism was raised up to spread Scriptural Holiness throughout the land by the proclamation of the Evangelical Faith".<sup>29</sup> A critical dimension to Methodism is the spread of holiness in many a sphere of life. The idea of spreading scriptural holiness brings to mind Benefiel's argument. He says:

It is the character of the people of God to engage the world in mission in a similar way that God has displayed in Christ Jesus, that is to say, incarnationally. Rather than moving away from the sin, pain and suffering of the world, the character of

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<sup>26</sup> MCSA, *Methodist Book of Order*, 41.

<sup>27</sup> MCSA, *Methodist Book of Order*, 224

<sup>28</sup> MCSA, *Methodist Book of Order*, 42.

<sup>29</sup> MCSA, *Methodist Book of Order*, 11.

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holiness in the people of God inclines them to move right into the midst of such a world.<sup>30</sup>

Based on the preceding remark, the MCSA clergy are called to exhibit the incarnational approach to ministry which was exemplified by Christ, the Lord of the Christian Church. If "the original purpose of Methodism 'to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land'" as correctly suggested by the MCSA, the ministry of the clergy in various political parties may thus be viewed as being within the Methodist ecclesiology.<sup>31</sup> However, one still wonders what the pastoral and prophetic nature of ministry is in the political and public space.

## **5 Pastoral and prophetic nature of ministry in the political and public space<sup>32</sup>**

It is necessary to acknowledge that each Christian is "created by God with a distinct calling and capacity."<sup>33</sup> That is, "the recognition that every person is related to God before they are related to anything or anyone else" as well as the awareness that "God has defined who they are and who they can be by his own eternal purpose" suggests that one's ministry in the public sphere is, in its nature, a response to God's calling. An individual and the Church should thus discern such a calling. Christians therefore receive both the calling and the spiritual gifts to minister in the political and public sphere. Importantly, "when human beings are brought into relationship with Jesus Christ by faith as a community in which everyone's gifts are set free for the service of others," the Church may in turn create space for each person to offer their gifts, and more significantly their ministry to other people in all sphere of the community.<sup>34</sup> It may therefore be noted that "the stress in Christian thinking on the active responsibility laid on each person means that whether government or private initiative takes the lead, there is a calling to be involved in the work of setting each other free to respond to the possibilities opened up by God."<sup>35</sup>

With regards to the church's relation with political power a caution on compromising the necessary independence of the Church in its witness to the Gospel should be made. In certain instance, when churches have directly tried to exercise political power they have often compromised their real character as well as their independence in its witness to the Gospel of Christ. As aforementioned, literature on the churches' relations with the apartheid government reveals the way the Church compromised her independence in its witness to the Gospel. However, when the churches have retreated in the face of power, as it is the case in the post-apartheid South Africa, it may be argued that "they have risked betraying (*betrayed*) their distinctiveness" as well as their calling to extend the lordship of Christ to all people in all spheres of life.<sup>36</sup> "Christians are called; it seems, to live out the vision of relationships in the Body of Christ without fear of conflict with the rest of society; because sometimes that living out of these relationships can be unpopular with society."<sup>37</sup> In other words, the prophetic nature of the calling and role of the Church may render her unpopular. However,

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<sup>30</sup> Benefiel 2006:137.

<sup>31</sup> MCSA, *Methodist Book of Order*, 172.

<sup>32</sup> This section is partly based on the lecture given by Rowan Williams, the then Archbishop of Canterbury at St Andrew's Cathedral in Singapore. Cf. Williams, "Christianity," 1-8.

<sup>33</sup> Williams, "Christianity," 1-8.

<sup>34</sup> Williams, "Christianity," 5.

<sup>35</sup> Williams, "Christianity," 5.

<sup>36</sup> Italics are an insertion.

<sup>37</sup> Williams, "Christianity," 6.



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God calls the Church to minister without fear of conflict with the society. In as much as the Church may affirm the good works of the political parties as well as political structure, she is also called to be critical of them, especially when the behaviour of politicians is harmful to the society. However, the Church is "not called to impose" her "vision on the whole of society," including the political parties".<sup>38</sup>

In the context of governance, be it in national parliaments, provincial, regional and municipal institutions and traditional spheres of leadership, Christian may assume the role of arguing "that the voice of faith should be heard clearly in the decision-making processes of society."<sup>39</sup> What this mean is that the ministry of the Church transcends the provision of spiritual disciplines such as prayer and spiritual direction, among others. The Church is also called to extend the lordship of Christ to processes that impact on many people in the society. As Williams pointed out:

... the churches do not campaign for political control (which would undermine their appeal to the value of personal freedom) but for public visibility - for the capacity to argue for and defend their vision in the public sphere, to try and persuade both government and individuals of the possibility of a more morally serious way of ordering public life.<sup>40</sup>

In addition, "A healthy democracy, then, is one in which the state listens to the voices of moral vision that spring from communities that do not depend on the state itself for their integrity and meaning - above all the communities of faith."<sup>41</sup> Noteworthy, the Church is and may be a conversational partner with the political parties and structures of governance where she calls for moral priorities. Being a conversational partner suggest that the Church extend a call "for a proper hearing of its concerns and - ideally - willingness on the part of political leaders to show self-critical honesty and, where appropriate, repentance."<sup>42</sup> It is not that the political parties and governance structure as well as the laws of society "must represent in all respects the commands of the gospel;" it is rather that the political parties and governance structure are "continually engaged in conversation with those who speak for the Gospel."<sup>43</sup> In this case, the Church becomes a critical friend to the political parties and/or governance structure as well as its laws.

## **6 Guidelines for Party Political Chaplaincy**

Based on the discussion above, we may thus attempt to provide guidelines for the MCSA's response to the debate on party political chaplaincy "Politics is therefore unavoidable and necessary; yet we need a kind of leadership that is ethical and can strive to transcend political ideologies."<sup>44</sup> Thus it is imperative to set guideline for the Church in relation to matters of clergy and political parties, especially ones that are grounded on theology. These include:

### ***General***

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<sup>38</sup> Williams, "Christianity," 1-8.

<sup>39</sup> Williams, "Christianity," 1-8.

<sup>40</sup> Williams, "Christianity," 7.

<sup>41</sup> Williams, "Christianity," 7.

<sup>42</sup> Williams, "Christianity," 8.

<sup>43</sup> Williams, "Christianity," 8.

<sup>44</sup> Tshaka and Senokoane, "The Christian politician," 1-7.

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- Expressions or forms of our ministry in the public/political domain include: nonpartisan ministry to political parties, governments, national parliaments, provincial, regional and municipal institutions and traditional spheres of leadership.
- Permission to minister to political parties or political structures will only be granted where the minister concerned is competent and acceptable and considered a worthy representative of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.
- If a Minister does not receive any payment and other incentives he/she may not be seconded to a political party or political structure.
- In a case where a payment and other incentives are to be received by a Minister, then he/she may apply for secondment.

### ***Application Procedure and Process***

- A Minister desiring to accept an invitation from a political party or political structure to be a chaplain or a political organisation or structure desiring the services of a minister shall submit a written request with appropriate motivation to the Presiding Bishop.
- The Presiding Bishop shall notify the Bishop of the District in which the Minister resides who shall appoint a Pastoral Commission to investigate the relevant factors, interview the minister and any persons it deems necessary and make a recommendation to the Presiding Bishop.
- The Pastoral Commission shall investigate the following matters:
  - (a) the nature of the organisation to which chaplaincy is sought and whether this is in harmony with the mission and ministry of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa;
  - (b) Whether or not of the ministry to the political party or political structure compromises the necessary independence of the Church in its witness to the Gospel in society;
  - (c) the role and function of the Minister in the position of chaplaincy and whether it is in line with the calling and work of a minister and the ministry of Word and Sacrament;
  - (d) the gifts and training of the Minister and how these relate to the position;
  - (e) the motives of the Minister and whether there is any loss of call or other factors which have led to the application;
  - (f) how chaplaincy would affect the Minister's family;
  - (g) what payment and other incentives the Minister will receive;
  - (h) receive evaluation of his/her work in the Circuit;
  - (i) any other matters considered relevant.
- The Pastoral Commission shall also investigate with the District Bishop and the Circuit in which the Minister is stationed whether he/she can be released from the appointment or

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may serve as chaplain whilst in the Circuit. Ministering to political parties or political structures whilst in Circuit should be encouraged.

- The Presiding Bishop may grant permission for the Minister to serve as a chaplain at any time of the year if satisfied that the application has met the requirements of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.
- All applications for chaplaincy in any political party or political structure must be referred to the Connexional Executive for ratification.
- If a Minister takes up an appointment or accept an invitation to be a chaplain in any political party or political structure without the necessary approval, he/she may be considered to have resigned from the ministry. The Minister shall have the right of appeal to the Connexional Executive.
- The initial period of chaplaincy in any political party or political structure shall be five years unless a shorter period is requested. Extensions shall be for a further five years at a time and shall be applied for in writing to the Presiding Bishop. During the last year of each five year period the chaplaincy in any political party or political structure shall be reviewed by a Pastoral Committee appointed by the Presiding Bishop in terms of the applicable criteria in the Book of Order above and shall include an assessment of the Minister's performance during chaplaincy in any political party or political structure. An assessment and recommendation should be obtained from the organisation.
- The Bishop shall twice a year initiate a pastoral consultation with each seconded Minister in the District.
- In a case where a payment and other incentives are received by a chaplain to political party or political structure and he/she fully serves such a party or structure, he/she must accept that he/she can be recalled at any time by the Methodist Church of Southern Africa to take up an appointment in Circuit. In such a case the Minister would be required to resign from their post in the organisation and take up the appointment required by Conference. At least three months notice should normally be given to the Minister and the organisation.
- When a Minister wishes to terminate a ministry to a political party or political structure and return to a circuit appointment he/she shall advise the Presiding Bishop in writing. The Presiding Bishop shall obtain an assessment and recommendation concerning his/her performance during ministry to a political party or political structure from such a party or structure to which he/she has been ministering to.

### ***Regulations***

- Chaplain Ministers in any political party or political structure have responsibilities to both the Church and the organisation to which they are seconded.
- Chaplain Ministers in any political party or political structure are in a covenantal relationship with the Methodist Church of Southern Africa through their ordination and are subject to its discipline and requirements in order to remain in good standing with the Church.

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- As representatives of the Church they must not conduct themselves in any way which will bring discredit on the good name of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.
- They must remain faithful to the doctrines, mission and values of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, especially in matters of conscience.
- They should not be a spoke person of a political party.
- They should not be card holders of any political party.
- A minister should be a chaplaincy of the province in which he or she is stationed.
- A minister should not wear any symbol or name tag or emblem of any political party or an attire of any political party.
- Chaplain Ministers in any political party or political structure are to attend the annual synod of the District in which he/she reside and if possible at least one ministerial retreat a year.
- Chaplain Ministers in any political party or political structure are to submit a written annual report on his/her work through the Bishop to Synod.