

A HANDBOOK
FOR
CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

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THE PREFACE

This handbook was compiled as a membership manual for use in local churches. It is intended for prospective members as well as members to understand the heritage and structure of the Methodist Church. Suggestions for improvement are welcomed by the Board of Laity since this book is intended for the Chinese Methodist Churches in Australia as a whole.

Some may wish to use this handbook as a follow-up tool for new Christians and prepare them to become members of the Church.

This handbook was translated, edited & compiled mostly from the Membership Booklet (Chinese Edition) published by the Board of Christian Literature of the Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Malaysia. However Chapters 5, 8, 10 & 11 are taken from the Book of Discipline of the Chinese Methodist Church in Australia (2006 Edition).

We wish to thank Mr. Allen Ling for re-typing and formatting these into printable pages and for binding purpose.

We pray that this handbook will contribute to the laying of good “foundations” for the Church in Australia.

Chapter 1

The Methodism

The Methodism is rooted back in the first century till now and until the second coming of Christ. Like other denominations, Methodism transpired from the early church and the teachings of Jesus Christ himself, the apostles, St. Augustine, St. Francis and other church scholars.

After John Wesley experienced his spiritual renewal in 1738, he formed the “methodical class” (which became the Methodist Church) with his brother, Charles Wesley though he was an ordained Anglican pastor. This was because his church members gathered to study the Bible daily and obeyed the Bible’s teaching vividly in their daily life and restlessly serving and caring for the needs of the society.

The Evangelical or Methodist church is over 265 years old since its founding 1738, Methodism has spread rapidly across the land with membership exceeded 2000 million already and has become the largest Christian denomination.

The Methodist Church

The Methodist Church is led by the clergy people but assisted by the lay people. It also has a “connectional” structure. So this is the episcopacy system in leadership which is different than the church led by the elders (who are lay people). However lots of the church ministry are led by the lay people, such as the local preachers proclaiming the Gospel and group-leaders in taking care of the membership groupings, church members to be elected as stewards of the Local Church Executive Committee (LCEC) at a Local Church, the chairperson of the LCEC to chair the church board meetings, numerous church programs and activities are carried out by the lay people supervised by the clergy. Hence Methodist Church is a democratic organization and needs members to work together in developing and nurturing the church.

With participation and collaboration by the church members, the Methodist Church has grown from strength to strength speedily under the leadership of the clergy people. But this does not mean that the lay people want to fight for equal status, authority and power as the clergy. This is because whatever the clergy has, the lay people also entitled to. The Methodist Discipline (MD) has clearly specified the structure of a Methodist church already. There should not be any power struggle anymore. Therefore all members and stewards have to accept the leadership of the clergy to carryout the church ministry and to build one united church for God. This is evidenced in Ephesians 4:16, “from him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” If the church is divided due to power struggle, then all church ministries would be destructed. God will not bless the church where people do not obey and collaborate with His servant (the clergy). In light of that the church members and stewards should not treat the clergy as their employee and themselves as the boss. According to **Clause 74** of the Methodist Discipline, the duties and responsibilities of the LCEC include the followings:-

- (1) To administer the affairs of the Local Church both spiritual and temporal as hereinafter set forth subject to the authority of the Local Conference;
- (2) To promote and to have general supervision, under the direction of the minister, of the administration and program of the local church.

Thus all stewards of Local Churches should be submissive to the leadership of the clergy and carry out duties and responsibilities diligently in accomplishing the objectives of the church. This is because the MD has clearly specified the roles each member should play in the church and it would be very difficult to over-turn that working relationship. The relationship between a clergy and the church member is like the husband-and-wife relationship which is inseparable.

Indeed wherever there is a Methodist church, there is the clergyman; and wherever there is a clergyman, there is the congregation of members. Any dispute would definitely bring suffering to all parties concerned.

Chapter 2

Who are the Methodists?

The founder of the Methodist church, John Wesley (1703 – 1791) said that a Methodist is one who loves the Lord, his God with all his heart, all his soul, all his mind and all his strength. This is rooted in the greatest commandment declared by Jesus Christ in Matt. 22:37: “love the Lord, your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

Why we should love our Lord?

Religion is focused in loving your Lord. This love would control our emotion and direct our thoughts. Love is the momentum of our action. So we can summarize that all religions are born of love by totally submitting one's life to the Lord.

We love our Lord today should equally motivate us to love all people. The way we are able to testify how much we love our Lord is by the way we love our brothers and sisters. That is why Paul said: “if any one says I love God yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. Whoever loves God must also love his brother.” (I John 4:20–21) But we should be aware of the progress of this commandment. That is we have to love our Lord first then to love people. Only when we love our Lord then we become loveable. The foundation of our love is totally based on our love for our Lord. That is why Professor Berkeley explained that the true religion is to love the Lord and to love those who are created in God's image. This love for the Lord and people is not out of vague emotional feeling but out of totally submitting to the Lord and sincerely serving the Lord.

John Wesley definitely based on this objective declared that a Methodist member should be a Christian who loves the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. Though Wesley formed the Group (later becomes the Methodist Church) after his personal spiritual renewal on 24th May 1738, his personal life style and teachings still inspire people and have a distinct significant meaning to the church today. Hence a Methodist member should love the Lord with all his heart, soul mind and strength.

Our Aim: to be a spiritually mature Christian;

Our Model: through missions to share God's love;

Our Care: to focus on the societal problem;

Our Focus: to achieve one united world;

Our Belief: the gracious and forgiving love of the Lord.

Chapter 3

Cornerstones of Methodist Belief

1. Conversion

- It may mean a change from sinfulness to a life of grace with the help of the Holy Spirit;
- It can mean a change from incompleteness of Christian faith to a complete assurance;
- The change can happen suddenly or it can happen gradually;
- After the Alders Gate experience Wesley said: "An assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from that of sin and death."

2. Justification

- Justification by faith alone is a predominated Protestant doctrine;
- From Luther's day it has served to remind Christians that they have direct access to God and that forgiveness of sins is a matter between the individual and God in Christ;
- The whole of Paul's epistle to the Romans seemed to Wesley to give a natural and easy account of God's justification of man. To quote Romans 3:26: "We conclude that a man is justified by faith." A reading of Wesley suggests that he coupled faith with grace as in Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God."

3. Sanctification

- Sanctification is what God works in us by His Spirit;
- It is to some degree the fruit of justification;
- Wesley argued that upon being justified a person 'gradually increased in spiritual stature and strength'. St. Paul wrote: "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly." The process of sanctification is a process of spiritual saturation;
- When you become a member of the Methodist Church you not only confess the full Christian faith but you promise to support the Church with your service. This is the beginning of a growth in the stewardship of all life.

4. Perfection

- This is directly a Methodist emphasis. Wesley wrote: "This is Wesley's doctrine!";
- Wesley's utterances on this subject were frequent and insistent.
- Perhaps a three point summary of his statement made after forty years of exposition, from 1724 to 1765, will serve as a good guide:
 - i. Perfection is purity of intention, dedicating all the life to God; It is devoting, not a part, but all our soul, body and substance to God;
 - ii. Perfection is the entire mind which is in Christ; enabling us to walk as Christ walked;
 - iii. Perfection loves God with all our heart and our neighbors as ourselves.

Chapter 4

Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church

Article I. - Of Faith in the Holy Trinity

There is but one living and true God, everlasting without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity - the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Article II. - Of the Word, or Son of God, who was made very Man

The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the word of the blessed Virgin, so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile His Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for the actual sins of man.

Article III. - Of the Resurrection of Christ

Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again His body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith He ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until His return to judge all men at the last day.

Article IV. - Of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

Article V. - Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

The Holy Scripture contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or to be thought requisite necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scriptures we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testaments of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church. The names of the canonical books are:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, Cantica or Song of Solomon, Four Prophets the Greater, Twelve Prophets the Less.

All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical.

Article IV. - Of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New, for both in the Old and New Testament, everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given by God to Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.

Article VII. - Of Original or Birth Sin

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.

Article VIII. - Of Free Will

The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

Article IX. - Of the Justification of Man

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort.

Article X. - Of Good Works

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

Article XI. - Of Works of Supererogation

Voluntary works - besides, over and above God's commandments - which are called works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required; whereas Christ saith plainly: When ye have done all that is commanded of you, say, "We are unprofitable servants."

Article XII. - Of Sin after Justification

Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against Holy Spirit, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification: after we have received the Holy Spirit, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives.

And therefore they are to be condemned who say that they can no more sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

Article XIII. - Of the Church

The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

Article XV. - Of Speaking in the Congregation in such a Tongue as the People Understand

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the primitive Church, to have public prayer in the Church, or to administer the Sacraments, in a tongue not understood by people.

Article XVI. - Of the Sacraments

Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by which He doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken but also strengthen and confirm our faith in Him.

There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. Those five commonly called sacraments, that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel; being such as having partly grown out of the corrupt following of the apostles and partly are states of life allowed in the Scripture, but yet have not the like nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, because they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

The sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or be carried about; but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves condemnation, as St. Paul said, I Cor.11:29.

Article XVII. - Of Baptism

Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The baptism of young children is to be retained in the church.

Article XVIII.- Of the Lord's Supper

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves, one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is the partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ. Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of the bread and wine in the Supper of our Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of the Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the means whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.

Article XIX. - Of Both Kinds

The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people; for both the parts of the Lord's Supper, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be administered to all Christians alike.

Article XX. - Of the One Oblation of Christ, finished upon the Cross

The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in the which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission for pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.

Article XXI. - Of the Marriage of Ministers

The ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage; therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve best to godliness.

Article XXII. - Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches

It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike, for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposefully doth openly break the rites and the ceremonies of the church to which he belongeth, which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly (that others may fear to do the like) as one that offendeth against the common order of the church and wounded the consciences of weak brethren.

Every particular church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.

Article XXIII.- Of the Duty of Christian to the Civil Authority

It is the duty of all Christians, and especially of all Christian ministers, to observe and obey the laws and commands of the governing or supreme authority of the country of which they are citizens or subjects or in which they reside, and to use all laudable means to encourage and enjoin obedience to the powers that be.

Article XXIV.- Of Christian Men's Goods

The riches and goods of Christians, are not common, as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesses, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.

Article XXV. - Of a Christian Man's Oath

As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James, his apostle, so we judge that the Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may swear when the magistrate required, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth.

Article XXVI.- Of Sanctification

Sanctification is the renewal of our fallen nature by the Holy Ghost, received in faith through Jesus Christ, whose blood of atonement cleaned from all sin; whereby we are not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but are washed from its pollution, saved from its powers, and are enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts and to walk in His holy commandments blameless.

Chapter 5

The Methodist Social Creed

1. **Our Heritage**

The interest of The Methodist Church in social welfare springs from the gospel, and from the labors of John Wesley, who ministered to the physical, intellectual, and social needs of the people to whom he preached the gospel of personal redemption.

In our historic position we have sought to follow Christ in bringing the whole of life, with its activities, possessions, and relationships into conformity with the will of God.

As Methodists we have an obligation to affirm our position on social and economic questions.

2. **Our Theological Basis**

The Methodist Church must view the perplexing times and problems that we face today in the light of the life and teachings of Jesus. Jesus taught us to love our neighbors and seek justice for them as well as for ourselves. To be silent in the face of need, injustice, and exploitation is to deny him.

We believe that God is Father of all peoples and races, that Jesus Christ is his Son, that all men are brothers, and that each person is of infinite worth as a child of God.

We believe that “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.” Our own capacities and all we possess are gifts of the Creator, and should be held and used in stewardship to him.

We believe that God in Christ is seeking to redeem all men and also society. This redemption is a continuing necessity.

We believe that the grace of God in Christ is available for redemption from individual and social sin as we seek in penitence and obedience to do his holy will.

We believe that all persons have supreme value in the sight of God, and ought to be so regarded by us. We test all institutions and practices by their effect upon persons. Since Jesus died for the redemption of all men, we believe we should live to help save man from sin and from every influence which would harm or destroy him.

3. **Our Declaration of Social Concern**

Applying the foregoing principles, The Methodist Church declares itself as follows:

a) The Family

We seek equal rights and justice for all persons; protection of the individual and the family by high standards of morality; Christian education for marriage, parenthood, and the home; adequate housing, improved marriage and divorce laws.

We believe that the Church must be vitally concerned with the health and welfare needs of all people, first within the family, and where necessary, through institutional care with high standards of scientific service and Christian dedication.

We believe that planned parenthood, practiced with respect for human life, fulfills rather than violates the will of God. It is the duty of each married couple prayerfully and responsibly to seek parenthood, avert it, or defer it, in accordance with the best expression of their Christian love. Families in all parts of the world should have available to them necessary information and medical assistance for birth control through public and private programs. This issue must be seen in reference to the pressing population problem now before the whole world.

We affirm that life begins at conception and that the human embryo is not simply a mass of tissue that has the potential to become a human being – it is the beginning of a human life with a vast potential. We therefore do not subscribe to abortion, except on medical grounds. We call on all Christians to a searching and prayerful inquiry in situations in which abortion may be contemplated and to seek medical, pastoral and other appropriate counseling.

We believe it is the plain responsibility of the family, as it is also the deep concern of the community, that welfare of children whose mothers are employed outside the home be safeguarded. This responsibility includes provision for the protection, education, spiritual nurture, and wholesome recreation of every child, and for religious and educational programs which will secure these ends.

The Church views with great concern the increasing number of divorces and affirms the need adequate premarital and marital counseling as well as marital enrichment programs. We also encourage an active and supportive commitment of the church and our society to minister in love to the divorced and their families.

We recognize the burden of single parent families and the need for understanding, care and support from the community and the church. We view with concern the diminishing time available for families to be together in our modern society. Families need to give priority to spending quality time together for family life enrichment and in worship and in recreation. We believe that children have a duty to honour, respect and care for their parents especially in sickness and old age.

b) Economic Life

1. Christianity and the Economic Order

With full acknowledgment of stewardship under God and accountability to him, we stand for the acquisition of property by moral processes and the right to private ownership thereof. We refuse to identify Christianity with any economic system. We are under obligation to test each aspect of every economic order by the commands of Christ and judge its practices by the Christian gospel. We believe that it is our duty not only to bring Christ to the individual, but also to bring the increasingly technological society within which we live more nearly into conformity with the teachings of Christ. We believe that a free democratic way of life, influenced by Christian principles, can bring to mankind a society in which liberty is preserved, justice established, and brotherhood achieved.

We believed in the use of such opportunities for political action as are consistent with Christian principles. We urge Christians to view political responsibilities as an opportunity for Christian witness and service.

2. Responsible use of Power

The Christian point of view demands that concentrations of power in government, labor, business, and religious organizations be used responsibly. The task of the church in this regard is to help people in positions of power and the organizations which they serve to achieve and exercise a high level of social responsibility.

3. Poverty and Unemployment

We believe that the economic development which makes possible material plenty for all imposes upon us great moral responsibility, in that the physical and spiritual development of millions of persons throughout the world is hindered by poverty. We therefore stand for the eradication of poverty everywhere.

We believe it is our Christian duty to provide opportunities for education and training for people to earn a living for themselves and their dependents, so that they may take advantage of new technology.

Lack of significant employment tends to destroy human self-respect. We believe that employable workers must be safeguarded from enforced unemployment.

4. Wealth

We recognize the perils of prosperity. Our Lord has told us that we cannot serve God and mammon. As Christians we must examine earnestly before God our personal and business practices, lest we adopt the standards and assumptions of a materialistic society. Churches and their institutions as well as individuals own property, invest funds, and employ labor. In these areas practices and relationships must conform to highest Christian standards.

5. Working Conditions

We oppose all forms of social, economic, and moral waste. We urge the protection of the worker from dangerous and unsanitary working conditions, and from occupational diseases.

We stand for reasonable hours of labor, for just wages, for a fair day's work, for a fair day's wages, for just working conditions, for periods of leisure, and for an equitable division of the product of industry.

We believe special protection should be provided for women and children, as well as migrant workers and others especially vulnerable to exploitation.

6. Social Benefits for Workers

We stand for public and private programs of economic security for old age, for adequate insurance covering sickness and injury to the workers and for increased protection against those preventable conditions which produce want.

7. The Right to Organize for Collective Bargaining

We stand for the right of employees and employers alike to organize for collective bargaining, protection of both in the exercise of their right, the responsibility of both to bargain in good faith, and the obligation of both to work for the public good.

8. Town and Country Life

We recognize the basic significance of town and country areas in relation to population supply, natural resources, community life, and Christian culture. We believe farmers, other agriculture workers, and those displaced by mechanization should have opportunity to earn a fair income.

Methodism, because of its large town and country membership and world-wide impact, must lead in developing an adequate Christian program in rural areas everywhere. This should pertain to people in their relationship to God, to the stewardship of the soil and the conservation of all natural resources, and to family, church, and community welfare.

9. Urban Life

We believe the inner city to be a mission field crying out for bold new creative ways of witness. Here is emerging a pagan generation committed to values that run counter to those of the Christ. Therefore we call our urban congregation to a deeper involvement in neighborhood life. We call the Church to come into the city for Christ's sake, there to touch all forgotten persons with his passion.

10. Christian Vocation

We believe that every employable person so far as possible should be engaged in some vocation productive of common good. Every such vocation should be viewed as a Christian calling by those who pursue it as well as by those who receive its benefits, and our daily work should be regarded as a sphere of service to God. The creative use of leisure is also a major responsibility for the Christian.

c) The Church and General Welfare

The Church is called to be a redeeming community of discerning Christian love - a fellowship of those who confess their sin, who rejoice in the love of God freely given, and who commit themselves continually to spiritual excellence in every facet of life.

1. Alcohol Problems

We believe that the Christian principle of love for God and neighbor calls us to abstain from the use of alcoholic beverages and to minister to those victimized by their use. The use of beverage alcohol imperils the abundant life to which Christ calls us. This is especially true in an organized and mechanized society. Individuals and families are destroyed by its use. We join with men of good conscience who seek to overcome the social, economic, and moral waste which this indulgence has created. The Church must become a healing and redemptive fellowship for those who suffer because of beverage alcohol.

2. Crime and Rehabilitation

We stand for the application of the redemptive principle in treating law offenders and for study and action directed toward the improvement of laws, correctional facilities and services, and court procedures in order to facilitate rehabilitation. For this reason we deplore capital punishment.

We do not believe an individual should be excused from his personal responsibility to society; but we recognize that crime, and in particular juvenile delinquency leading to crime, is often a result of family failure and bad social conditions. Christian citizens and churches have a special opportunity and responsibility for creating those conditions of family life and social surroundings, wholesome recreation, vocational training, personal counseling and social adjustment by which crime may be reduced and offenders rehabilitated and redeemed by God's grace.

3. Gambling

We stand for the achievement of community and personal standards, which make unnecessary the resort to petty or commercial gambling as a recreation, escape, or producer of public or charitable revenue. As an act of faith and love, Christians should abstain from all gambling, and should participate in efforts to minister to those victimized by the practice, including compulsive gamblers.

4. Mental Health and Medical Care

We stand for the provision of adequate medical care for all people, with special attention being given the aging, the young, and minority and low income groups. We strongly favor the healing ministries of the Church and other private groups. We support our government, individuals, and foundations in required research in public health; and we support legislation to meet these needs.

We believe that adequate facilities with professionally trained staff must be made available for the emotionally ill and the mentally retarded of every community. We also believe that churches may become spiritual centres of healing through worship, pastoral concern, and volunteer service for the emotionally ill.

5. Drug Abuse

We seek to overcome those social and psychological forces which lead so large a part of our society to unhealthful dependence upon tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. The illicit traffic in drugs cannot be tolerated. Society must provide through public and private facilities for the treatment, rehabilitation, and after-care of narcotic addicts and other victims of drug abuse.

6. Sex in Christian Life

We believe that sexual intercourse within holy matrimony with fidelity and love is a sacred experience and constitutes a needed expression of affection. We also believe that sexual intercourse outside the bonds of matrimony is contrary to the will of God. The outrageous exploitation of the strong forces underlying sexual experience is a destructive element of our culture. It not only distorts the meaning of sex experience but constitutes a blasphemous disregard of God's purpose for men and women. A case in point is the distribution of hard-core pornographic and other sex-exploitive material. We advocate thorough educational efforts in home, church, and school designed to elevate our whole understanding of the meaning of sexual experience.

The practice of homosexuality is unbiblical and is incompatible with the Christian life and teachings. The MCA recognizes that homosexual persons are individuals of sacred worth who need the ministry and guidance of the Church as well as spiritual and emotional support of a caring fellowship and community of faith. Nevertheless, no practicing homosexual persons shall be permitted to hold positions of authority within the Church.

7. Social Welfare

We believe that meeting human need is both a private and a community responsibility. Adequate public assistance should be made available to all persons solely on the basis of need. Every individual should provide for his own needs and share responsibility for the needs of others to the full extent of his ability, but we believe that no person in an affluent society should be demoralized because of unmet need.

d) Human Rights

1. Freedom from Discrimination

We stand for equal rights for all racial, cultural, and religious groups, and insist that the principles set forth in this creed apply to all alike. The right to choose a home, enter a school, secure employment, vote, and have access to public accommodations should be guaranteed to all regardless of race, culture, national origin, social class, or religion. Neither should any person be denied equal political, economic, or legal rights or opportunities because of sex.

That the Church should ever refuse access to worship or membership in its fellowship to any person because of race, color, or national origin is contrary to our fundamental Christian convictions.

2. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

We stand for freedom of speech, assembly, and press and broadcasting. The fundamental responsibility in the use of these freedoms and the justification of their exercise is adherence to the truth.

We stand for the right of all individuals and groups to advocate any peaceful and constitutional method for the solution of the problems that confront society.

e) Peace and World Order

We believe that Christianity cannot be nationalistic; it must be universal in its outlook and appeal. The influence of the church must always be on the side of every effort seeking to remove those conditions of heart and mind, of social, economic, and international injustice, and of ideological conflict in which wars begin.

We must actively and constantly create the conditions of peace. We stand for the promotion of understanding, reconciliation, and good will; the relief of suffering, the lifting of living standards around the world; concern for the freedom and welfare of dependent and subject persons; the removal of racial tensions; the taking of steps towards disarmament; and the support of patient negotiations.

1. International Organization

We believe that the United Nations is a working centre of international co-operation which provides the most hopeful avenue leading to peace and world order. The United Nations with its related agencies should be strengthened through governmental co-operation and support. This effort deserves the support of all Christians. The Church itself, as a world fellowship, makes an important contribution to the development of world order.

2. The Christian and Military Service

The Methodist Church, true to the principles of the New Testament, teaches respect for properly constituted civil authority. It encourages both love of country and love of all men. Believing that government rests upon the support of its conscientious citizens, it holds within its fellowship those who sincerely differ as to the Christian's duty in regard to military service. We ask and claim exemption by legal processes from all forms of military preparation or service for all religious conscientious objectors, as for those of the historic peace churches. We recognize the right of the individual to answer the call of his government according to the dictates of his Christian conscience. We also recognize that non-violent resistance can be a valid form of Christian witness. In all of these situations members of The Methodist Church have the authority and support of their church.

4. **Our Mandate: Read, Study , Apply**

We recommend that this Social Creed be presented to our congregations orally or in printed form at least once a year, and that frequent references be made to it. Every local church shall encourage the study of the Social Creed and seek to apply its principles.

Chapter 6

The Church and Mission

The Church is the Means of God's Redemption

The Church committed herself to the call, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." (Mark 16:15) and "who have been chosen according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ..." (I Peter 1:2a) It is for this cause that the church exists and to continue her purpose.

Mission Oriented Organization

The church is formed to accomplish her mission objective. So the church organization is not an end to itself but as a means to complete the purpose. Before studying the organizational structure of the church, one should first ask the basic question: what is a church and why does she exist? Upon understanding these then one should ask what type of organization would best benefit and fulfill the mission objective? In what way the church should modify to enhance her mission work effectively and efficiently? Otherwise the study would be a very "shallow" and "dangerous" one.

God's Chosen People

In the Old Testament time, God chose the Israelites among the mankind as His covenant people so that He could bless the mankind through His chosen people. "I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse." (Gen 12:3)

Chapter 7

Member's Duties and Responsibilities

1. To Family

- a) Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the Church and willing to sacrifice yourself up for her. (Eph 5:25-29; I Peter 3:7)
- b) As the Church submits to Christ, so wives should submit to their husbands and willing to be the followers. (Eph 5:22-24; I Peter 3:1-6)
- c) Fathers do not exasperate your children instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Eph 6:4)
- d) Children obey your parents in the Lord to make them enjoy peaceful and joyful lives. (Eph 6:1-3)
- e) Masters should treat your servants equally and favorably. (Eph 6:9)
- f) Servants obey your earthly masters with respect and fear and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. (Eph 6:5-8)
- g) Brothers & sisters and uncles & aunties should live respectfully and harmoniously. (Prov 17:1)
- h) Mothers & daughter in-laws, siblings and sister in-laws should love and respect each other honorably. (Ruth 1:16-22)

2. To the Church

- a) Pray for the church, the pastoral team and members of the church and attend the Prayer Meeting. (Eph 6:18-19)
- b) Do not give up church worship services and other church gatherings. (Heb 10:24-25)
- c) Bring the tithe (10% of your income) and special giving (such as thanksgivings, love offering, memorial fund) to the church to support the church ministries. (Mal 3:10; I Cor 16:1-2)
- d) Always eager to serve in the church faithfully in spreading the Gospel. (I Cor.15:58; Matt. 28: 19-20)

3. To Society and Country

- a) Not just because of punishment but of good conscience be loyal to the country and submit to the governing authority unless the authority instructs you to disobey God's word. (Rom 13:1-5; Act 4:19-20)
- b) Respect the governing authority. (Rom 13:1-5)
- c) Support the government by paying taxes accordingly. (Rom 13:6-7)
- d) Pray for the rulers and governing authority. (II Tim 2:1-2)
- e) Speak out on social problem, such as drugs, abortion, gambling, cause to broken relations based on the biblical teaching and actively to participate in building up the society, such as the social welfare program, educational facilities.
- f) Be involved in all aspect of the political arena as God leads you and know that voting is the duty of a loyal citizen at every election.
- g) Should respect all people disregarding race, color, gender, religion and cultural background and promote living in harmony.
- h) Actively be involved in developing and making of the country.

Chapter 8

The General Rules of the Methodist Church

The Nature, Design, and General Rules of Our United Societies

In the latter end of the year 1739, eight to ten persons who appeared to be deeply convicted of sin and earnestly groaning for redemption, came to Mr. Wesley in London. They desired, as did two or three more the next day, that we would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over the heads. That he might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), he gave those advises from time to time which he judged most needful for them, and they always concluded their meeting with prayers suited to their several necessities.

This was the rise of the **United Society**, first in Europe, then in America. Such a society is no other than “a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.”

That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called classes, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in a class, one of whom is styled the **leader**. It is his duty:

1. To see each person in his class at least once a week, in order to:
 - a) inquire how his soul prospers;
 - b) advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require;
 - c) receive what he is willing to give towards the relief of the preachers, church, and poor.
2. To meet the ministers and the stewards of the society once a week, in order to:
 - a) inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly and will not be reproved;
 - b) to pay the stewards what he has received of his class in the week preceding.

There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies - “a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins.” But wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits.

It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they shall continue to evidence their desire of salvation.

First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced, such as:

1. The taking of the name of God in vain.
2. The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein or buying or selling.
3. Drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity.
4. Slaveholding; buying or selling slaves.
5. Fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother, returning evil for evil, or railing for railing, the using of many words in buying or selling.
6. The buying or selling of goods that have not paid the duty.
7. The giving or taking of things on usury - that is, unlawful interest.
8. Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation, particularly speaking evil of magistrates or ministers.
9. Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us.
10. Doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as:
 - a) The putting on of gold and costly apparel.
 - b) The taking of such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.
 - c) The singing of those songs, or reading of those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God.
11. Softness and needless self-indulgence.
12. Laying up treasures upon earth.
13. Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

It is expected of all who continue in these societies that they shall continue to evidence their desire for salvation.

Second: By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men:

1. To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison;
2. To their souls, by instructing, reproving, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine, that "we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to it."
3. By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another; helping each other in business; and so much the more because the world will love its own and them only.
4. By all possible diligence and frugality, that the Gospel be not blamed.
5. By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and the offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them falsely, for the Lord's sake.

It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies that they shall continue to evidence their desire for salvation.

Third: By attending upon all the ordinances of God, such as:

1. The public worship of God.
2. The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded.
3. The Supper of the Lord.
4. Family and private prayer.
5. Searching the Scriptures.
6. Fasting or abstinence.

These are the General Rules of our societies; all of which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written Word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observes them not, who habitually breaks any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul as they who must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But if then he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.

Chapter 9

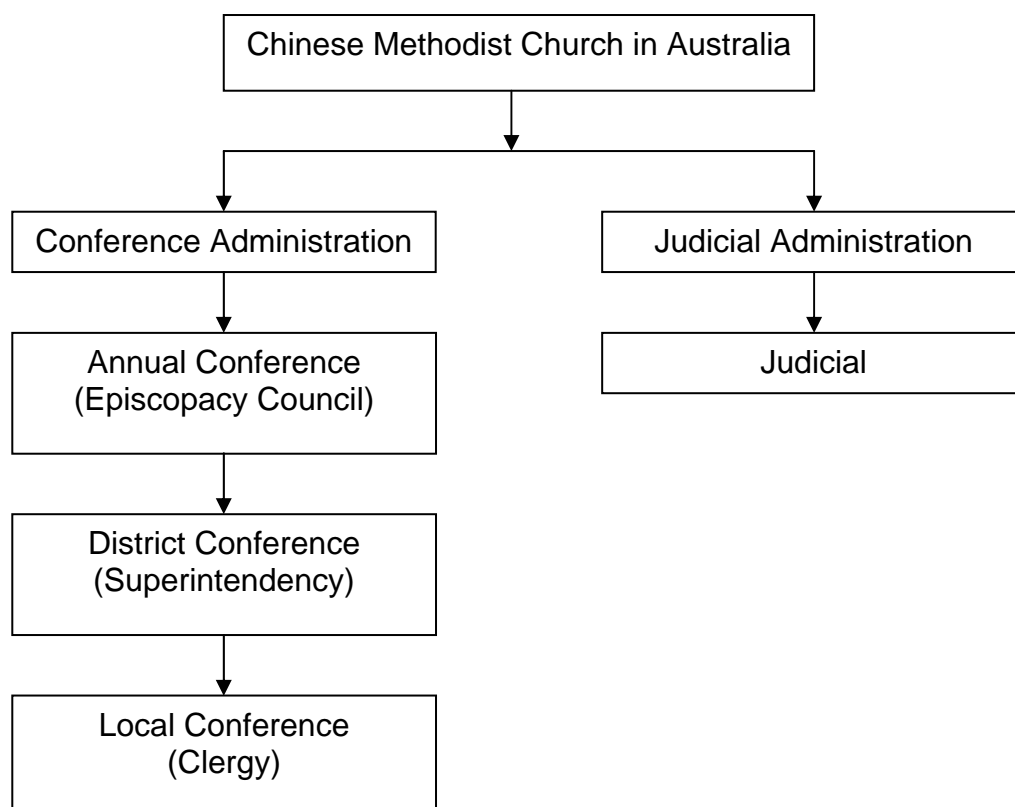
What Believers should know about Holy Communion

1. Holy Communion is one the two most important ceremony of the Christian Church. The other one being the baptismal ceremony. Only those who are 12 years and above and are baptized are allowed to partake this.
2. Those who are not ordained clergies or have not been accepted and authorized by the Board on The Ministry are not allowed to administer the Holy Communion in our church. A Deacon can administer the Holy Communion at his/her appointed parish. However if there is an elder present, it is right to ask the elder to administer the Holy Communion and assisted by the Deacon. If the Bishop/ president is present at the parish where an elder takes charge, it is right to invite the Bishop/ President to administer the Holy Communion and assisted by the elder. This is right and proper to respect the clerical order of our church.
3. Care should be taken in preparing the Holy Communion. Only dedicated utensils should be used to contain the elements of Holy Communion and all must be kept clean and protected. Only the unleavened bread (waffle) and grape juice should used.
4. The Holy Communion service should be kept in meditating atmosphere and inspiring the congregation to wait upon the Lord while waiting to part-take the Holy Communion.
5. The unleavened bread (waffle) signifies Jesus Christ died for the mankind whereas the cup signifies the new covenant made out of His blood.
6. The congregation should meditate and reflect on God's love, ask for forgiveness once more, and be reconciled with God and people first before part-taking the Holy Communion. Otherwise they would be taking their own sins. The congregation should participate with faithfulness and thanksgiving.
7. The congregation should proceed to the alter in an orderly manner and kneel down along the railing and to wait in the attitude of prayer to receive the bread and cup as distributed by the administer/s. (Elderly people or those who were unwell may stand or sit down to receive the bread and cup.)
8. We have to part-take Holy Communion as often as we can in remembrance of His death until the second coming of Christ.

Chapter 10

The Methodist Church Organization and Administration

1. The Methodism is rooted back in the first century till now and until the second coming of Christ. Like other denominations, Methodism transpired from the early church and the teachings of Jesus Christ himself, the apostles, St. Augustine, St. Francis and other church scholars.



2. Aspects of Methodist Church Organization and Administration
 - a) Local Church:
Includes the definition of a church; meaning and type membership;
Church ministry (all working committees);
 - b) Clergy:
The definition of a pastor, qualification, duty & responsibility of a pastor;
 - c) Conference:
Including General, Annual, Provisional, Mission, District and Local Conference;
 - d) Judicial Administration:
Includes Judicial Council & investigation work;
 - e) Church Property & Trustee:
Includes church property management & work of trustees;
 - f) Financial Administration:
Includes managing of financial affairs of various conferences;
 - g) Administrative Agency:
Includes all boards of the Annual Conference.

Remarks: Though there is distinct administrative function at different levels, these are inter-related, inter-connected, and supporting each other in nature.

Chapter 11

The Local Church Organization and Administration

Privileges of Membership in the Methodist Church

The vows of membership which we take make us members of our own local church and through it we are related to the Methodist Church at large and the great Christian family throughout the world. As believers, we are brought into a redemptive fellowship under Christ's lordship in which the Word of God is preached, the Sacraments are administered and divine worship is carried out corporately. Such a membership entitles a person not only to share in fellowship with others who owe their loyalty to the Methodist Church, but also to its pastoral care and supervision (including discipline) as well as participation in all its activities including the holding of office. Membership also entitles the person to be married and buried in the church.

1. Church Location

- a) The Executive Board of the Chinese Methodist Church of Australia or its duly appointed body shall investigate all proposed local building sites, ascertain that such sites are properly located for the community to be served and adequate in size to provide space for future expansion and growth and to investigate new projects, ensuring that they are consistent with the policy and interests of the Chinese Methodist Church in Australia.

2. Foundation of a Local Church

- a) A new local church or mission shall be established only with the consent of the Conference and be established at another parish away from the original church provided (i) that there are thirty (30) members and (ii) a pastor can be assigned. The sponsors may be a Local Conference. It shall recommend to the Conference for approval. The Superintendent / President / Bishop shall at the request in the prescribed form may by not less than thirty (30) registered members above the age of eighteen interested in the proposed church call such members to meet at an appointed time and place, or he may by written authorization designate any pastor to call such a meeting.
- b) The Superintendent / President / Bishop, or the minister holding authority from him, shall preside and shall appoint a secretary to keep a record of the meeting. Following a period of worship opportunity shall be given those in attendance to present themselves for membership by proper certificate of Transfer.
- c) Persons desiring to become members on profession of their faith in Christ shall also be given opportunity to present themselves for membership. When the presiding minister is satisfied as to the genuineness of their faith and purpose, they shall be received into the membership of the church.
- d) A list shall be made of all the persons received into the membership of the proposed church, by transfer and on profession. Those persons in the membership eighteen years of age and over shall be members of the Constituting Church Conference, and each shall be entitled to vote.

- e) The Constituting Church Conference shall then be called to order, and it shall proceed to choose the elective stewards of the church, on nomination of a committee on nominations. Such committee shall be appointed by the presiding minister or elected on nomination from the floor as the Constituting Church may determine. In either case the presiding minister shall be chairman. When the elective stewards have been chosen in proper number, the presiding minister shall declare the church properly constituted.
- f) The presiding minister shall then adjourn the Constituting Church Conference and call to order the Local Conference. The membership of the Local Conference shall be the newly elected stewards and others entitled to membership. The Local Conference shall then elect such officers of the church as the Discipline requires, including trustees of church property, and shall set up committees as provided in the Discipline. When such officers have been duly elected and the proper committee constituted, the church is duly organized, and from this point its work shall proceed as described in the Discipline; provided that when a newly organized church is attached to a circuit, the Local Conference shall not be held until such time as representatives from all churches can be properly assembled for that purpose.

3. Church Membership

- a) All persons seeking to be saved from their sins and sincerely desiring to be Christian in faith and practice are proper candidates for membership in The Methodist Church. When such persons offer themselves for membership, it shall be the duty of the pastor, or of proper persons appointed by him, to instruct them in the meaning of the Christian faith and the history, organization and teaching of The Methodist Church, using materials approved by The Methodist Church to explain to them the baptismal and membership vows; and to lead them to commit themselves to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. When they shall have given proof of the genuineness of their faith in Christ and of their desire to assume the obligations and become faithful members of The Methodist Church, after the completion of a period of training not less than three months or twelve sessions, and after the rite of Baptism has been administered to those who have not been previously baptized, the pastor shall bring them before the congregation, administer the vows and receive them into fellowship of the church, and duly enroll them as members.
- b) A person who is a member of The Methodist Church may have his membership transferred from one local church to another by a certificate of transfer.
- c) A member in good standing in any Christian denomination who has been baptized and who desire to unite with The Methodist Church may be received into membership by a certificate of transfer from his former church, or by his own declaration of Christian faith, and upon affirming his willingness to be loyal to The Methodist Church, and after he and the members of the church have entered into solemn covenant with one another as provided in the Ritual.

4. Membership Records and Reports

- a) The minister shall report to each Local Conference the names of persons received into the membership of the church or churches since the Local Conference preceding, and the names of persons whose membership in the church or churches has been terminated during the same period, indicating in the case of each how he was received or how his membership was terminated.

- b) Each local church shall accurately maintain the following membership rolls:
1. Full Membership Roll.
 2. Membership Roll, containing the names and pertinent information of baptized children and youth of the church sixteen years of age and under who are not full members.
 3. Members Removed by Local Conference Action.
 4. Constituency Roll, containing the names and addresses of such person as are not members of the church concerned, including unbaptized children, church school members not yet members of the church, preparatory members who have reached the age of sixteen and who have not been received into full membership, and other non-members for whom the local church has pastoral responsibility.
 5. Affiliate Membership Roll.
 6. Associate Membership Roll.
- c) The Local Conference may elect a Membership Secretary, whose duty shall be under the direction of the minister, to keep accurate records of all membership rolls, and to report to each meeting of the Local Church Executive Committee through the Committee on Membership and Evangelism.

5. The Local Church Executive Committee

- a) General Provisions: In every Local Church there shall be an administrative body called the *Local Church Executive Committee*, (hereinafter designated as the ***Executive Committee***); and it shall be the duty of the minister and the district superintendent to see that such organization is set up in every local church as hereinafter set forth. The Executive Committee shall be responsible to the Local Conference, and shall report regularly to the sessions of the Local Conference as its work and the occasion may require, and as the Local Conference may request.
- b) The Executive Committee shall be constituted of the following persons:
1. The minister of the local church and duly appointed associate minister or ministers, if any, and deaconesses, if any.
 2. The stewards of the local church, duly elected.
 3. The ex-officio stewards of the local church.
 4. The Chairman of the Committee on Church Property Management shall be ex-officio member.
- c) All lay members of the Executive Committee shall be members of the local Methodist Church, and in nominating and electing persons to such membership the utmost care shall be taken that only morally disciplined persons shall be so nominated and elected.
- d) Stewards shall be persons of genuine Christian character who love the church and are competent to administer its affairs.
- e) The elective stewards shall not be less than 21 years of age nor more than 70. They may be elected annually or biennially.

- f) An elective steward must have been a member of the Methodist Church for at least two years before being eligible for election. A steward who becomes an affiliate member of another Methodist Church shall not be elected as a steward in that church during the first year as an affiliate member. An associate member shall not be elected as a steward unless his or her membership has been transferred to a Methodist Church for more than two years.
- g) The above restriction in (3) may be waived at the discretion of the Superintendent / President / Bishop after considering the local needs.
- h) Stewards-elect shall take office at the beginning of the Conference year following their election; provided, that in cases where a steward is elected to fill a vacancy in the Executive Committee he shall take office immediately after election. Vacancies may be filled by the Local Conference in regular or special session; under no circumstances shall stewards be elected by the Executive Committee.
- i) Each Local Church shall be entitled to not fewer than three (3) or more than thirty-five (35) stewards, exclusive of ex-officio and honorary stewards; provided that in a church of more than five hundred members one steward may be elected for each additional thirty members.
- j) The following officers, if members or affiliate members of the Local Church, shall be ex-officio stewards during their respective terms of office, and shall exercise all the rights and privileges which belong to a steward in The Methodist Church; the church lay leader, the associate lay leader, the church business manager, the director of Christian Education or the assistant director, the church school superintendent, the *Conference delegate & first reserve*, the chairman of the Committees on Stewardship and Finance; Christian Education; Christian Social Concerns; Membership and Evangelism; Missions; Worship and Music, the secretary of stewardship, the president of the Methodist Women's Fellowship, the president of the Methodist Men, the church treasurer or treasurers, the financial secretary, the membership secretary, the president of the Methodist Adults/Young Adults Fellowship, the president of the Methodist Youth Fellowship, captain of the Boys' Brigade, the captain of the Girls' Brigade, the president of the Youth Council and the chairman of the Methodist Seniors Fellowship or his designed nominee.
- k) A Local Church by action of the Local Conference shall establish a limit to the consecutive terms of office for any or all the elective or appointive officers of the local church except where its membership is less than one hundred.
- l) In each Local Church the Local Conference may make provision for the recognition of the faithful service of those stewards on the Executive Committee who have reached the age of seventy, or who may have become physically incapacitated, by electing them honorary stewards until such time it is revoked by the Local Conference. An honorary steward shall be entitled to all the privileges of a steward, except the right to vote.
- m) The *Executive Committee* shall be organized annually/*biennially* by the election of a chairman, a vice chairman, and a secretary. These officers shall be elected by the members of the Executive Committee on the nomination of a Committee on Nominations. Additional nominations may be made from the floor.

n) It shall be the duty of the Executive Committee:

1. To administer the affairs of the Local Church both spiritual and temporal as hereinafter set forth subject to the authority of the Local Conference.
2. To promote and to have general supervision, under the direction of the minister, of the administration and program of the local church.
3. After consultation with the Committee on Pastor-Parish Relations, to recommend to the Local Conference, at the session next preceding the Annual Conference, the salary and other allowances of the minister, and of the associate minister or ministers, if any, and to make ample provision for the other financial needs of the local church.
4. Upon recommendation of the Program Committee to study and approve the program of the Local Church.
5. To promote interest in all the agencies authorized by the Annual, District and Local Conferences.
6. To discharge faithfully any and all duties and responsibilities committed to it by the Local Conference or by the law of the Church.
7. To develop in the members of the congregation a feeling of responsibilities in the establishment of new churches and church schools; and when specifically authorized by the district superintendent to organize and sponsor new churches and church schools needed in the community.
8. To make proper and adequate provision for the financial needs of the Local Church, including ministerial support (i.e. for the minister or ministers, associate minister or ministers, district superintendent, conference pensioners or claimants, bishop or president), approved items of local expense, commitments and undertakings, budget and other items apportioned to the local church by the proper authorities, and all obligations assumed by the Local Church.

o) The Executive Committee shall meet at least once in two months at a time determined by itself. Special meetings shall be convened at the request of the Chairman, or the Minister or one half of the total membership of the Executive Committee.

p) The Executive Committee shall not deny or take from any organization in the Local Church a right or power granted it by the Discipline.

6. The Local Conference

I. The Composition

a) The Local Conference is the basic body uniting it to connectional Methodism. The Local Conference shall therefore be organized as provided in the Constitution and provided that there are thirty (30) members who are not less than eighteen years of age. In the event that the membership shall decline to less than fifteen (15) members it shall revert to its former sponsoring Local Conference or such other local church as may be assigned by the Conference.

b) The membership of the Local Conference shall consist of all the registered members of the Local Church, if such Local Conference is considered as an Annual General Meeting, or Extra-ordinary General Meeting, or Congregational Meeting of the Local Church.

The membership of the Local Conference shall consist of the following:

1. the pastor and associate pastor or pastors;
2. retired ministers residing in that place who elect to hold membership therein;
3. traveling preachers who are assigned to special work and are amenable to the local conference;
4. local preachers, ordained or un-ordained, provided always that a person may at any one time be a member of one local conference only;
5. deaconesses;
6. the lay member or members and first reserve of Annual Conference;
7. the lay leader;
8. the chairman of the trustees of the church or churches in the Local conference;
9. the church business manager;
10. the church treasurers;
11. the financial secretary;
12. the director of Christian Education or educational assistant;
13. the church school superintendent;
14. the chairmen of Committees on Stewardship & Finance, Christian Education, Christian Social Concerns, Membership and Evangelism, Missions, Worship & Music and Pastor-Parish Relations;
15. the President of the Methodist Women's Fellowship;
16. the President of Methodist Men;
17. the membership secretary;
18. the President of the Methodist Adults Fellowship;
19. the President of the Methodist Youth Fellowship;
20. Captains of the Boys' Brigade and Girls' Brigade;
21. the President of the Youth Coordinating Committee;
22. the Chairman of the Methodist Seniors Fellowship or his designated nominee;
23. the President of the Methodist Young Adults Fellowship;
24. not fewer than three or more than thirty-five stewards, exclusive of ex-officio and honorary stewards provided that in churches of more than five hundred members one additional steward may be elected for each thirty additional members.

c) Meetings of the Local Conference

1. A Local Conference shall be convened at least twice a year: the first meeting within *four (4)* months after the Annual Conference (hereinafter called the First Local Conference) and the second meeting within *four (4)* months before the Annual Conference (hereinafter called the Second Local Conference).
2. Every Local Conference of the local church other than the First and Second Local Conference shall be called Special Session of the Local Conference.

d) A Special session of the Local Conference shall be convened whenever a requisition in writing is made by any of the following to the honorable Secretary:

- the pastor of the local church in consultation with the District Superintendent of that District; or
- the District Superintendent of that District in consultation with the pastor of that local church; or
- A simple majority of the members of the Local Church Executive Committee.

e) Notice of Meetings

1. Ten (10) clear days notice shall be given of any Local Conference to be convened. The notice shall specify the place, day and hour of meeting and in the case of the Special Session of the Local Conference the general nature of such business.
2. The notice shall in each case be given in the following manner:
 - Ordinary post or dispatch by hand; and
 - One prior pulpit announcement.

f) District Superintendent or an elder appointed by him shall preside.

g) The members present at any duly arranged meeting shall constitute a quorum.

h) The Local Conference after a period of worship shall transact the business committed to it by the Discipline. The Superintendent/ President/ Bishop or his authorized delegate is required to keep his record of each Local Conference. It shall also be his duty to see that other Local Conference and church records and reports are kept.

II. Powers and Duties

- a) To elect a recording secretary who shall keep an accurate and permanent record of the proceedings and shall be the custodian of all the records and reports, and who with the presiding officer shall sign the minutes.
- b) To have general oversight of the Local Church Executive Committee, which is the administrative body of the Local Conference in each local church.
- c) To receive reports from the pastor(s), church officers, and the committees and societies of the church or churches as the Local Conference may require.
- d) To elect officers of the church or churches constituting the Local Conference, unless otherwise provided in harmony with the provisions of the Constitution of The Methodist Church, and to constitute the committees of each local church as may be determined by the Local Conference, designating the chairman of the committees on Stewardship and Finance, Christian Education, Christian Social Concerns, Membership and Evangelism, Missions, and Worship and Music.
- e) In cases where the Discipline permits more than one course of action in the administration and work of a local conference, to determine what course shall be taken.
- f) On application for issuance or renewal of a license to preach by a proper person, whose membership is within the local church, recommend such person to the District Commission on the Ministry/ Conference Board on the Ministry, if in the judgment of the Local Conference his gifts, graces, and potential usefulness warrant such action. Such person shall conform with all provisions of the Discipline. The vote to recommend shall be taken by written secret ballot, and the recommendation shall be signed by the presiding officer.

- g) To fit the salary and other remuneration of the pastor, or pastors, after the following procedure: At the session of the Local Conference next preceding regular annual session of the Conference, on recommendation of the Executive Committee or Committees and after consultation with the pastor, the Conference shall set the salary of the pastor for the ensuing conference year and make satisfactory provisions for the payment of the same. In the Local Conference of more than one church the amount apportioned to each church shall be recorded in the minutes of the Local Conference. The pastor's salary thus agreed upon shall not include the traveling and removal expenses of a new appointee to the church. These expenses, when provided for, shall be classified as current expenses and so reported in the pastor's report to the Conference.
- h) To determine the amount accepted annually for the church for all purposes by the following procedure: As soon as practicable after the session of the Conference, each district superintendent shall notify each Local Conference in his district what amounts have been apportioned to it by the Board of Finance. It shall be the responsibility of the pastor and the respective church lay leaders to present to a meeting of each local church a statement of the apportionment for all purposes other than local expenses, explaining the causes supported by each of these funds, and their place in the total program of the church. Such presentation to each local church shall be made before the Local Conference sets the amounts of its acceptances. The Local Conference shall determine annually the amount accepted by the church for conference boards and agencies. Should the amount contributed during the year for conference boards and agencies exceed the church's acceptance, the entire amount so contributed shall be remitted in regular order to the Conference treasurer before the end of the conference year. The district superintendent shall also notify each Local Conference of all other amounts properly apportioned to it. The apportionments to the Local Conference for the conference claimants and ministerial pensions and for the salary fund are not subject to change or alteration by the Local Conference.
- i) To recommend candidates for the ministry who have been members of the local church in good standing for at least once a year, having met the educational requirements and having satisfactorily answered the questions before of the Local Conference as provided for in the Discipline.
- j) Such other duties and responsibilities as the Conference may duly commit it to.

III. Elections

The Local Conference shall elect annually/biennially to serve from the beginning of the ensuing conference year, except as specified below, the following officers for the church on nomination from the Committee on Nominations, or on nomination of the pastor if there is no such committee, unless otherwise provided in the Discipline; provided that in no case shall the privilege of making nominations from the floor be denied:

- a) The elective stewards of the church or churches of the Local Conference.
- b) The church lay leader or leaders and associate lay leader or leaders if desired.
- c) The district steward and reserve district steward; provided that the Committee on Nominations or the pastor shall confer with the district superintendent before any nomination is made.

- d) The lay member or members of the Conference and one or more alternate, who shall continue in these relationships until their successors are elected. If the Local Conference lay representative to the Conference shall cease to be a member of the local church or shall for any reason fail to serve, a reserve member in the order of his election shall serve in his place. At the option of the Conference, the lay member or members thus elected shall serve beginning with the next session of the Conference following election.
- e) Both the lay members and the alternates shall be at least eighteen years of age, and shall have been members in good standing.
- f) The church treasurer or treasurers.
- g) Counselors to the Methodist Youth Fellowship, Methodist Adults/ Young Adults Fellowship, Captains of the Boy's and Girl's Brigade.
- h) Internal Election
 - 1. Should there be an internal election to confirm the portfolio of ministries for the elected stewards; this should be carried out within fourteen (14) days after the election;
 - 2. Such internal election shall be presided by the minister in-charge or the pastor appointed by the Conference;
 - 3. And attended only by the elected stewards and pastoral member(s) with voting right.

Chapter 12

Understanding of the Stewardship

Besides being willing to serve the Lord whole-heartedly, serving does require sufficient training. So church stewards need suitable training as well. Before being elected as stewards, people should have basic training to be a steward already, especially in understanding the task of being a steward, the duties and responsibilities, how to assist the clergy people, understanding of the congregation, the pastoral role and church administration. In addition, stewards should understand how to cooperate with each other and build a cohesive team in building up the church.

1. **Qualification as a Steward**

(Referenced from Acts 6:3 and I Timothy 3: 1-16 of the Bible)

a) To be worthy of respect:

1. must be above reproach;
2. the husband of but one wife;
3. not indulging in much wine;
4. not pursuing dishonest gain;
5. be first tested for nothing against him.

b) To be full of the Spirit:

1. be temperate and self-controlled;
2. trustworthy in everything.

c) To be full of Wisdom:

1. keep hold of the deep truth of the faith with a clear conscience;
2. must be sincere;
3. must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.

2. **Character of a Steward**

The basic characters are:

a) Be Objective:

Unless it is contradictory to the Bible, a steward should not be subjective and insist on their own perception, but willing to seek other's view.

b) Obedience:

Unless it is contradictory to the teaching of the Bible, a steward should obey:

1. the authority of the church;
2. the decision of the church;
3. the clergy – the authority from the Lord is bestowed upon the clergy;
4. respect each other as stewards.

c) Responsibility:

1. be responsible to the church for entrusted work;
2. must be steady, with attention to detail and with initiative.

d) Love the people:

1. to love people because of God's love towards mankind and the trustworthy of mankind before God;
2. To have compassion, care and be willingly associates with people.

e) Speak the Truth:

1. not to speak degrading word;
2. not to gossip and transmitting gossip;
3. not to have double standard;
4. not to speak pessimistic words.

3. The Duty

Under the supervision of the clergy, the basic duties are:

- a) to serve the congregation;
- b) to manage the church affairs;
- a. to execute the church's decisions.

Chapter 13

What Christians should know about Marriage

1. Marriage is one's life long commitment. Christians should unite in holy matrimony according to the Church's ceremonial tradition and based on the biblical teaching. In the presence of God, both parties covenant to love and cherish each other all the days of their life and to build a godly family.
2. Marriage is instituted by God as evidenced in Genesis 2:18 "The Lord God said (that) it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Also John 2:3-11 mentioned that Jesus attended a wedding in Cana. The Apostles instructed people to honor and respect every marriage. Numerous Bible messages exemplify the marriage relationship to the union of Jesus Christ and the Church.
3. The marriage is the union of a man and a woman (Matt 19:5; Eph 5:31; I Cor.6:15). When the wife is still alive, the husband should not marry again. So as when the husband is still alive, the wife should not marry again. The first marriage consummated by God is also between one man and one woman.
4. The union through marriage is a life-long one (Matt 19:6). For mankind, the becoming of husband and wife is the sweetest intimate union. Husbands should not leave their wives; wives should not leave your husbands for the Lord said, "Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."
5. Husbands and wives should love each other without ceasing (Eph.5:22-33; I Peter 3:8-9). "Wives submit to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

So husbands and wives live together in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, be compassionate and humble, and to receive eternal blessings together.

6. Those who want to have a church wedding ceremony should know that it needs 3 months notice to discuss and coordinate the date, time and style of worship preferred with the officiating minister. He then would arrange the marriage counseling sessions and discuss about the legal requirements for the marriage to be legal and valid.
7. Then the selection of style of worship and the details of the program in order to glorify the Lord. This could start with the prelude, choir presentation, solo or congregational singing. The wedding ceremony should end with a piece of sacred music. When the bride enters the church hall, the congregation should stand and welcome the bride. The officiating minister should be standing at the centre of the sanctuary facing the congregation. The groom should be standing at the left side of the minister with joyous smile watching the bride matching down the red-carpet in her father's right arm (guardian's arm). The bride then stands to the right of the minister.
8. The minister would then shake hand with the bride's father and send him to the designated seat. Then the wedding ceremony would begin.

Chapter 14

Christian Spirituality

1. **Covenant Disciples**

It is the utmost duty of the church to nurture sincere and humble covenant disciples. So the first step is for the church to ascertain who are the leaders among the disciples, train and equip them, empower them to lead and guide others in discharging the duties of a disciple.

2. **Leaders amongst the Disciples**

In shaping Christian spirituality, the leaders must lead by examples. They must bear the marks of discipleship and must follow Christ's path closely. At the same time they have to lead others to do the same. So the church should first identify who are the leaders among these Christian believers. Then they have to train them and empower them to lead responsibly and to guide others obliging the duties of a disciple

3. **The Two Models**

From the renewal movement of the Church, the two (2) distinctive models in nurturing Christian believers are: (1) Class Meeting; and (2) Class Leaders. Today the American United Methodist Church has re-shaped these models in order to suffice the need of the 20th Century and called these, "the Covenant Discipleship Groups." All the resources have been provided by the Discipleship Resources Head-office.

a) The Covenant Discipleship Group

This is to rediscover the spirit of the Class Meeting of the early Church in today's church ministry. The aim is to implement the purpose of the Class Meeting --- to support and supervise each other --- in nurturing those willing to be true disciples regardless of age and gender but must submit wholeheartedly and willingly to be supervised in love and determined to follow Christ without wavering faith.

Each member of the group would contribute in devising one common covenant declaration to be of binding to all members as their supervising guide. Then the group would meet once a week for one hour to question each other on the Christian living and matters as stated in the covenant in order to build each other and help each other to grow spiritually.

b) The Class Leaders

These leaders must be members of Covenant Discipleship Groups already and they are willing to take care of one Class Meeting (Group) consisting 15 – 20 members. They would follow one consented format in conducting the meeting. However the key is for the class members to learn under their leaders' guidance how to live out their belief and walk in Christ's footsteps and obey the Word.

c) The Practice

The Class Leaders are not specialists in religious beliefs and qualified counselors. So they provide facilitation for believers to share and testify their faith including themselves. Their key role is to supervise each other and encourage members to share their experience in practicing their belief on earth and experiencing God's grace.

Class Leaders are appointed by the Church. Besides leading monthly meeting with their group, they have to meet with the pastoral team monthly to present their report and to receive words of encouragement and guidance in shaping and nurturing the spiritual life of the Church.

d) The Summary

Just like the early Methodist "Class Meeting" and Class Leaders followed the guide set by John Wesley in "supervising" and nurturing believers, the current Covenant Discipleship groups followed this model as well.

The overriding principle is:

"As guided by the Holy Spirit; go into the world to testify for the Lord and obey His teachings; as advocating justice and being compassionate; practicing a worshipping and devotional life style."

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