

The Mission and Vision of The Methodist Collegiate Church

A cooperative, voluntary association of like-minded, common-hearted congregations and ministries, the Methodist Collegiate Church is envisioned to create a new form of connectionalism – one of shared ministry, equal accountability, and practical governance. Evangelical at its core and grace-filled in its practice, this partnership of autonomous Wesleyan churches seeks to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world and equip disciples for the life of ministry.

Scripture calls us to live our lives together as people of God and as churches. Jesus prays for us to be one as he and the Father are one¹. The apostle Paul builds the powerful metaphor of the church as the “Body of Christ” in 1 Corinthians and Ephesians. As the Body, we each bring our particular gifts and graces to the church as a whole, filled with the Holy Spirit² and led by Christ as our head³. We join as autonomous Methodist churches to walk together with Christ, drawing people to Him through the power of the Spirit and working to embrace the call of Jesus - to love God and to love others in our daily lives.

Using the ancient term, we call our national assembly a “collegium,” meaning “a group in which each member has approximately equal power and authority” (Merriam-Webster). As a collegium, we embrace Romans 12 as our statement of strategy for our life together in our efforts to fulfill the Great Commission⁴ and the Greatest Commandment⁵. Romans 12 calls us to be selfless, transformed people who use our diverse gifts to fervently follow the lived example of Jesus.

Organization

From ancient days, churches and local faith communities have joined together for mutual support, resource sharing, missional engagement, and faith development. Believing in the incredible potential of the historic Methodist understanding of connectionalism, the “collegiate” or “cathedral” model of polity strives to unite like-minded, common-hearted regional churches in voluntary missional associations centered around a strong regional congregation. These “coalitions of the willing” are intended to allow independent Wesleyan churches/ministries to connect with one another, to learn from one another, and to journey alongside one another to make more deeply-committed followers of the way of Jesus Christ in their specific missional contexts. At the same time, these partnerships are intended to provide a mode of accountability, support, and intentional oversight to independent, local Wesleyan congregations.

¹ John 17:21

² Romans 8:9

³ Ephesians 1:22-23

⁴ Matthew 28:18-20

⁵ Matthew 22:34-40

Groups of approximately 10 autonomous Methodist churches, ideally located within a 100-mile

geographic radius, will join to form a “college.” Each college will be anchored by a large thriving congregation that will serve a cathedral function, providing encouragement, resources, administrative support, and critical mass to each of the individual churches in the college. Each church within the college is expected to add its own strengths and spiritual gifts to the college so that the whole is stronger than simply the sum of its parts. Each college will elect an experienced ordained Elder to lead the college as its Dean.

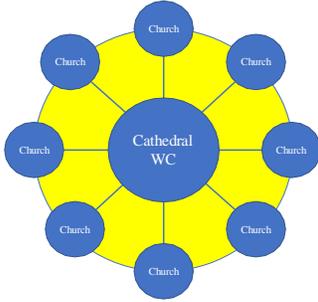


Figure 1 - A College

The churches within each college will have the opportunity to work together on service and mission, share educational and spiritual formation programs, partner in discipleship endeavors and cooperate to innovate and engage the world in new ways.

Each college will join with the other colleges to form the Collegium. The Collegium will act as a decision-making entity for the group and as the home for centrally-managed administrative functions that will provide economies of scale for the member churches. The Collegium will host a Commission on Ministry and be the organizing entity for the Collegium Book of Discipline. The Collegium will be led by a Dean elected by the colleges every four years. Each of the member churches will appoint delegates to the Collegium. The church delegations shall be equally composed of ordained people and laypeople.

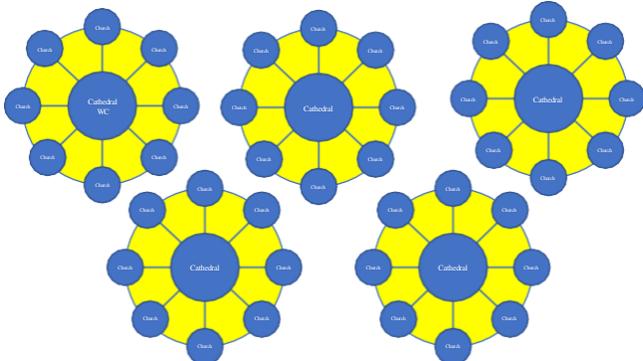


Figure 2 - The Collegium

Member Churches

After making a formal application, church membership in a college is granted by three-fourths vote of the Collegium. Similarly, the designation of a member church as a cathedral church is granted by three-fourths vote of the Collegium. Following a season of intentional discernment, a local church’s affiliation with the Collegium may be terminated by either the church/ministry or by three-fourths vote of the Collegium itself. Each church will enter a covenant with the other churches of the Collegium promising to uphold each other on their Christian journey through prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness, and to hold each other accountable under the MCC Book of Discipline.

Member churches will remain financially and administratively independent. Each church is expected to uphold the tenets of the MCC Book of Discipline. Each church will have the administrative freedom to address issues of polity not explicitly addressed in the MCC Book of Discipline. Each church is anticipated to adjust its order and polity to match its particular mission field.

Book of Discipline

The MCC Book of Discipline will firmly establish the Methodist tradition, history and polity of the Collegium. It will address the history of Methodism, beginning with the ministry of John Wesley. It will establish the foundations of doctrine set forth in the Articles of Religion as adopted by the Methodist Episcopal Church in the General Conference of 1808 and revised by the Uniting Conference of 1939; by the Standard Sermons of John Wesley and Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the New Testament; and by the Apostles Creed, The Nicene Creed and the Definition of Chalcedon.

The MCC Book of Discipline will address the General Rules of Our United Societies and the Wesleyan Quadrilateral as a pedagogical tool, emphasizing the primacy of Scripture.

The MCC Book of Discipline will describe the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion.

The MCC Book of Discipline will encourage our engagement with the world as God's people. God's good creation requires our attention and care, and all God's people need our love and compassion. The MCC Book of Discipline will encourage the ministry of all Christians in these areas but will not include the highly-specific calls and recommendations of the Social Principles in the United Methodist Book of Discipline. These calls to action are to be the purview of the local church.

The MCC Book of Discipline will include a description of the Pastoral Offices and of the qualifications and requirements for ordination. The ordination process will include an examination based on the historic questions asked by John Wesley. Clergy will not receive guaranteed appointments in the MCC.

The MCC Book of Discipline will detail certain administrative, financial auditing and legal structuring processes that must be adopted by each member church. Committee structures to implement these and other administrative and operational objectives are the purview of the local church.

Pastoral Offices

The Office of Deacon: As a part of every candidate's ordination process, following the successful completion of his/her educational requirements and examination by the Commission on Ministry, he/she will serve for a period of no less than one year and no more than five years as a commissioned Resident Deacon. During this time, the Deacon will serve full-time in a local church or other ministry setting under the supervision of an Elder. At the conclusion of each residential year, the Deacon shall be eligible to interview for ordination as an Elder in the Methodist Collegiate Church. Resident Deacons will serve with the full authority of an Elder, but will have no vote in Collegium matters.

The Office of Elder: Ordained to a life of Word, Service, Sacrament, and Order, Elders devote themselves wholly to the work of the Church and to the upbuilding of the ministry of all Christians. They do this through the careful study of Scripture and its faithful interpretation; through effective proclamation of the gospel and responsible administration of the sacraments; through diligent pastoral leadership of their congregations for fruitful discipleship; and by following the guidance of

the Holy Spirit in witnessing beyond the congregation in the local community and to the ends of the earth. The life of the Elder is defined by faithful commitment to servant leadership following the example of Jesus Christ, passion for the hallowing of life, and concern to link all local ministries within the widest boundaries of the Christian community.

Following the scriptural pattern, there is no retirement for clergy or laity from the work of God's Kingdom. However, clergy persons serving in appointments may choose senior status within the Collegium. There is no mandatory age for such status. Senior status releases clergy members from any obligation to accept an appointment to ministry from the Dean, though clergy in senior status may voluntarily accept an appointment from the Dean to any ministry setting for which they qualify. Senior clergy retain their active status in the Collegium.

The Office of Canon: In the Order of Elder, there will be those called to assume the senior leadership responsibilities of churches and/or other ministry settings (e.g., Senior Pastor, Lead Pastor, Executive Director, CEO, etc.). Following the historic Anglican nomenclature, these individuals shall hold the office of Canon. Canons shall have no rights or authority greater than their colleagues in the Order of Elder but may be called upon to serve in the absence of a Dean. Those seeking the Office of Canon must hold full membership in the Methodist Collegiate Church.

The Office of Dean: Historically, the Office of Dean was entrusted with the oversight and discipline of a College or the Collegium. Upon election to the office, the Dean is authorized to guard the faith, order, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the Church. The Dean exercises oversight and support of the Church in its mission of reaching the world for Jesus Christ. The Dean is responsible for ordaining approved Candidates in their College.

Process for Ordination

The call to Holy Orders is a sacred journey not to be undertaken hastily or unadvisedly. As such, it is the expectation of the Methodist Collegiate Church that every candidate shall enter a season of counseled discernment before beginning the candidacy process.

- 1.) Persons who hear a call to ordained ministry should meet with their local Canon to inquire about candidacy. They must have held membership in a local MCC church (or its predecessor) for at least one year and shall complete a background and credit check. Upon the recommendation by two-thirds vote of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (or equivalent), the Administrative Board of the local church shall, by simple majority, vote whether to approve and certify individuals for candidacy.
- 2.) Candidacy Discernment. After local church approval, a certified candidate shall spend a minimum of six months in discernment under the supervision of the College, which must include a supervised internship or employment in a ministry setting. During this time, the candidate shall:
 - a.) Engage with discernment, including but not limited to: completion of a guidebook, mentoring, and participation in a small group with other candidates.
 - b.) Have a secondary school diploma or its equivalent.
 - c.) Undergo a psychological evaluation.
 - d.) Upon completion of the foregoing, the candidate shall write a statement detailing his/her call to ordained ministry and submit it to the Collegium Commission on Ministry.

3.) Once accepted as a candidate for ministry by the Collegium's Commission on Ministry, a candidate shall undergo a process of ministerial and spiritual formation developed by the Commission, which shall determine the length and content of the process, though it should focus on the development of spiritual maturity and leadership skills necessary for successful ministry in the candidate's ministry setting.

4.) Educational Requirements for Ordination: In order to better prepare leaders, the MCC will require candidates for ordination to fulfill basic educational requirements prior to ordination. Recognizing that educational opportunities vary based on geography and life circumstance, the Methodist Collegiate Church will accept courses from any of the following: a Course of Study program, a bachelor's degree program in ministry, a joint Bachelor of Arts and Master of Divinity program, a program for a Master of Arts or equivalent degree in the practice of ministry, or a Master of Divinity degree program.

5.) Residential Requirements for Ordination: Following the successful completion of his/her educational requirements, a candidate shall interview with the Collegium's Commission on Ministry, which shall vote by three-fourths majority to recommend the candidate for commissioning as a Deacon. The recommended candidate will then meet with the local church Pastor-Parish Relations Committee and be approved for ministry in that context. A candidate shall serve no less than one year and no more than five years as a Resident Deacon in a full-time ministry setting.

6.) Following his/her residential year, a candidate may interview with the Collegium Commission on Ministry, which, by three-fourths majority, shall elect the candidate for ordination as an Elder by three-fourths majority.