ST STITHIANS COLLEGE

STATEMENT ON SPIRITUALITY

(11 May 2023)

1. INTRODUCTION

St Stithians College is a Methodist independent educational institution. The College is a Circuit within the Central District of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA). Being a Methodist School and working in partnership with our Church and its community, helps to shape our distinctive ethos where we can embrace and promote Christian values in a respectful, sincere and enjoyable way.

St Stithians College was constituted on 30 April 1941 as a Methodist school, and opened its doors

in January 1953. The College stands as a testament to the faith and vision of our founders, Albert Collins and William Mountstephens, who were active Methodists and who understood Jesus Christ's charge "To whom much has been given, much is expected." (Luke 12:48).

We believe, as a Methodist School, that it is our responsibility to empower all our stakeholders to personally and progressively develop a moral foundation, framework, and worldview that is built upon faith.

To this end, the College Statement on Spirituality is located within and alongside the statements of the Methodist Church Doctrine and Ethos, the MCSA Vision and Mission Statement, the St Stithians College Charter, and the relationship between the College and the Methodist Church. These are briefly explained below:

1.1 The Methodist Church Doctrine and Ethos

The Methodist Ethos refers to Methodism's affirmation of the creeds of Christianity and the belief that all churches are part of the Body of Christ. Our Methodist doctrine of salvation, prevenient grace, justification by faith, and Christian perfection, epitomizes inclusion of One and All. Our inclusive Methodist spirit never seeks to cancel, but rather to cherish the differences and sensibilities that have been uniquely gifted by our Creator to each one of us for all our various faiths. Hence, the School endeavours to welcome each person, as highlighted by our Saints motto, "One and All".

Our Methodist belief in salvation is summarised in the Saints motto of One and All. We believe that absolutely no person is beyond the reach of God's love, that Salvation is for everyone. This is an echo of Reverend John Wesley's famous *Four All's of Salvation; 'All need to be saved. All may be saved. All may know themselves to be saved. All may be saved to the uttermost'.*

It is both necessary and helpful at the outset of this Statement on Spirituality to attempt to summarise, in brief, the essence of Christian belief in general and its particular expression in the Methodist tradition. (Several Methodist sources are used for this purpose):

1.2 The MCSA Vision & Mission Statement

The College recognises and strives to honour the MCSA Vision and Mission Statement. Vision: A Christ healed Africa for the healing of nations.

Mission Statement: God calls the Methodist people to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ for healing and transformation.

1.3 The St Stithians College Charter

The St Stithians College Charter sets out the purpose and the core principles which are fundamental to St Stithians College as a Methodist School, among which includes the Honour Code: Honour God, Honour Others and Honour Self and Saints Character: Know Yourself, Be Yourself and Make Your Contribution. Our spirituality animates and better enables an integrated and holistic way of living in harmony with God and God's creation.

1.4 The relationship between the College and the Methodist Church

The relationship between the College and the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) is one that we treasure as two institutions and in our community of faith. The formal relationship is governed by the Trust Deed and Constitution of the College. As outlined in the St Stithians Trust Deed, the College is a 'church school espousing a Christian Methodist ethos and set of values as a discrete, self-governing institution' and the MCSA 'exercises its influence in relation to good governance and the exercise by the Board of Trustees of their fiduciary duties through its representation on the Board and on the Council.'

The MCSA is strongly represented on the St Stithians College Council, whose members include the Presiding Bishop, the District Bishop (or his or her delegate in the case of both bishops), five MCSA representatives appointed by the Annual Conference, and the Superintendent Chaplain of the College. The Council is the guardian of the College's Christian Methodist ethos. The MCSA has the 'final say in all matters concerning spiritual welfare, religious instruction and worship at the College'. (St Stithians College Constitution)

The Church Sub-Committee of the College Council creates a forum of church, school, parent and alumni representatives to formulate policy, build the relationship between the College and the Methodist Church, and advance and deepen the Christian character and ethos of St Stithians. The College seeks to maintain relationships with Methodist churches in neighbouring circuits.

2. THE PURPOSE OF OUR SPIRITUALITY STATEMENT

When we speak of spirituality we speak of a growing relationship of each person with God, that necessarily begins with and leads towards God. We believe this encounter allows each person to establish a personal response to the grace of God.

Thus, like any relationship, it cannot be forced, but only gently realised, gratefully reciprocated, and sensitively nurtured. Whilst every relationship is different, there are some essential features and guides which shape a healthy relationship, and which are outlined below.

The purpose of our statement on spirituality at St Stithians College is to practically help One and All to live out the Good News of God's love for humanity and our world.

We believe a practical example of this Spirituality is told in the parable of the Prodigal Son which shows the true image of God who is desirous to meet us on the way; and in the story of the Good Samaritan which is illustrated so beautifully in the stained glass window in our Chapel, which demonstrates how

love is shown more in deeds than in words; and in the offer of welcome and hospitality for the other, especially the poor and the outsider as we endeavour to live out of the consequences of God's good news.

We seek to provide opportunities to expose One and All to Jesus Christ, the Lord and Saviour of our lives, so that One and All might always "act justly, love kindly and walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8).

As Methodists we believe that this can be best done by paying attention to the Methodist Rule of Life; that of "doing no harm", "doing good by being merciful after one's own power" and "attending upon all the ordinances of God".

This Statement is epitomised in the great commandment and one of the Reverend John Wesley's (the founder of Methodism) sayings as reflected below:

- In Matthew's Gospel, 'Jesus said: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind". This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is similar to it, "Love your neighbour as yourself".' (Matthew 22: 37-39)
- This commandment is again captured by Reverend John Wesley when he memorably said; 'Do all the good you can; by all the means you can; in all the ways you can; in all the places you can; at all the times you can; to all the people you can; as long as ever you can.' (Revd. John Wesley).

3. A COMMUNITY OF VARIOUS CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS AND OTHER FAITHS

The College welcomes people of various Christian denominations and other faiths into our community, and respects One and All as beloved children of God. We are committed to nurturing the spiritual life of all members of our community, which includes encouraging those who are not Christian to discover within their faith the path to becoming the people we are called and strive to be.

We believe we are mutually enriched as we grow in respectfully understanding one another's beliefs, recognising, and valuing what we have in common. We respect each other's differences as part of what makes up each person's beloved uniqueness and we recognise this as a sign of God's generous creativity.

This recognition is in line with the values of Reverend John Wesley. He welcomed in his movement people of diverse theological beliefs and perspectives. For Wesley, it is the practice of Christian love that leads us to be open to all that is positive in others; hence his principles about the importance of loving God and neighbour. We recognise that staff and students of other faiths should have appropriate opportunities to attend specific religious events or festivals held off campus.

4. THE GOALS OF SPIRITUALITY AT ST STITHIANS COLLEGE

4.1 To inspire lives of witness reflecting gratitude, healthy relationships, servant leadership, active global citizenship and social justice in our College and South African society.

4.2 To provide the opportunity for students, staff, parents, alumni and visitors to come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour, if moved

4.3 To create meaningful opportunities for our school community to 'appreciate and develop their own faith' and to 'pursue a meaningful relationship with God.'

4.4 To promote intelligent study, reflection, contextualization and appreciation of the Bible, the message of the Gospel and Christian doctrine, particularly as expressed through the

Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) using Wesley's quadrilateral of Tradition, Experience, Reason and Scripture.

4.5 To confidently demonstrate and apply social holiness in the contemporary world.

4.6 To develop a positive, personal, and hope-filled spirituality which is expressed through regular prayer and worship, which can guide one's choices and behaviour, and which involves enquiry and engagement that encourages encounter and cultivates compassion.

4.7 To ensure that the life of the College and its activities should reflect and observe the ethos of the MCSA by which the school is governed.

4.8 To ensure that the College offers concrete opportunities for spiritual growth in holiness that considers holiness in its full measure, since within Methodism, true Scriptural Holiness is never merely personal, but always social and concerned with the common good, especially with the poor and marginalised. These activities should not be 'ivory tower' experiences, but rather reflective opportunities designed to stretch those involved to be concerned more for others than themselves and to foster a developmental and growing awareness of injustice and inequalities.

4.9 To gradually integrate this statement on Spirituality within oneself, such that each person might grow in authenticity and self-acceptance and is helped to see how One and All are wonderfully made. This will result in a feeling of awe and gratitude to God, who created and welcomes everyone without exception, and to a growing sense of responsibility and care for our common home and all of God's creatures.

5. SYMBOLS OF OUR SPIRITUALITY

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa logo

The St Stithians College Badge

Our Spirituality is expressed first and foremost through the Christian Symbol of the Cross, that forms part of our school badge that proclaims our Christian heritage, and is found in the Methodist Logo.

The Cross represents the vertical dimension of our Spirituality as an ever-deepening relationship between God and ourselves; whilst the horizontal dimension represents the invitation to broaden our relationship with each other and all creation.

At the intersection of these horizontal and vertical tensions is where we find ourselves - sometimes at a crossroads and so in need of the values and support our Spirituality offers us to always wisely choose that which is good, beautiful and true, that which is the right choice, that which is God's will, as we pray in Our Lord's Prayer, "Thy Will be done."

The scallop shell in the Methodist logo is not only a reminder of the journey, but also a metaphor for the pilgrim, since just as the waves of the ocean wash scallop shells up onto the shores, it is God who guides the pilgrims across the seas and for a time permits us all to say, as found in our College Song, "that here my ship once anchored". Similarly, we believe all who come to be part of this community of 'Saints' are sent by God to come to know Him and to reveal something of Godself to each other. We do this each time we welcome each other, care for the vulnerable, and forgive one another, as Christ taught us. Our Spirituality is realised through these concrete practices of love that Reverend John Wesley so desired his companions to practice and perfect in their own lives. These symbols, taken together, can describe our Spirituality as each of us is invited to encounter God in and through each other as One and All.

6. THE ROLE OF CHAPLAINS AS "CHAMPIONS" OF SPIRITUALITY AT ST STITHIANS COLLEGE

The Chaplains at the College are ordained ministers in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, stationed by the MCSA and appointed by the College. In the stationing of Chaplains, the usual procedures of the MCSA apply, together with the Rector approving and appointing each Chaplain as a member of the College's staff. The Chaplains are called to a ministry of presence in the College, that creatively and faithfully communicates God's love and concern for One and All.

One of the Chaplains is appointed as Superintendent Chaplain by the MCSA conference after prior consultation with the Rector and Chaplains, and he/she becomes a member of the College Council and College Executive Committee. Due to the pre-eminent importance of Spirituality in the College and in the journey of every child through our schools; as well as because of the founding relationship of the College and the MCSA, and the heartfelt desire to be a Church school not just in name only; each Chaplain is called to be a respected and valued member of the executive committee of the School in which he or she works.

The Chaplains are expected to live out a ministry of presence within their Schools. They are responsible for pastoral care, nurturing the spiritual lives of One and All, for leading regular worship in the Chapel, for participating actively and playing a leading role in our Community Engagement programmes, and for coordinating and leading the teaching of the religious education and religious instruction curriculum in each school with special reference to Spiritual development, Christianity and its Rites of passage and practice, as reflected in the goals of our Statement and religious curriculum.

7. THE CHAPEL

The Chapel is the spiritual heartland of the College that welcomes One and All and thus to be treated with respect and appreciation by all who enter through its doors. Other places of spiritual gathering on the campus include the Outdoor Chapel and the Labyrinth, as well as in every honest and courageous conversation, for we believe God's Spirit is present at all times.

8. STAFF AND STUDENTS

The Rector of the College and the Heads of the Schools are required to be practising Christians who support the ethos and teachings of the Methodist Church, seek to live as Christian role models, advance the spiritual aims of the College and participate regularly in Chapel services.

Staff and students are expected to respect the Christian ethos of the College and to attend chapel services. Consistent with the participatory ethos of our schools, all students are required to participate in religious education and religious instruction classes and community engagement activities.

We recognise that no culture or society lies outside of God's saving love, and each person has the supreme dignity of being a child of God. Our schools must be places where efforts towards building solidarity and partnerships with all people of good will are encouraged and enacted. We believe that Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, should acknowledge, preserve, and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among other faiths, together with their social life and culture.

9. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

Consistent with the requirements of the Constitution of St Stithians College, and in advancing our mission as a church school, the curriculum includes religious education and instruction classes. The religious education curriculum is both formal and informal, providing diverse opportunities for the development of spirituality and the progressive formation of a truly formed conscience. Through religious education students engage with the Bible, the foundations of Christian theology and faith, the history and context of the Methodist Church, topical issues of choice and morality, and the study of other major religions. We seek to educate young people who are attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible, who endeavour to develop their intellect, courage, compassion and who in growing interior freedom, learn to discern the good and follow their conscience in always loving God, neighbour and self.

10. RECOGNITION OF OTHER FAITHS

In appreciation of our social and cultural diversity as a South African educational institution, we welcome and respect staff and students who are believers of other faiths. Alongside our expectation that staff and students participate in the Christian life of the College, we recognise that staff and students of other faiths should have appropriate opportunities to attend specific religious events or festivals held off campus.

Honour God. Honour Others. Honour Self.

Thanks be to God.

Reviewed by Exco, 19 September 2022
Further Revised and Proposed by Church Sub-Committee of Council, 9 February 2023
Approved by College Council, 16 March 2023
Approved by SSCEFT, 11 May 2023