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Statement on the ministry of oversight

The ministry of oversight in the MCSA is understood to be exercised by an ordained presbyter of the MCSA with the duties and functions afforded to them with reference to the Laws and Discipline of the MCSA, para. 6.18-6.22. As Methodists, serving in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, we concur with Mr Wesley's view as expressed in a letter to Francis Asbury, that the title "Bishop" should not be construed to imply an ecclesiastical office which represents an order of ministry that is superior to, or different in essence from, any other order of ministry, position or role in the life of the church. Resisting the temptation to create a superior and distinct order of ministry, namely episcopacy, the MCSA in 1989 implemented the renaming of the *Office of the Chairman of the District* to that of the *Office of the District Bishop*; and the *Office of the President of Conference* to that of the *Office of the Presiding Bishop* without the change of personal title from *Reverend* to either *Bishop* or *Presiding Bishop*. The terms "Bishop" and "Presiding Bishop" refer to the title of the office and not to that of the individual. By virtue of not being ordained to an order of ministry (specifically episcopacy) that is distinct from and superior to that of presbyter, the presbyter who serves in the Office of the District Bishop or that of the Presiding Bishop, does not occupy this role for life, but may be elected to this office by means of the stipulations as directed in the Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Archived documents reflecting the history of the adoption of the Offices of the District Bishop and the Presiding Bishop can be obtained from <http://db.tt/h22GYoCo> Those who serve in the Offices of the District Bishop and the Presiding Bishop do so as pastors of the pastors, custodians of the doctrines, laws and disciplines of the MCSA, striving for Ecclesiastical unity, both inside the MCSA as well as with the broader ecumenical family.