



## ST STITHIANS COLLEGE

### SERVING OF ALCOHOL ON THE ST STITHIANS COLLEGE ESTATE

(AMENDED BY COUNCIL: 26 JULY 2005)

#### Introduction: Principles

1. The Methodist Church of Southern Africa's (MCSA) teaching regarding the consumption of alcohol is unequivocal. Practising Methodists are expected to abstain totally. This is strengthened to the point that no alcoholic or intoxicating liquor or narcotic drugs "will be brought onto or be permitted on any Church premises even of a temporary nature". This also includes Trust premises. (Laws & Disciplines of the MCSA, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition, Clause 9.37.5)
2. This is significant, as St Stithians College (according to its Trust Deed dated 22 and 30 April 1941), is set up "under the control of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA)" (Clause 1 of the Deed). This phrase is used a few times in the Trust Deed, although the Deed itself does not refer to the consumption or distribution of alcohol.
3. Alcohol abuse in South Africa today has become a scourge of epidemic proportions, probably little different from English society at the time of John Wesley. It is responsible for many tragedies on the roads, due to drunken driving; for very high levels of domestic violence, murder and other crimes; and, in particular, it has been noted that the abuse of, and violence towards, women often has the abuse of alcohol at its root. This scourge has no racial or social boundaries. We experience it at our school.
4. At the College we are conscious of a large amount of alcohol usage amongst young people. Our parents are continuously looking to the school for guidance in dealing with this burgeoning social problem amongst the youth.
5. We have a dual responsibility:
  - 5.1. As a Church school, we need to understand that we are part of the mission of the Church.
  - 5.2. We are a school and are secondarily responsible (after parents) for the education of children. This education is not only academic but extends into social issues and is also about moral formation. In fact our founders were particularly interested in a liberal education based on Christian principles.
6. It is therefore incumbent upon us to discharge our duty towards the youth diligently and based on the firm moral principles of the Church.
7. There are a number of other points to note concerning the use of alcohol in a school context:
  - 7.1. According to a number of Acts, Policies & Procedures of Government (South African Schools Act, Gauteng Schools Act, Labour Relations Act, Public Servants Co-ordinating Bargaining Council etc), a teacher may not be under the influence of liquor while discharging his/her duties with children. This extends in all government schools to disallowing the distribution and consumption of any alcohol on any school premises. These regulations do not as yet apply to any independent schools. Government is, however, considering the introduction of a law that will prohibit the sale of liquor from any outlets in or near any school premises. This will have a fundamental effect on all independent schools if the law deals with consumption and not just the sale of liquor.
  - 7.2. The Liquor Act (No. 27 of 1989) makes it clear that alcohol may not be sold to those under 18 years of age. It does not concern itself with the consumption of alcohol.

## **Our Reality**

8. It is important to note that while the College is "under the control of the Methodist Church" it serves a much broader base than the MCSA. College Management is of the opinion that about 10% of the school-going population come from families that are regular Churchgoers of any denomination. In the survey "*How Good is Your School?*" undertaken in June 1999, it was noted that only 3% of parents sent their children to St Stithians College because it was a Church school.
9. The mission as a Church school is therefore to the school constituency as much as it is to the wider community, i.e. St Stithians is not only a Methodist School with a mission to the world, it is also a Methodist School with a mission to its own constituency.
10. In recognising this mission, it is important to note that an important principle of spreading the Good News is that we witness to our beliefs rather than impose them, especially those that may conflict with the conscience of other believers. This is fundamental to the concept of respect for the dignity and rights of others. It is an important principle in the teachings of the MCSA and the broader Methodist community.
11. It is pointed out that this Council, as a matter of unequivocal principle, is fully committed to maintaining its relationship with the MCSA. This is a fundamental basis of the Trust Deed, which the Council does not wish to alter.
12. It is recognised that if the Council imposes on the school community the absolute abolitionist stance of the MCSA, it will be incumbent upon the College to ensure that there is no consumption of alcohol in any of the residences on site, nor at any College function either on or off site. This will force management into a policing role for adults and their social functions. To make this a responsibility of College management may be considered unacceptably onerous on the part of management.
13. Further, this Council recognises that we participate with the MCSA in its mission, but its mission around alcohol is not the primary mission of the College.
14. This Council notes that due to the success and community-based nature of education at the College many parents are drawn into the community as a fundamental part of their socialising and social reality. They enjoy spending time with their children at their children's school and participating in the activities of their children. This is an important principle of education and one that the school would not like to lose. For many parents and teachers the consumption of alcohol is part of their socialising reality.
15. The Council recognises that many of the staff, in the privacy of their own homes, will consume and serve alcohol to their own guests.

## **Resolution**

16. This Council resolves to remain committed to the fundamental mission of the Methodist Church, which includes witnessing, in whatever ways possible, to the scourge of alcohol abuse in our society.
17. The Council undertakes to continue educational and awareness campaigns about alcohol usage in the formal and informal curriculum.
18. The Council notes that while there may be a strong message of no alcohol use, there is a fundamental contradiction in providing, on an annual basis, a beer tent at a highly prestigious College event to sell liquor for the sole purpose of raising a profit. For the College to be teaching abstinence and yet providing such a facility is a contradiction.
19. Under no circumstances will the College ever countenance the distribution of alcohol to any learners in any circumstance on or off site at any school event. In that regard the College undertakes to regularly review College processes and procedures to comply with this resolution and to look for ways to positively educate learners so that they look for alternative mechanisms of socialising.
20. The *One & All*:

- 20.1. The Council recognises that the lease arrangement that has allowed the serving of alcohol at the *One & All*, is irregular with the teachings of the MCSA.
  - 20.2. It recognises the contribution that the Old Stithians have made to the Council, as one of the original four participants in the Trust, as well as in many other ways over the years.
  - 20.3. It recognises that the Old Stithians have also been drawn to socialise and participate at the College in much the same way as the parents of the children and this is why the situation regarding the serving of alcohol at the *One & All* has developed.
  - 20.4. Council requests that the Old Stithian Association ensures that any serving of alcohol at the *One & All* is discrete and does not cause embarrassment to the College or the MCSA.
21. The Council recognises that parents may serve alcohol at some school events both on and off campus. Requests for permission to serve alcohol at such events shall be made in writing to the relevant Head of school. It requests the parents' constituency represented on this Council to ensure that any alcohol consumption by parents at such events (both on and off campus) recognises and respects the mission of the MCSA and this Council and continually asks parents to respect this position.
22. The Council recognises that school functions may be held on or off the campus or in staff members' homes at which alcohol may be served. It requests that the school be sensitive to the Mission of the MCSA and continually attempt to be faithful to this mission.
23. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by Council on an annual basis.

**APPROVED AND ADOPTED BY COUNCIL: 26 MARCH 2003**

**AMENDMENTS APPROVED AND ADOPTED BY COUNCIL: 26 JULY 2005**

Ref: Council/policy-alcohol resolution, 2005