

TOUCHSTONE STATEMENT OF VALUES & POLICY ON ADVERTISING

Introduction

Touchstone is the primary publication of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. While the opinions expressed in the paper do not necessarily reflect the official views of the New Zealand Methodist Church, the publication is guided by a framework of values which inform the life and ministry of the Methodist Church. These values are rooted in the history and heritage of the Church – in particular the life and ministry of John Wesley and the first Methodists in New Zealand.

In 1745, in a pamphlet entitled *Advice to the People called Methodists*, Wesley encouraged Methodists ‘to be true to their principles... to beware of narrowness of spirit... to love as brothers and sisters those who do not agree with you... to agree with truth and reason.’ He argues that the distinguishing mark of a Methodist is ‘the love of God in one’s heart’. These principles, he concluded, were only the common fundamental principles of Christianity’. Touchstone as a Methodist publication, seeks to honour these principles, and is guided by a set of values which provide the working framework of the publication. (cf ‘A Statement of Mission for the people of Aotearoa New Zealand who are associated with the Methodist tradition, both in Methodist parishes and Cooperative Ventures’, adopted by Conference, 1989)

Therefore the Methodist Publishing Board has identified three sets of values to assist and guide the editor in determining the content of the paper. They are:

1. Faith imperatives
2. Social guidelines
3. Policy initiatives

These values are not fixed; rather they provide a flexible framework designed to assist the editor:

1. to determine what to publish and what not to publish;
2. To establish a working policy for what advertisements to include;
3. To set priorities for the content of the paper.

II Faith Imperatives

- A. Universal Love:** In his Commentary on the Epistle of First John, Wesley wrote that the whole end of one’s life, one’s whole business, one’s whole happiness... is love.’ ‘We may not know much,’ he said, ‘but we may love much.’ This value ought to shape the content of Touchstone. It does this best by containing material which provides a greater sense of belonging and community among Methodists. Christian love is the glue holding the faith community together.
- B. Critical Justice:** Methodism arose as a response to the inequality of a ‘class-based’ society, and as a living critique of the inequities of a society which privileges the few at the expense of the majority. Thus Touchstone places a strong emphasis on justice issues in the church, the wider community and the world.
- C. Compassionate service:** Wesley encouraged the early Methodist preachers to follow in the way of compassion. Love, he said, was the heart and soul of compassion and compassion ‘was the food of the soul and the water of life’. Thus he believed Methodists should seek out those who were in need, stand alongside them, relieve their suffering and poverty and advocate publicly for them. These principles encourage Touchstone to be a voice for those who are poor, exploited and in need of help.
- D. Whole World Emphasis:** When told by Bishop Butler that he could no longer preach in his diocese, Wesley reported that the whole world was his parish. He added defiantly that he was not subject to the dictates of bishops but constrained by the call of God to preach the gospel. Touchstone is one of the means through which the Methodist Church of New Zealand gives expression to the Good News of the Christian faith.
- E. Evangelical Mission:** Wesley established field preaching as the means of sharing the gospel especially with those outside the established church because of an oppressive class system that excluded the working poor. The Methodist Church has continued to encourage a strong

lay ministry. Touchstone is committed to keeping the wider church informed about this ministry and its implications for the mission of the church.

III Social Guidelines

- A. **Educational and Informative:** Wesley often said he wanted 'plain truth for plain people.' To achieve that goal:
1. He published a regular newsletter, the Armenian,
 2. He published numerous treatises on a variety of subjects important to the emerging church.
 3. He published and distributed among Methodists his Explanatory Notes on the New Testament and he made available to Methodists pamphlets he thought would be of interest.

Touchstone's primary purpose builds on these initiatives of early Methodism and is committed to providing information that is not only informative but educational.

- B. **Responsible and Critical:** The material published in Touchstone also reflects the need of the Church to have printed material that is critical and honest in what it says about the life and ministry of the wider church. It has a responsibility to provide material to the wider church that accurately reflects the life and concerns of the church while also critiquing issues of concern. As Wesley emphasised: 'Methodists are to have 'hearing ears and seeing eyes'.

IV Policy Initiatives

- A. **Social Diversity:** The Methodist Church of New Zealand is committed to the bicultural journey with Maori under Te Tiriti O Waitangi. This relationship provides the working foundation of the church. It also establishes the framework for the wider ethnic diversity of the church. Touchstone seeks to encourage this ethnic diversity and the importance of the Treaty to the life and ministry of the church. This concern for unity in diversity can be seen in Wesley's strong support of William Wilberforce in his efforts to put an end to slavery. In his Thoughts upon Slavery (1774) Wesley condemns slavery and establishes principles that form the basis for a society built on fundamental human rights and social equality.
- B. **Affirmative Inclusivity:** Wesley sought to build a movement within the established Church of his day that was not bound by class or race distinctions. It included everyone, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, young and old, male and female. The Methodist Church today seeks to be that kind of Church community through its bicultural journey and its principles of power-sharing. Touchstone is committed to publishing material that is inclusive in content.
- C. **Emerging Ecumenicity:** The Methodist Church in New Zealand has always been in the forefront of ecumenical activities in the country from full participation in Cooperative Ventures to the recent Covenant of Understanding with the Anglican Church and the emerging interfaith movement. Touchstone is committed to providing information and insight into the on-going ecumenical journey in New Zealand.

Jim Stuart and Brian Turner

(This paper is available as a separate document from the MPB)

TOUCHSTONE POLICY ON ADVERTISING

In light of the faith imperatives (universal love, critical justice, compassionate service, whole world emphasis and evangelical mission), social guidelines (both educational and informative and responsible and critical) and policy initiatives (social diversity, affirmative inclusivity and emerging ecumenicity) set out above in the values, we suggest a number of guidelines to assist the Editor and other Publishing Board resource persons in the choice of advertising.

1) "Values before Finance".

Whilst the financial viability of Touchstone is important, attention to the core values of the MCNZ is more important. Any advertisement placed in Touchstone must be consistent with the core values of the MCNZ

2) “A Primary Publication”

Whilst other parts of the MCNZ publish material, few do so as regularly and to such a wide readership as Touchstone which gives the publication a high visibility within the wider Church (including Co-operating Ventures)

3) “Walking the Talk”

Given Touchstone's high visibility, and despite a published disclaimer, the majority of content in Touchstone (including advertising) is likely to be viewed as in accord with the values and policy of the MCNZ. This is not dissimilar to other constituency specific publications such as Taonga, Spanz, Tui Motu, Challenge Weekly etc. This means that particular sensitivity needs to be exercised in regard to material that is contrary to the core values of the MCNZ.

4) “To be Methodist is to be Ecumenical” (Conference decision 2005)

Touchstone needs to be particularly open and sensitive to those parts of the wider faith family that the MCNZ is in special partnership with.

These partnerships include

- Ecumenical chaplaincies
- Christian World Service and World Council of Churches
- Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand
- Bi-lateral and multilateral dialogues
- The emerging Unity Commission
- Anglican-Methodist National Covenant
- Reciprocity of ministry with the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
- Membership of inter-faith councils and groups

5) “When in Doubt Consult”

The Editor should have the final say as to what copy (including advertising) is included in Touchstone. When in doubt, the Editor, Publishing Board Chair and General Secretary should confer.

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