



Recontextualizing John Wesley's Class Meeting for Holistic Discipleship and the Contemporary Methodist Church Ghana

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Abstract: This paper explores the recontextualization of John Wesley's Class Meeting as a framework for holistic discipleship within the contemporary Methodist Church Ghana (MCG). Rooted in Wesley's eighteenth-century vision of accountable small-group discipleship, the Class Meeting historically nurtured spiritual growth, mutual care, and lay leadership formation. In Ghana, however, rapid urbanization, youth disengagement, and declining participation in small-group ministries have created significant discipleship gaps—relational, practical, and leadership-oriented. Drawing on Wesleyan theology and the Akan concept of *abusua* (extended family), this study proposes a contextual model that frames Class Meetings as “spiritual families” embodying communal identity, accountability, and intergenerational mentorship. A sample liturgical framework is outlined, integrating accountability, sermon application, and missional outreach. The paper highlights potential challenges—cultural sensitivities, clerical inertia, leadership quality, sustainability, and theological depth—and offers mitigation strategies through training, participatory leadership, and contextualized liturgy. Ultimately, the re-envisioned Class Meeting emerges as a vital complement to preaching, the sacraments, and other means of grace, positioning the MCG for ecclesial renewal and transformative discipleship in Ghana's evolving sociocultural landscape.

Keywords: *Class meeting • ecclesial renewal • inculturation • akan abusua • lay leadership formation • accountability in discipleship • missional outreach*

Introduction

The Methodist tradition has long prized the small-group setting as the crucible for spiritual formation. John Wesley institutionalised the Class Meeting as a weekly gathering of twelve individuals who met under the pastoral eye of a leader to “examine themselves before God and one another.”¹ In the eighteenth-century English context, these meetings were instrumental in fostering personal holiness, mutual accountability and lay leadership formation.²

In Ghana, the Methodist Church established in 1835 by the Wesleyan missionaries has grown to become one of the largest Protestant denominations, with over one million adherents.³ It has a robust network of congregations spanning rural villages to urban megacities. Yet the church confronts pressing issues of the effects of rapid urbanization, youth unemployment, religious pluralism, and a growing gap between doctrinal proclamation and lived experience.⁴ Urban migration has led to the concentration of Methodist congregations in the cities, where

¹ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley, Bicentennial Edition, vol. 9, The Methodist Societies: History, Nature and Design* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 77.

² Richard Miller, *People of Practice: Methodism and Discipleship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 112.

³ The Methodist Church Ghana, *Annual Report, Methodist Conference Office* (Accra, 2023), 49.

⁴ Joseph Amoako, “Urban Migration and Ecclesial Challenges in Ghana,” *Trinity Theological Seminary Journal* (2021), 45–52.

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young professionals and students constitute most of the attendees.⁵ The rural congregations, though still sizable, face leadership attrition as the youth and educated relocate to urban centres. These challenges have prompted a reevaluation of discipleship structures.⁶

The challenge today is not to recreate the eighteenth-century Class Meeting verbatim, but to recover its essence—mutual accountability, spiritual growth, and communal support—in forms that speak to contemporary culture. When contextualised for Ghanaian cultural and ecclesial realities, John Wesley's Class Meeting provides a robust, relational framework for accountable discipleship that can catalyse church growth and indigenous leadership formation in the Methodist Church Ghana. This paper therefore asks: How can John Wesley's Class Meeting be recontextualised to nurture holistic discipleship within the contemporary Methodist Church Ghana (MCG)? It proceeds by (1) reviewing Wesleyan Class Meeting scholarship; (2) outlining the Ghanaian ecclesial context; (3) proposing a contextual framework; and (4) highlighting practical implications.

Part 1: Review of Scholarly Perspectives on Wesley's Class Meeting

Wesley conceived Class Meetings as “the school of the Holy Spirit”.⁷ They were small groups meeting weekly for prayer, scripture reading, the sharing of personal experience, and the monitoring of the means of grace (preaching, searching the Scriptures, communion, love-feasts). Wesley asserted that the people called Methodists could not survive without the small groups, for it provided the accountability and spiritual formation necessary for holiness of heart and life.⁸ Henry Ward Beecher observed, “The greatest thing John Wesley ever gave to the world is the Methodist class-meeting,” while Dwight L. Moody affirmed it as “the best institution for training converts this world ever saw”.⁹

According to Miller, the Class Meeting fosters holistic formation through “spiritual accounting.”¹⁰ In the opinion of Stott, accountability in discipleship is essential to prevent moral drift in fast-growing churches. The weekly accountability supports addressing ethical challenges among urban congregants.¹¹ Bonhoeffer described the community of confession as the church's heartbeat.¹² Bosch argues that missional discipleship integrates formation and outreach which aligns with MCG's evangelistic thrust in peri-urban and rural areas.¹³ Andrew Goodhead highlights how Class Meetings fostered accountability, spiritual growth, and community cohesion, while also examining the reasons for their decline in later Methodist history. He engages with modern debates about whether reviving Class Meetings could address current challenges in Methodism, such as declining membership and spiritual vitality. Goodhead raises the question of whether calls for revival are nostalgic or providentially timely.¹⁴

Recent Methodist scholarship has revisited Class Meetings as a vehicle for holistic discipleship. In the United States, the “Class Meeting Revival” emphasizes “spiritual health checks” and community service.¹⁵ According to Kevin Watson “the Class Meeting was the primary way Methodists moved from conversion to sustained discipleship without which the Methodist Revival could have degenerated into emotional enthusiasm short of ethical depth.”¹⁶ In the African context, scholars such as Nkosi Banda argue that Class Meetings can be “inculturated” to incorporate ubuntu ethics and indigenous communal rites.¹⁷ African theologians have articulated a holistic gospel that integrates spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions.¹⁸ The concept of integral mission—faith that transforms personal life and

⁵ Ghana Statistical Service, *Population and Housing Census Report* (Accra, 2022), 4.

⁶ Kwame Amoah, *Discipleship Structures in Ghanaian Churches* (Accra: Christian Press, 2020), 3.

⁷ John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley* (Oxford: University Press, 1987), 2.

⁸ Wesley, *Works*, 9:77.

⁹ Henry F. Henderson, *Class Meetings in Methodist History* (Nashville, TN.: Abingdon Press, 1997), 93.

¹⁰ Richard Miller, *People of Practice* (Nashville, TN.: Abingdon Press, 1999), 115.

¹¹ John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 1.

¹² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row, 1937), 8.

¹³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011).

¹⁴ Andrew Goodhead, *The Cross and the Crown: The Rise, Decline and Fall of the Methodist Class Meeting* (London: Epworth Press, 2010), 6.

¹⁵ John Hick, “The Class Meeting Revival: The New Model for Spiritual Health” *Methodist Quarterly* 94:2 (2018), 29-46.

¹⁶ Kevin M. Watson, *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten Small-Group Experience* (Wilmore, KY: Seedbed Publishing, 2014), 21.

¹⁷ Nkosi K. Banda, “Inculturation of Methodist Small -Group Practices in Southern Africa,” *African Journal of Theology* 23, no. 1 (2020), 85–103.

¹⁸ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 29.

societal structures—is widely endorsed.¹⁹ This theological backdrop aligns with Wesley's means of grace framework, suggesting a fertile ground for Class Meeting renewal. The consensus in these works is clear that accountability, mutual care, and leadership training are indispensable for vibrant discipleship, particularly in contexts experiencing rapid sociocultural change. In the opinion of Sondra Higgins, placing too much emphasis on the Class Meeting as the sole tool for discipleship in early Methodism at the expense of the other disciplines leaves much to be desired. Higgins sets the use of bands and classes within the wider framework of theological and devotional formation in early Methodism. The Class Meeting, though a very key element in discipleship formation, was not the only means. The other disciplines such as hymn singing, preaching, acts of mercy, acts of piety, and the theological underpinning of these elements combined uniquely in Wesley's day to form generations of Christians.²⁰

Historical Underpinnings: Wesley's Class Meeting as a Discipleship Engine

To propose recontextualization, one must first understand the original. Wesley's Class Meetings emerged organically from the Oxford Holy Club and in Bristol in the 1740s. They were not initially "small groups" for fellowship alone, but structured, intentional cohorts of 10–12 persons, meeting weekly under the guidance of a class leader who was often a layperson. Wesley's genius was in creating a scalable, relational, and grace-filled system for forming disciples, not just gathering converts.²¹ Scholars note three theological pillars for the Wesleyan Class Meeting: (a) the doctrine of prevenient grace that enables every member to respond; (b) the praxis of mutual accountability; and (c) the goal of social holiness.²²

The core functions of the Class Meeting as outlined by Wesley are threefold. The first was accountability or inquiry that is an intentional spiritual probing with the core question: how is the "state of your soul." This is Wesleyan shorthand for one's practical, affective, and volitional alignment with God's will. The Class Meeting was a safe space for confession of faults and resistance to "sin, particularly that sin which easily besets us."²³ This was not a performance review but a grace-filled examination of one's progress in the "way of salvation." The second function of exhortation looks at the encouragement, reproof, and counsel of members based on the members' responses from the inquiry. This was the space for catechesis and theological reflection. Using Wesley's "General Questions" and, later, the Directions for the Society, members learned to articulate their faith, wrestle with doctrine (like Christian perfection), and connect belief to behaviour. The third role of the Class Meeting was Practical Support, discussing temporal and spiritual needs, including financial stewardship for the "poor" (the "contributions" for the class). Crucially, the Class Meeting was the operating system for Wesley's entire system. It was the primary context for leadership incubation. Class Leaders were trained through apprenticeship and Wesley's own mentoring. They learned to pastor, to discern spiritual states, to apply Scripture, and to manage group dynamics, thus creating a vast, distributed network of pastoral care that compensated for the paucity of ordained Anglican clergy sympathetic to Methodism. The Class Meeting was the place where one reported on one's use of prayer, Scripture reading, sacrament attendance, fasting, and works of mercy. It made the "means of grace" a subject of communal discourse and accountability, moving them from private rituals to public, shared disciplines. The Class Meeting's strength lies in its fusion of theological depth and practical simplicity.

Part 2: The Ghanaian Ecclesial Landscape

Ghanaian Christianity is characterized by a highly relational worship culture, the prevalence of charismatic expressions, and a strong communal ethic rooted in Akan *abusua* (family) structures.²⁴ The Methodist Church Ghana has grown progressively over the years in almost all the regions in Ghana and beyond. The MCG has 22 Dioceses presided over by Bishops. The dioceses are made up of circuits, and circuits are made up of societies. Societies are the direct local contact points for Church members and the community. The societies are divided

¹⁹ Kobena Ekpennyong, *Integral Mission in Africa* (Lagos: African Studies Press, 2019), 64.

²⁰ Sondra Higgins Matthaël, *Making Disciples* (Nashville, TN.: Abingdon Press, 2000), 9.

²¹ Wesley, *Works*, 9:47.

²² Michael Watts, *Social Holiness and Wesleyan Theology* (Cambridge: Theological Studies, 2005), 78–82.

²³ Wesley, *Works*, 9:47.

²⁴ Emmanuel Quartey, *Akan Christianity and Community Worship* (Accra: Heritage Publishing, 2017), 57.

into classes for teaching and discipleship purposes. These classes, from the establishment of Methodism in Ghana, have supported the development of lay leadership and expansion of the Church throughout Ghana and beyond. In their evangelistic roles, some of these classes have developed into mega societies in their localities.²⁵ In the late twentieth century, research indicates a sharp decline in participation in small-group ministries, especially among urban youth.²⁶ The Methodist Church Ghana has reported a sharp decline in attendance and participation in the Class Meeting right across the Connexion. In 2022, MCG reported that 39% of the full members attend Class Meetings.²⁷ This phenomenon has significantly affected the quantitative and qualitative growth of the Church.

The MCG's current discipleship ecology is robust in certain areas. The Church has a powerful preaching tradition (the "sermon" is central to Sunday worship), a strong sacramental life, especially the monthly and periodic Eucharist, love feast, weekly prayer meetings, and baptism, a vast network of societies, circuits, and dioceses, and a commendable emphasis on children's, men's, youth, and women's groups. These provide corporate and sacramental foundations for the members in the societies. The MCG has a strong music ministry that has been very instrumental in its evangelistic work. The music ministry of the MCG led by the Choir, Singing Band, the Christ Little Band and other groups in the Church is very strong, and has played a significant role in the growth and expansion of the Church.²⁸ These are strong discipleship tools, yet without a robust participation in the Class Meeting by members, the MCG could produce a community with form but lacking the discipline of discipleship. As indicated above, that the Class Meeting was not just an organizational tool but a theological expression of Methodism itself, its decline, and non-participation, represented not only a structural change but a doctrinal shift — away from disciplined communal holiness toward more individualized forms of faith.

The Relational Gap

There are some notable discipleship gaps in a Methodist society without a strong Class Meeting structure. The large Sunday and mid-week services, while inspiring, offer little space for the vulnerable, face-to-face corporate and individual confession and interrogation of one's "state of one's soul" that Wesley deemed essential. There are many instances of members who relocate residence for various reasons and have worshipped in a new society for years unnoticed by the minister or the leaders, because they did not disclose their identity nor belong to any of the small groups. The MCG acknowledges two main fellowships, yet the fellowship, at the Class Meeting confirms one's membership of the society.²⁹

The Practical Application Gap

Many members can articulate what they believe from sermons and congregational meetings but struggle with the "so what?" This is looking at the application of the sermon to daily Christian life. The application deficiency relates to how doctrine shapes financial management, conflict resolution, sexual ethics, or vocational choices. There is a lack of structured forums for this applied theology in the large Sunday service.

The Lay Leadership Formation Gap

While the MCG has accredited lay preachers, stewards and organisational officers, their formation more often focuses on function and duties (how to lead a service, collect offerings) over character and pastoral instincts. A deep, Wesleyan "watching over one another in love" is not systematically cultivated.³⁰

²⁵ Some classic examples are the Mt. Olivet Methodist Church in the Dansoman Circuit of the Accra Diocese and the St. John Methodist Church in the New Achimota Circuit of the Northern Accra Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana. These two started as a Class Meeting in the Calvary Methodist Church, Adabraka, in the Accra North Circuit of the Accra Diocese.

²⁶ Samuel Oppong and Lydia Mensah, "Youth Participation in Ghanaian Methodism," *Journal of African Ecclesial Studies*, 8:1 (2022), 118.

²⁷ The Methodist Church Ghana, *Strategic Plan 2022–2028 Agenda for Renewal, Transformation and Growth* (Accra: Alpharoyal, 2022), 26.

²⁸ The Methodist Church Ghana, *The Constitution of the Methodist Church Ghana* (Accra: Alpharoyal, 2022), 289–297. These Standing Orders give the full list of the Intergenerational and Adult Organisations in MCG

²⁹ The Methodist Church Ghana, *The Constitution of the Methodist Church Ghana*, 19.

³⁰ The Methodist Church Ghana, *The Constitution of the Methodist Church Ghana*, 725.

The Means of Grace Narrowing

For many, the “means of grace” are equated with Sunday worship and occasional prayer at revival meetings. The disciplined, weekly, personal and communal engagement with Scripture, prayer, fasting, and works of mercy as practices for growth are under-emphasised.

These gaps can lead to a form of discipleship that can be inspirational but not always incarnational. That is faith that uplifts only on Sunday but struggles to sustain through the Monday-to-Saturday complexities of life. This is where the Class Meeting model becomes not just relevant, but critical and essential.

Part 3: Recontextualising the Class Meeting for Ghana: Class Meetings as Spiritual *Abusua* in Ghana

The Akan concept of *abusua* (extended family) provides a powerful cultural lens for understanding and supporting the importance of the Methodist Class Meeting. In connecting the two, several parallels become clear. The first of these parallels is **communal identity**. In Akan culture, *abusua* is not just nuclear family but the wider clan, bound by blood, responsibility, and shared destiny. **Mutual care** forms a second parallel. Members are expected to support one another materially, emotionally, and spiritually. The emphasis on **accountability** is a third parallel. The family system enforces discipline, guidance, and correction, ensuring individuals live responsibly with dignity. Finally, there is a **transmission of values**. Through family gatherings, storytelling, rituals, and shared practices, the *abusua* preserves identity and passes on wisdom.

Parallels with the Methodist Class Meeting: A Spiritual Family

Just as the *abusua* provides belonging, the Class Meeting creates a spiritual household where believers are nurtured. First of all there is **mutual support**. Class members pray for one another, share struggles, watch over one another in love, and offer practical help thus mirroring the *abusua*'s ethic of care. Secondly, there is **accountability in holiness**. Wesley's system of asking “How does your soul prosper?” echoes the *abusua*'s corrective role in shaping moral behaviour. Then there is the emphasis on the **transmission of beliefs/faith**. The Class Meeting, like the *abusua*, is a space for passing on values—in this case, the transmission of Christian doctrine and discipleship practices.

Why the Akan Abusua Strengthens the Cultural Case for Class Meetings

Ghanaians already understand the importance of family bonds; framing Class Meetings as “spiritual *abusua*” makes them relatable. As a result they offer a **counter to individualism**. In a globalised world where individualism is rising and personal autonomy and privacy are prioritised, the *abusua* reminds us that identity is communal—just as Wesley insisted that holiness is social. No one is an island and this is emphasised by the Akan proverb; “*ɛtɛɛ se ɔtɛ neho nso osi ndua mu*” (“The tree that decided to live in isolation still finds itself standing in the forest among trees”). The family that is always together counters the solitary tendencies in society. Then there is **resilience in crisis**. Both *abusua* and Class Meetings provide networks of care during hardship, ensuring no one is left isolated. Finally there is a **continuity of tradition**. By linking Wesleyan practice to the Ghanaian heritage, the church affirms both faith and culture, making discipleship deeply contextual.

Part 4: Practical Application within Ghanaian Methodism: Class Meeting as Spiritual *Abusua*

The MCG could present Class Meetings as “church families,” where members belong, are cared for, and are accountable. **Language and symbols** – the Church can use Akan proverbs and family metaphors in teaching about the importance of family bonding: e.g., “*Abusua baako na ɛma ɔman yɛ yie*” (“It is one family that makes the nation prosper”)—applied to the church family. **Intergenerational mentorship** – just as elders guide the *abusua*, older Christians can mentor young people in Class Meetings, ensuring wisdom flows across generations. **community service** – Class Meetings can encourage us to act as *abusua* units, mobilizing for collective action

in church building, social outreach, and public witness. **Theological insight** – John Wesley’s insistence that “**social holiness**” is essential finds a natural ally in the Ghanaian *abusua* system.³¹ Both affirm that faith is lived in community, not isolation. Thus, reviving Class Meetings in Ghana is not importing a foreign idea but reclaiming a communal spirituality already embedded in the culture.

The Size and Composition of the Class

Wesley’s plan to divide the members of the society into smaller groups with a leader was intended to be intentional and focused. This composition can be a mix of gender, ages, geographical locations of residence, educational background, and most importantly stages of faith or maturity to model the “communion of saints.” This grouping can give the class leverage in discussions on a variety of topics and can offer a higher level of assistance to members. In this context, for effective accountability and watching over one another in love, the ideal number might be between 12 and 25 people.

The Leadership of the Class Meeting – Abusuapanin

In the *abusua* concept, every family has a head called *Abusuapanin*, who is carefully chosen. Such people are elderly, are respected, and integrity and can be named an ancestor upon their demise. The *Abusuapanin* is someone who knows the history and traditions of the family. The Class could also have a carefully chosen leader (*Abusuapanin*). A trained class leader (and an assistant), a mature layperson (or deacon/deaconess) selected for spiritual maturity, humility, and listening skills, not oratory. The Class leader assumes a pastoral, not presidential, role. They require specific training in facilitation, pastoral care, counselling and Wesleyan theology. In the traditional concept, an *Abusuapanin* is the one who takes care of the members’ welfare and makes sure everyone is well catered for.

Theological and Practical Integration in the Class Meeting

Another area that the MCG can contextualise is the liturgy for the weekly Class Meeting and the duration of the Class Meeting. The suggested duration for the Class Meeting 60–75 minutes. The proposed liturgy framework retains Wesley’s doctrine of grace, emphasizing that every believer is equipped to partake in the means of grace.³² By maintaining this mutual accountability, the Class Meeting continues to function as the “laboratory of the Spirit,” a place where sanctification is examined and enacted. This integration of service is a direct outworking of Wesley’s social holiness.³³

Sample Weekly Meeting (60–75 minutes):

- Opening Devotion and Hymn or Local Choruses (Connecting to the MCG’s worship heritage).
- Accountability Section

“The State of Our Souls” (Modified Wesleyan Inquiry). Instead of a legalistic interrogation, use 3–4 questions from a rotating list:

What was a moment this week you felt the following:

- Closest to God?
- Farthest from God?
- What Scripture or sermon challenged you?
- How did you respond to a specific need you saw?
- “Is there any behaviour, habit, or relationship where you feel stuck and need the group’s prayer and gentle challenge?”
- (This is where grace and truth meet. The leader must model vulnerability first.)

³¹ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, vol. 2: *Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 72.

³² Wesley, *Works*, 2:74.

³³ Watts, *Social Holiness*, 82.

(The Leader must focus on stories and experiences, not just theological answers.)

- Scripture and Sermon Application – Weekly Bible Lesson for the Week
 - (This is the member connecting to the Word).
 - The group must discuss last Sunday's sermon
 - What one concrete action did it challenge you to take? How did it go?
 - This bridges pulpit to pew to practice.
 - Discuss the lesson for the Week (As in the Weekly Bible lesson)
- Temporal and Missional Concerns
 (Wesley's "practical support").
 Sharing needs (prayer, material), discussing local community needs, and planning a collective act of mercy/evangelism (the "class project").
 There could be a planned quarterly "Class love feast" where members share testimonies of growth, celebrate answered prayers and reaffirm their commitment.
- Closing Prayer and Commitment.

The Class Meeting as a Complement for Spirituality

From the outline above it is apparent that there is a theological integration for members. A well-coordinated Class Meeting ensures synergy with preaching, sacraments, and the means of grace. In going through all these disciplines, the Class Meeting is not seen as a competitor but a complement and amplifier of the MCG's existing tools for discipleship and spirituality. In cases where members decouple the Class Meeting from other activities within the Church it is possible for these to be addressed within the structure of the Class Meeting. In addition to preaching on Sunday or during the midweek service, the "small group reflection" helps members to assimilate the sermon.³⁴ The discussion in Class helps members to apply the teaching of the sermon to their lives (James 1:22). At a time when members often struggle with shallow faith, a consumerist church culture and minimal ethical transformation, the Class Meeting's emphasis on accountable discipleship helps deepen the faith of members. On the sacraments, the class members prepare for and reflect upon the sacrament together, thus deepening its significance. It becomes a corporate preparation, not just an individual ritual. With the other "Means of Grace" (Prayer, Scripture, Fasting) the group doesn't just recommend these practices; they ask deep questions of spirituality about them. When questions such as "How did your Scripture reading shape your day at work and home and in your family life?" The activities of the Class Meeting create a culture where the means of grace become normative, not optional, and are held in community. When it comes to the discussion on holiness, the members are taught to understand that Wesleyan holiness is social and practical. The Class Meeting is the laboratory where "perfect love" is tested in relationships. The class can discuss probing questions such as "Did you love that difficult sibling in Christ this week?" It makes holiness an accountable journey, not a solitary pursuit. The Class Meeting thus functions as the connective tissue of church life that links preaching, sacrament and mission. The study of the Scriptures must feed into the Class discussion to foster discipleship.

Potential Challenges from Contextualization and Mitigations

At this stage it is helpful to outline some potential challenges to contextualization in this setting. The first difficulty relates to cultural factors. Ghanaian culture prizes respect, old age, communal harmony, and "saving face," hence open confession can be seen as shameful, and gentle correction as disrespect on the part of the class leader or other members. The Class Meeting structure would encounter these difficulties. For example, the issue of shame and exposure in a social media age. In view of this, MCG would need to give extensive training on grace-filled accountability—framed as "watching over one another in love" (*ɔdɔ nni afa mu*). The Class leader must frame the accountability questions to be forward-looking and grace-centred, not forensic. Use biblical metaphors of iron sharpening iron (Proverbs 27:17) and members on a communal pilgrimage. The leader (*Abusuapanin*) must be skilled in creating psychological safety and must be grounded in the safeguarding policies of the MCG.

³⁴ John Wesley insisted that genuine Christianity must be lived daily. For further discussion see Wesley, *Works*, 9:38.

The second difficulty relates to clerical and institutional inertia. Due to the inadequate number of Class Leaders, the current system in many societies is often clergy-centric. However, Class Meetings require a shift to lay-led pastoral care, which some clergy may see as diluting their authority. The clergy might conceptualize this system as a form of empowerment, not replacement, wherein they become trainers and supervisors of Class Leaders, multiplying and expanding their pastoral reach. Institutional commitment is also crucial if MCG is to make the Class Meeting phenomenon a recognized, encouraged, and resourced part of the circuit structure, as opposed to an optional extra. From the society through to the conference, annual reports could include group health metrics. In the context of realignment, the MCG might re-evaluate its theological education to include a module on Wesleyan Small-Group Ministry in the curriculum, with field placements in Class Meeting pilots. This would reposition Class Meetings as the primary node for integral mission outreach, aligning them with MCG's strategic plan – Agenda for Renewal, Transformation and Growth.

A third difficulty relates to leadership quality. Poorly led groups might become a major cause of decline and, moreover, poor participation in the Class Meeting. Such Class Meetings are reduced to administrative gatherings, fundraising units and attendance check mechanisms. The way to mitigate this challenge is a robust, mandatory training curriculum for all Class Leaders, covering character and values, Wesleyan theology, group dynamics, active listening, confidentiality, and handling conflict. Wesley invested in the training and supervision of Class Leaders. He provided clear expectations and pastoral oversight.³⁵ The MCG could create a “mentor class leader” system for apprenticeship for a sustainable process of developing leaders. The Church could pair seasoned Class Leaders with emerging lay leaders in a mentor-apprentice relationship. Elders could attend the first portion of the meeting to provide theological oversight, then withdraw, allowing the group to exercise autonomy—a balance between authority and empowerment. This would allow the training of younger members to take on leadership roles. Another way of addressing this challenge is Participatory Leadership Structures. The MCG can also adopt a rotating facilitator model where a mature member is encouraged to lead the meeting, mirroring the egalitarian ethos of the early Class Meetings and the Ghanaian tradition of learning by example. This would be a way to develop new leaders.

A fourth difficulty relates to sustainability and burnout. The voluntary, weekly commitment is high and might become boring over time. The groups can lose momentum and burn out. The Church could emphasise short-term commitment, for example quarterly study and plan a joint evaluation session among classes where stories and experiences are shared. They can celebrate “class anniversaries.” The Church can intentionally connect classes to a clear, shared missional task (e.g., supporting a local school, visiting the elderly) to give an outward focus to the Class Meeting. The MCG could encourage the use of technology in urban and peri-urban societies, where they use digital tools (a simple WhatsApp group for prayer requests between meetings) to maintain connection without meeting fatigue. In urban contexts facing time constraints, a hybrid model can be employed: physical meetings supplemented by a WhatsApp group for daily reflections, prayer requests, and accountability tracking.

A further challenge relates to a tension between the need for theological depth and practical application. Looking at the questions and the accountability process there is the tendency and risk of becoming a “how was your week?” chat without theological meat. The Church can provide a simple, rotating “resource guide” with a weekly theme aligned with the lectionary or denominational emphases. The Methodist Church Ghana can promote the use of the Connexional Weekly Bible Lesson booklet which discusses the Church theme for the year.

Conclusion

Reviving Wesley's Class Meeting as a “spiritual abusua” offers the Methodist Church Ghana a culturally relevant model of accountable discipleship that bridges preaching, sacraments, and daily life for holistic renewal. In a context in which the establishment of megachurches seems to be the order of the day, it is helpful to emphasise the value of the Class Meeting as a form of accountable discipleship. The recontextualisation of Wesley's Class Meeting for the Methodist Church Ghana does not have to be a nostalgic return to the past but a strategic retrieval of a proven discipleship engine, recalibrated for contemporary realities. By aligning the Class Meeting with Ghanaian

³⁵ Wesley, *Works*, 9:82-85.

cultural values (*abusua*) the church can reclaim its heritage of communal holiness while addressing pressing gaps in relational accountability, applied theology, and lay leadership formation.

Properly structured Class Meetings can function as the connective tissue of church life—bridging pulpit and pew, sacrament and mission, doctrine and daily practice. They transform discipleship from a Sunday-centered inspiration into a holistic, incarnational journey sustained throughout the week. While challenges of culture, leadership, and sustainability remain, intentional training, contextual liturgy, and participatory structures can mitigate these risks. Revived as “spiritual families,” Class Meetings offer the Methodist Church Ghana a pathway toward ecclesial renewal, resilient faith communities, and leadership formation that is both indigenous and missional. In this way, Wesley’s vision of accountable discipleship can find a fresh expression in Ghana, ensuring that holiness remains social, practical, and transformative for generations to come.

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