

The Free Methodist Church
of
North America

THE
BOOK OF DISCIPLINE 1995

Part A
Doctrines, Character, and Ritual
of the Free Methodist Church

Part B
Board of Administration

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

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THE BOARD OF EDITORS

Bishops Gerald E. Bates, David M. Foster, (chair), Richard D. Snyder; Barbara Fox (secretary).

FOREWORD

At approximately four-year intervals the Free Methodist Church of North America assembles in a deliberative body called a General Conference. Ministerial and lay delegates from the annual conferences, located across North America and in many parts of the world, along with the bishops, come together to renew their mission, care for denominational business, and examine their *Book of Discipline*. Representatives of the institutions and ministries of the church as well as denominational executives and their staffs bring reports and add their insights to the business.

At this time Free Methodists pray especially to God for guidance, debate the issues and act upon them, listen to the Word of God preached, set new directions, renew friendships, fellowship together, and, in all, worship God.

This *Book of Discipline* represents the fruit of the 1995 General Conference. For the first time the agenda of the conference was submitted to the scrutiny of the mission statement of the denomination:

The mission of the Free Methodist Church is to make known to all people everywhere God's call to wholeness through forgiveness and holiness in Jesus Christ, and to invite into membership and to equip for ministry all who respond in faith.

The book is, therefore, a blend of history, roots, and intentional contemporary mission. It is the ecclesiastical and organizational manual of the church. It represents, also, the vision of the Free Methodist people as they define themselves and the earnest Christian life under the banner of Jesus Christ and try to serve Him faithfully in the world.

While published in one book, there are two parts. Part A contains the doctrines, character, and rituals of the Free Methodist Church. Part B deals with structure and administration.

— The Editors

Note: The Constitutional issues which are approved as a result of the referendum process going on as this book goes to press will be made available in page-size format when the voting results are declared by the Constitutional Council.

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The Free Methodist Church

INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE AND CHARACTER

The Free Methodist Church is best understood within the framework of the biblical concept of the church, the perspective provided by its historical heritage, and its commitment to the needs of man.

A. The Biblical Concept of the Church

It is clear from Scripture that the church is *of* God and *for* people. It is His creation. Christ is its head. The church is the people of God chosen for a purposeful partnership in accomplishing the will of God on earth. More than eighty metaphors, word pictures, relating to the church appear in the New Testament. Each portrays a more profound reality than does the picture it brings to mind. The pictures together make clear the nature and mission of the church. Paul speaks of the church as “body,” “building,” and “bride.” The most inclusive and perhaps the most significant metaphor is “body of Christ.” The redeemed are spoken of as “members of the body.”

What is the profound truth that the many word pictures convey? God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — takes a redeemed people into partnership to share in His activities and to realize His purposes. The church is the organic, corporate instrument God has chosen to remake men and society. It has a mission of holy love. The church exists to produce Christlikeness in men and their institutions. Thus our mission may be described as participation with God in bringing holiness and love to bear upon the sins, hurts, and needs of men. This description of our mission is both individual and social. It points to a social relationship of men to God and to each other described in Scripture as “the kingdom of God.”

The metaphors of the New Testament are made emphatic by the greatest portrait of all — the Incarnation, God made flesh. The church, enlightened by the Incarnation, continues the teaching and the ministry of its Lord on earth.

When the church is acting under the headship of its Lord and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it continues the story begun in the book of Acts. Many are its wonderful achievements since the first century, and many more may yet be realized in the unfolding drama of the acts of the Holy Spirit through redeemed men.

The New Testament reminds us that the church visible is not the church ideal. Because the church is a divine-human partnership, sharing not only in the holy love of its founder but in the blemishes of its humanity, it is ever in need of renewal. God takes the same risk with the church in redemption as He did when He granted men freedom in creation. Just as God, the Holy Spirit, used the hands of the Apostle Paul in “special miracles” so He can use His church today. The results will be the same — the Word of the Lord will grow mightily and will prevail (Acts 19:11 and 20).

B. Historical Heritage and Perspective

Free Methodists consider the story of the church in the book of Acts and the other New Testament writings as their primary heritage. Generation after generation derives from this record their main source of direction and renewal. Followers of God have wrestled with issues both old and new throughout the centuries just as they do now. The entire history of the church is instructive for us.

Free Methodists claim a line of evangelical descent spelled out in large terms as follows: They trace their spiritual heritage through men and women of deep personal piety in all ages who have shown that it is possible to maintain the glow of spiritual fervor in the midst of paganism, apostasy, and the ofttime corruption of the established church.

The lineage of the Free Methodist Church begins with the people of God in the Old and New Testaments, and includes influences and contributions from the multitude of renewal movements in western Christianity: Wycliffe and the German Moravians (from whom Wesley learned the concept of “the witness of the Spirit”); the sixteenth century Reformation with its many counterbalancing renewal movements, not the least of which were the Arminian correctives (which taught that Christ’s salvation was for all mankind without limit, but that it must be freely chosen); the Catholic-Anglican tradition; the English Puritan influence; the Methodist tradition; and the ensuing vigorous nineteenth century holiness movement. God has used these and others across the ages to make the unchanging Christian gospel known more clearly. In sum, Free Methodists identify with the flow of history of the Christian church while maintaining

distinctive evangelical and spiritual emphases.

The contributions from church history may be detailed as follows:

The Reformation heritage is reflected in their commitment to the Bible as the supreme rule of faith and life, and to salvation by grace through faith.

The Catholic-Anglican heritage appears in their concern for church order and appreciation for liturgical form.

Their emphasis on the essentials of the faith allows for their openness towards differing views on such subjects as modes of baptism and the millennium.

The Methodist heritage is shown in theological, ecclesiastical and social concerns articulated by the Reverend John Wesley and his associates in the eighteenth century and reaffirmed through the holiness movement of the nineteenth.

Theologically, they are committed to the Wesleyan-Arminian affirmation of the saving love of God in Christ. Through prevenient grace He seeks to bring every individual to himself but grants to each the responsibility of accepting or rejecting that salvation. Salvation is a living relationship with God in Jesus Christ, giving the believer a legal position of righteousness, and therefore affirming the security of all who continue in fellowship with Him. Along with the Arminian emphasis on the universal offer of salvation, John Wesley rediscovered the principle of assurance through the witness of the Holy Spirit. He declared a scriptural confidence in a God who is able to cleanse the hearts of believers from sin here and now by faith, fill them with the Holy Spirit, and empower them for carrying out His mission in the world. John Wesley wrote of himself and his brother Charles, "In 1729 two young men in England, reading the Bible, saw they could not be saved without holiness, followed after it, and incited others so to do. In 1737 they saw, likewise, that men are justified before they are sanctified; but still holiness was their object. God then thrust them out to raise up a holy people."

Ecclesiastically, the Methodist heritage is continued in Free Methodist organization. There are lines of responsibility connecting local, district, conference, and denominational ministries. Small groups of believers are accountable to one another for growth in Christian life and service. Free Methodists are concerned for the whole church, not just the local congregation. They value the leadership of bishops, superintendents, pastors, and lay leaders who provide counsel and direction to the church.

Born at a time when representative government was being developed

by free societies, the Free Methodist founders reaffirmed the biblical principle of lay ministry. Free Methodists recognize and license unordained persons for particular ministries. They mandate lay representation in numbers equal to clergy in the councils of the church.

Socially, from their early days, Free Methodists displayed an awakened conscience characteristic of the early 'Wesleyan movement. Their outspoken action against the institution of slavery and the class distinction inherent in the rental of pews to the wealthy demonstrated the spirit of true Methodism. Although issues change, the sensitive social conscience remains, evidenced by continuing active participation in the social concerns of the day.

During the nineteenth century, the holiness movement, arising in American Methodism but spreading through other nations and denominations, called Christians to deeper levels of relationship with God and greater concern for the needs of hurting humanity. Within this context, the Reverend Benjamin T. Roberts and other ministers and laypersons in the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in western New York, raised a protest against theological liberalism, unhealthy compromise on pressing social issues, and loss of spiritual fervor.

Between 1858 and 1860, a number of these leaders were excluded from the Methodist Episcopal Church on various charges and allegations. In reality, the primary issue was their proclamation of the basic principles of Methodism, especially the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification. Appeals made to the General Conference of May 1860 were denied. Those excluded could not join any other Methodist body, for there was none that agreed with them on the issues on which they were thrust out. Therefore, the Free Methodist Church was organized by a convention of lay members and ministers which met at Pekin, Niagara County, New York, on August 23, 1860. The first General Conference met on the second Wednesday of October, 1862, at Saint Charles, Illinois.

The Free Methodist Church, since its inception, continues to expand around the world through missionary outreach, the development of additional general conferences, and a coordinating world organization.

C. The Needs of Persons

Free Methodists are committed to the task of understanding the most important needs of persons, institutions, and varying cultures so that it may minister meaningfully and redemptively to them. In the high priestly prayer of Jesus Christ, He called upon believers to live in this world actively and intelligently in order that the world might be led both to "know" and to "believe."

Free Methodists are aware of the demonic forces in the world which

debase men, pervert the good, and lead men and institutions to ruin. They attempt to help men by restoring personal meaning in a time of depersonalizing developments.

Free Methodists openly rebuke anything in law, persons, or institutions which violates the dignity of persons created in the image of God. They are committed to taking advantage of opportunities where as individuals, local churches, conferences, and denomination they can minister healing and redemptive helpfulness in the world.

D. Distinctive Principles

Free Methodists seek to express the concept of the church of Jesus Christ, their historical perspective, and the needs of persons in specific principles and commitments.

Free Methodists today seek to continue the mission of first-century Christianity which was recovered by John Wesley and the early Methodists who declared they existed “to raise up a holy people.”

Free Methodists are a fellowship of Christians in earnest to get to heaven and committed to working in the world for the salvation of all men. They place their commitment to Christ and His church above all others. They keep themselves free from alliances which would compete for their highest loyalty and from all which would encumber and compromise their effective witness to the Trinitarian faith and man’s dependence upon the grace of God. The Christian denies himself, takes up his cross daily, and follows Jesus. He conforms to all the will of God as made known in His Word, and believes the conditions of salvation are the same now as they were in the days of the apostles.

In doctrine, Free Methodists’ beliefs are the standard beliefs of evangelical, Arminian Protestantism, with distinctive emphasis on the scriptural teaching of entire sanctification as held by John Wesley.

In experience, Free Methodists stress the reality of an inner cleansing and power that attests the doctrine of entire sanctification, both in the inward consciousness of the believer and in his outward life.

Their worship is characterized by simplicity and freedom of the Spirit, untrammelled by elaborate ritual.

Free Methodists maintain a life of daily devotion to Christ that springs from inward holiness and separates the Christian from the world, even while he / she lives in the world. They believe the best way to keep worldliness from invading the church is for the church to invade the world with redemptive purpose.

They practice a complete consecration of every power and possession to the service of God and man. They believe so strongly in the mission of the church that they are committed to responsible stewardship in

finance. Therefore they do not need to resort to commercial efforts to support the cause of Christ.

Free Methodists recognize that God gives spiritual gifts of service and leadership to both men and women. Since male and female are both created in the image of God, that image is most fully reflected when both women and men work in concert at all levels of the church. Therefore, all positions in the church are accessible to any whom God has called.

Free Methodists sense a special obligation to preach the gospel to the poor. The provisions of the gospel are for all. The “glad tidings” must be proclaimed to every individual of the human race. God sends the true light to illuminate and melt every heart. Jesus set the example. Of His ministry it was reported, “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.” This preaching to the poor was the crowning proof that He was the one who should come. In this respect the church must follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Free Methodists are committed to the New Testament ideals of simplicity and modesty as a style of life. They wish to call attention, not to themselves, but to their Lord.

These distinctives of the Free Methodist Church from its origin are still living issues. In every era and every land these distinctives are the witnesses of the church, needing utterance clear and strong that they may be heard and heeded amidst the world’s confusing and misleading voices.

CHAPTER I

THE CONSTITUTION: DOCTRINE AND MEMBERSHIP

Preamble

- A. Articles of Religion
- B. Membership and Covenant

The Constitution of The Free Methodist Church

PREAMBLE

¶A/100. In order that we may wisely preserve and pass on to posterity the heritage of doctrine and principles of Christian living transmitted to us as evangelicals in the Arminian-Wesleyan tradition, insure church order by sound principles and ecclesiastical polity, and prepare the way for evangelization of the world and the more effective cooperation with other branches of the church of Christ in the advancement of Christ's kingdom, we, the ministers and lay members of the Free Methodist Church, in accordance with constitutional procedure, do hereby ordain, establish, and set forth the following as the Constitution of the Free Methodist Church.

CHAPTER I

THE CONSTITUTION: DOCTRINE AND MEMBERSHIP

A. ARTICLES OF RELIGION

GOD

I. The Holy Trinity

¶A/101. There is but one living and true God, the maker and preserver of all things. In the unity of this Godhead there are three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are one in eternity, deity, and purpose; everlasting, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness.

II. The Son

His Incarnation

¶A/103. God was himself in Jesus Christ to reconcile man to God. Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, He joined together the deity of God and the humanity of man. Jesus of Nazareth was God in human flesh, truly God and truly man. He came to save us. For us the Son of God suffered, was crucified, dead and buried. He poured out His life as a blameless sacrifice for our sin and transgressions. We gratefully acknowledge that He is our Savior, the one perfect mediator between God and man.

His Resurrection and Exaltation

¶A/104. Jesus Christ is risen victorious from the dead. His resurrected body became more glorious, not hindered by ordinary human limitations. Thus He ascended into heaven. There He sits as our exalted Lord at the right hand of God the Father, where He intercedes for us until all His enemies shall be brought into complete subjection. He will return to judge all men. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

III. The Holy Spirit

His Person

¶A/105. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. Proceeding from the Father and the Son, He is one with them, the eternal Godhead; equal in deity, majesty, and power. He is God effective in Creation, in life, and in the church. The Incarnation and ministry of Jesus Christ were

accomplished by the Holy Spirit. He continues to reveal, interpret, and glorify the Son.

His Work in Salvation

¶A/106. The Holy Spirit is the administrator of the salvation planned by the Father and provided by the Son's death, Resurrection, and Ascension. He is the effective agent in our conviction, regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. He is our Lord's ever-present self, indwelling, assuring, and enabling the believer.

His Relation to the Church

¶A/107. The Holy Spirit is poured out upon the church by the Father and the Son. He is the church's life and witnessing power. He bestows the love of God and makes real the lordship of Jesus Christ in the believer so that both His gifts of words and service may achieve the common good, and build and increase the church. In relation to the world He is the Spirit of truth, and His instrument is the Word of God.

THE SCRIPTURES

IV. Authority

¶A/108. The Bible is God's written Word, uniquely inspired by the Holy Spirit. It bears unerring witness to Jesus Christ, the living Word. As attested by the early church and subsequent councils, it is the trustworthy record of God's revelation, completely truthful in all it affirms. It has been faithfully preserved and proves itself true in human experience.

The Scriptures have come to us through human authors who wrote, as God moved them, in the languages and literary forms of their times. God continues, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, to speak through this Word to each generation and culture.

The Bible has authority over all human life. It teaches the truth about God, His creation, His people, His one and only Son, and the destiny of humankind. It also teaches the way of salvation and the life of faith. Whatever is not found in the Bible nor can be proved by it is not to be required as an article of belief or as necessary to salvation.

V. Authority of the Old Testament

¶A/109. The Old Testament is not contrary to the New. Both Testaments bear witness to God's salvation in Christ; both speak of God's will for His people. The ancient laws for ceremonies and rites, and the civil precepts for the nation Israel are not necessarily binding on Christians today. But, on the example of Jesus we are obligated to obey the moral

commandments of the Old Testament.

The books of the Old Testament are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

VI. New Testament

¶A/110. The New Testament fulfills and interprets the Old Testament. It is the record of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is God's final word regarding man, his sin, and his salvation, the world, and destiny.

The books of the New Testament are: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philipians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation.

MAN

VII. A Free Moral Person

¶A/111. God created man in His own image, innocent, morally free and responsible to choose between good and evil, right and wrong. By his sin Adam's offspring are corrupted in his very nature so that from birth he is inclined to sin. He is unable by his own strength and work to restore himself in right relationship with God and to merit eternal salvation. God, the Omnipotent, provides all the resources of the Trinity to make it possible for man to respond to His grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. By God's grace and help man is enabled to do good works with a free will.

VIII. Law of Life and Love

¶A/112. God's law for all human life, personal and social, is expressed in two divine commands: Love the Lord God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself. These commands reveal what is best for man in his relationship with God, persons, and society. They set forth the principles of human duty in both individual and social action. They recognize God as the only Sovereign. All men as created by Him and in His image have the same inherent rights regardless of sex, race, or color. Men should therefore give God absolute obedience in their individual,

social, and political acts. They should strive to secure respect for all persons, their rights, and their greatest happiness in the possession and exercise of the right within the moral law.

IX. Good Works

¶A/113. Good works are the fruit of faith in Jesus Christ, but works cannot save us from our sins nor from God's judgment. As expressions of Christian faith and love, our good works performed with reverence and humility are both acceptable and pleasing to God. However, good works do not earn God's grace.

SALVATION

X. Christ's Sacrifice

¶A/114. Christ offered once and for all the one perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. No other satisfaction for sin is necessary; none other can atone.

XI. The New Life in Christ

¶A/115. A new life and a right relationship with God are made possible through the redemptive acts of God in Jesus Christ. God, by His Spirit, acts to impart new life and put us into a relationship with himself as we repent and our faith responds to His grace. Justification, regeneration, and adoption speak significantly to entrance into and continuance in the new life.

Justification

¶A/116. Justification is a legal term that emphasizes that by our new relationship in Jesus Christ we are in fact accounted righteous, being free from both the guilt and the penalty of our sins.

Regeneration

¶A/117. Regeneration is a biological term which illustrates that by our new relationship in Christ we do in fact have a new life and a new spiritual nature capable of faith, love, and obedience to Christ Jesus as Lord. The believer is born again. He is a new creation. The old life is past; a new life is begun.

Adoption

¶A/118. Adoption is a filial term full of warmth, love, and acceptance. It denotes that by our new relationship in Christ we have become

His wanted children freed from the mastery of both sin and Satan. The believer has the witness of the Spirit that he is a child of God.

XII. Entire Sanctification

¶A/119. Entire sanctification is that work of the Holy Spirit, subsequent to regeneration, by which the fully consecrated believer, upon exercise of faith in the atoning blood of Christ, is cleansed in that moment from all inward sin and empowered for service. The resulting relationship is attested by the witness of the Holy Spirit and is maintained by faith and obedience. Entire sanctification enables the believer to love God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind, and his neighbor as himself, and it prepares him for greater growth in grace.

XIII. Restoration

¶A/120. The Christian may be sustained in a growing relationship with Jesus as Savior and Lord. However, he may grieve the Holy Spirit in the relationships of life without returning to the dominion of sin. When he does, he must humbly accept the correction of the Holy Spirit, trust in the advocacy of Jesus, and mend his relationships.

The Christian can sin willfully and sever his relationship with Christ. Even so by repentance before God, forgiveness is granted and the relationship with Christ restored, for not every sin is the sin against the Holy Spirit and unpardonable. God's grace is sufficient for those who truly repent and, by His enabling, amend their lives. However, forgiveness does not give the believers liberty to sin and escape the consequences of sinning.

God has given responsibility and power to the church to restore penitent believers through loving reproof, counsel, and acceptance.

THE CHURCH

XIV. The Church

¶A/121. The church is created by God; it is the people of God. Christ Jesus is its Lord and Head; the Holy Spirit is its life and power. It is both divine and human, heavenly and earthly, ideal and imperfect. It is an organism, not an unchanging institution. It exists to fulfill the purposes of God in Christ. It redemptively ministers to persons. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it that it should be holy and without blemish. The church is a fellowship of the redeemed and the redeeming, preaching the Word of God and administering the sacraments according to Christ's instruction. The Free Methodist Church purposes to be representative of what the church of Jesus Christ should be on earth. It therefore requires

specific commitment regarding the faith and life of its members. In its requirements it seeks to honor Christ and obey the written Word of God.

XV. The Language of Worship

¶A/122. According to the Word of God and the custom of the early church, public worship and prayer and the administration of the sacraments should be in a language understood by the people. The Reformation applied this principle to provide for the use of the common language of the people. It is likewise clear that the Apostle Paul places the strongest emphasis upon rational and intelligible utterance in worship. We cannot endorse practices which plainly violate these scriptural principles.

XVI. The Holy Sacraments

¶A/123. Water baptism and the Lord's Supper are the sacraments of the church commanded by Christ. They are means of grace through faith, tokens of our profession of Christian faith, and signs of God's gracious ministry toward us. By them, He works within us to quicken, strengthen, and confirm our faith.

Baptism

¶A/124. Water baptism is a sacrament of the church, commanded by our Lord, signifying acceptance of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ to be administered to believers, as declaration of their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior.

Baptism is a symbol of the new covenant of grace as circumcision was the symbol of the old covenant; and, since infants are recognized as being included in the atonement, we hold that they may be baptized upon the request of parents or guardians who shall give assurance for them of necessary Christian training. They shall be required to affirm the vow for themselves before being accepted into church membership.

The Lord's Supper

¶A/125. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death. To those who rightly, worthily, and with faith receive it, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ. The supper is also a sign of the love and unity that Christians have among themselves.

Christ, according to His promise, is really present in the sacrament. But His body is given, taken, and eaten only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. No change is effected in the element; the bread and wine are

not literally the body and blood of Christ. Nor is the body and blood of Christ literally present with the elements. The elements are never to be considered objects of worship. The body of Christ is received and eaten in faith.

LAST THINGS

XVII. The Kingdom of God

¶A/126. The kingdom of God is a prominent Bible theme providing the Christian with both his task and hope. Jesus announced its presence. The kingdom is realized now as God's reign is established in the hearts and lives of believers.

The church, by its prayers, example, and proclamation of the gospel, is the appointed and appropriate instrument of God in building His kingdom.

But the kingdom is also future and is related to the return of Christ when judgment will fall upon the present order. The enemies of Christ will be subdued; the reign of God will be established; a total cosmic renewal which is both material and moral shall occur; and the hope of the redeemed will be fully realized.

XVIII. The Return of Christ

¶A/127. The return of Christ is certain and may occur at any moment, although it is not given us to know the hour. At His return He will fulfill all prophecies concerning His final triumph over all evil. The believer's response is joyous expectation, watchfulness, readiness, and diligence.

XIX. Resurrection

¶A/128. There will be a bodily resurrection from the dead of both the just and the unjust, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. The resurrected body will be a spiritual body, but the person will be whole and identifiable. The resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of resurrection unto life to those who are in Him.

XX. Judgment

¶A/129. God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness in accordance with the gospel and men's deeds in this life.

XXI. Final Destiny

¶A/130. The eternal destiny of man is determined by God's grace

and man's response, not by arbitrary decrees of God. For those who trust Him and obediently follow Jesus as Savior and Lord, there is a heaven of eternal glory and the blessedness of Christ's presence. But for the finally impenitent there is a hell of eternal suffering and of separation from God.

¶A/131. The doctrines of the Free Methodist Church are based upon the Holy Scriptures and are derived from their total biblical context. The references below are appropriate passages related to the given articles. They are listed in their biblical sequence and are not intended to be exhaustive.

GOD

- I. *Holy Trinity*
Genesis 1:1-2; Exodus 3:13-15; Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1-3; 5:19-23; 8:58; 14:9-11; 15:26; 16:13-15; 2 Corinthians 13:14.
- II. *Son — His Incarnation*
Matthew 1:21; 20:28; 26:27-28; Luke 1:35; 19:10; John 1:1, 10, 14; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 2:17; 9:14-15.
Son — His Resurrection and Exaltation
Matthew 25:31-32; Luke 24:1-7; 24:39; John 20:19; Acts 1:9-11; 2:24; Romans 8:33-34; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:1-4.
- III. *Holy Spirit — His Person*
Matthew 28:19; John 4:24; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:13-15.
Holy Spirit — His Work in Salvation
John 16:7-8; Acts 15:8-9; Romans 8:9, 14-16; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Galatians 4:6.
Holy Spirit — His Relation to the Church
Acts 5:3-4; Romans 8:14; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 2 Peter 1:21.

THE SCRIPTURES

- IV. *Authority*
Deuteronomy 4:2; 28:9; Psalm 19:7-11; John 14:26; 17:17; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 4:12; James 1:21.
- V. *Authority of the Old Testament*
Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 10:25-28; John 5:39, 46-47; Acts 10:43; Galatians 5:3-4; 1 Peter 1:10-12.
- VI. *New Testament*
Matthew 24:35; Mark 8:38; John 14:24; Hebrews 2:1-4; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 1 John 2:2-6; Revelation 21:5; 22:19.

MAN

- VII. *Man: A Free Moral Person*
Genesis 1:27; Psalm 51:5; 130:3; Romans 5:17-19; Ephesians 2:8-10.
- VIII. *Law of Life and Love*
Matthew 23:35-40; John 15:17; Galatians 3:28; 1 John 4:19-21.
- IX. *Good Works*
Matthew 5:16; 7:16-20; Romans 3:27-28; Ephesians 2:10; 2 Timothy 1:8-9; Titus 3:5.

SALVATION

- X. *Christ's Sacrifice*
Luke 24:46-48; John 3:16; Acts 4:12; Romans 5:8-11; Galatians 2:16; 3:2-3; Ephesians 1:7-8; 2:13; Hebrews 9:11-14, 25-26; 10:8-14.
- XI. *The New Life in Christ*
John 1:12-13; 3:3-8; Acts 13:38-39; Romans 8:15-17; Ephesians 2:8-9; Colossians 3:9-10.
Justification
Psalm 32:1-2; Acts 10:43; Romans 3:21-26, 28; 4:2-5; 5:8-9; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Philippians 3:9.
Regeneration
Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 5:24; Romans 6:4; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10; Titus 3:4-5; 1 Peter 1:23.
Adoption
Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:4-7; Ephesians 1:5-6; 1 John 3:1-3.
- XII. *Entire Sanctification*
Leviticus 20:7-8; John 14:16-17; 17:19; Acts 1:8; 2:4; 15:8-9; Romans 5:3-5; 8:12-17; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 12:4-11; Galatians 5:22-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; 5:23-24; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 10:14.
- XIII. *Restoration*
Matthew 12:31-32; 18:21-22; Romans 6:1-2; Galatians 6:1; 1 John 1:9; 2:1-2; 5:16-17; Revelation 2:5; 3:19-20.

THE CHURCH

- XIV. *The Church*
Matthew 16:15-18; 18:17; Acts 2:41-47; 9:31; 12:5; 14:23-26; 15:22; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 11:23; 12:28; 16:1; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:9-10; 5:22-23; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 3:14-15.
- XV. *The Language of Worship*
Nehemiah 8:5, 6, 8; Matthew 6:7; 1 Corinthians 14:6-9; 14:23-25.
- XVI. *The Holy Sacraments*

Matthew 26:26-29; 28:19; Acts 22:16; Romans 4:11; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:23-26; Galatians 3:27.

Baptism

Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12-17; 9:18; 16:33; 18:8; 19:5; John 3:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27-29; Colossians 2:11-12; Titus 3:5.

The Lord's Supper

Mark 14:22-24; John 6:53-58; Acts 2:46; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8; 10:16; 11:20, 23-29.

LAST THINGS

XVII. *The Kingdom of God*

Matthew 6:10, 19-20; 24:14; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:19-23; 1 Corinthians 15:20-25; Philippians 2:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12; 2 Peter 3:3-10; Revelation 14:6; 21:3-8; 22:1-5, 17.

XVIII. *The Return of Christ*

Matthew 24:1-51; 26:64; Mark 13:26-27; Luke 17:26-37; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 9:27-28; Revelation 1:7; 19:11-16; 22:6-7, 12, 20.

XIX. *Resurrection*

John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 51-57; 2 Corinthians 4:13-14.

XX. *Judgment*

Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 11:31-32; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Romans 2:15-16; 14:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:6-10; Hebrews 9:27-28; 10:26-31; 2 Peter 3:7.

XXI. *Destiny*

Mark 9:42-48; John 14:3; Hebrews 2:1-3; Revelation 20:11-15; 21:22-27.

B. MEMBERSHIP AND COVENANT

1. REQUIREMENTS, RIGHTS, AND TENURE

¶A/150. The privileges and requirements of full membership in the church are constitutional, and changes therein may be made only by amendment according to Paragraphs A/225-228. Nothing shall be included in the membership ritual that is contrary to the following definitions of conditions and privileges of membership.

¶A/151. The requirements of full membership are:

1. Christian baptism, confession of a personal experience in regeneration, and a pledge to seek diligently until sanctified wholly if that experience has not been attained.
2. Acceptance of the Articles of Religion, guidance for Christian living [the Covenant], and the authority of the *Book of Discipline* in matters of church government. *
3. A covenant to support the church, to live in fellowship with the members thereof, and to seek God's glory in all things.
4. Approval of membership by the official board and the candidate's public declaration of membership vows.

¶A/152. The rights of full membership are:

1. Participation in the sacraments and ordinances of the church.
2. To vote and hold office upon reaching the age designated by the General Conference.
3. Trial and appeal if charged with failure to maintain the conditions of membership, with the specific provision that joining another religious denomination or sect shall of itself sever membership in the church without trial.

¶A/153. Church membership may be terminated only by:

1. Voluntary withdrawal (including permission to withdraw under complaint).
2. Joining another religious denomination or sect or a secret order.
3. Expulsion after proper summary proceeding, or trial and conviction.
4. Persistent neglect of church relationship by a member residing at a distance from pastoral and church supervision, which in effect is voluntary withdrawal.

*When not in conflict with local laws in matters of church government.

2. COVENANT

(NOTE: Scripture references and teaching aids are to be found in Chapter III, B, "Christian Conduct.")

Privilege and Responsibility

¶A/154. Membership in the church is a high privilege and responsibility. We believe the covenant required of members is consistent with the teaching of the written Word of God. Faithfulness to the covenant is evidence of the individual member's desire to sustain a saving relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord, to bring glory to God, to advance the cause of God on earth, to preserve the unity of the body of Christ, and to cherish the fellowship of the Free Methodist Church.

¶A/155. When a member does not keep his covenant and habitually violates his vows, it is the responsibility of minister and members to point to the failure and to seek in love to restore the member. If, after these steps have been taken, the member does not keep his commitments, he must be dealt with in accord with the due processes of the church.

¶A/156. A member of the Free Methodist Church, trusting in the enablement of the Holy Spirit and seeking the support of the other members of the church, makes the following confession and commitments as a covenant with the Lord and the church.

The Confession and Commitment

I confess Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord and will continue to walk with Him by faith. I commit myself to know God in His full sanctifying grace.

As Regards God

¶A/157. 1. I will reverence the name of God.

2. I will observe the Lord's Day in worship, Christian fellowship and service, renewal of mind and spirit, avoiding all unnecessary commerce, labors, travel, and pleasures which detract from the moral and spiritual purposes of the day.

3. I will not engage in any form of false worship such as spiritism, witchcraft, and astrology.

4. I will abstain from membership in secret societies and oath-bound lodges, and, recognizing that the religious nature of such organizations tends to divide the Christian's loyalty and confuse his Christian faith, I will keep myself free to follow the will of God in all things.

5. I will seek to grow in the knowledge and love of God by consistent

use of the means of grace such as public worship of God, the ministry of the Word, the Supper of the Lord, family and private prayer, searching the Scriptures, and fasting and abstinence.

As Regards Myself and All Men

¶A/158. 1. I will show goodness and mercy to all men, and especially to the household of faith, both to their physical and spiritual needs as I have ability.

2. I will respect the rights of all persons as created in the image of God, regardless of differences of sex, race, or color.

3. I will be just in all transactions, faithful in commitments and contract obligations with full intention to keep them.

4. I will abstain from the manufacture, sale, and use of alcoholic beverages and harmful drugs and from the cultivation, manufacture, sale, and use of tobacco.

5. I will abstain from all forms of gambling.

6. I will observe the scriptural standards of simplicity, humility, modesty, propriety, purity, and good stewardship in everything I buy, use, or wear, and thereby reflect the beauty of the gospel.

As Regards the Institutions of God

¶A/159. 1. I will respect duly constituted authority in the home, church, and state except when it is in violation of the clear teachings of the Scripture.

2. I will observe the teachings of the Scripture regarding the sanctity of the home and marriage and the nurture of children in the Christian faith.

3. I will be guided by the teaching of Scripture regarding separation, divorce, and remarriage as understood by the church, especially recognizing monogamy as God's plan for marriage.

As Regards the Church

¶A/160. 1. I have received Christian baptism.

2. I accept the Articles of Religion and the authority of the *Book of Discipline* in matters of church government.

3. I will work for the advancement of God's kingdom and the mutual growth of fellow believers toward full stature in Christ in holiness and love.

4. I will seek to preserve the unity and the witness of the church by nurturing and expressing Christlike love as described in 1 Corinthians, chapter thirteen.

5. I will cooperate in developing the Christian fellowship by willingness to receive and give counsel with tenderness and meekness; to pray for others; to aid others in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy; and to show understanding, courtesy, and purity in all conversation.

6. I will exercise responsible Christian stewardship by the careful and disciplined use of time, talents and material resources being sensitive to the needs of the church and my fellowmen. I will accept the biblical principle of tithes and offerings as the guide of my material stewardship and the support of the church. I will choose those activities which contribute to the spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical well-being of myself and those who share in them.

CHAPTER II

THE CONSTITUTION: ORGANIZATION

- A. General Organization
- B. Restrictive Rules and Methods of Amendment of
the Principles of Free Methodism
- C. Interrelation of General Conferences
- D. Articles of Organization and Government

CHAPTER II

THE CONSTITUTION: ORGANIZATION

A. GENERAL ORGANIZATION

¶A/200. Each annual conference in the Free Methodist Church of North America shall be a member of the General Conference of the same.

¶A/201. The General Conference may create a new general conference out of a portion of its area when in its judgment the proposed area has approximated a level of development defined for a general conference in Paragraph 250.

¶A/202. The General Conference shall be represented in a Constitutional Council composed of representatives from all general conferences of Free Methodism, the representation to be proportionate to membership on the basis stipulated in Paragraph A /253, Section 2.

1. The General Conference shall submit to the Constitutional Council a copy of all legislation, orders, and policies of the General Conference, and if question should arise concerning the agreement of any action with the "Basic Principles of Free Methodism," shall proceed according to Paragraph A /253 , Section 5a.

2. The General Conference shall refer all matters requiring referendum voting by other general conferences to the supervision of the Constitutional Council.

3. The General Conference, in cooperation with all general conferences, may assign other functions than the foregoing to the Constitutional Council, but in no case shall the Constitutional Council act as a legislative or governing body.

4. A general conference or its interim administrative board may refer to the Constitutional Council, as a representative coordinating agency, any problem that may arise with another general conference involving boundaries, recognition of credentials, and other matters of comity. If no solution satisfactory to both general conferences should be reached, the recommendation of the Constitutional Council shall prevail. If within six months either conference shall register an appeal, the Constitutional Council shall arrange a referendum vote to decide the issue.

¶A/203. The chief administrative officer or officers of the General Conference shall affiliate with such officers of all general conferences in a Council of Bishops for the purpose of fellowship, mutual understanding,

and extension of Free Methodism and the worldwide promotion of its ideals.

¶A/204. The General Conference shall recognize the World Fellowship of Free Methodist Churches as a means of promoting evangelistic outreach through fellowship, understanding, and cooperative planning among all areas of Free Methodism, according to the constitution and bylaws of said organization.

B. RESTRICTIVE RULES AND METHODS OF AMENDMENT OF THE PRINCIPLES OF FREE METHODISM

¶A/225. Paragraphs A/100 to A/227 inclusive may be altered, changed, or revoked only by concurrent approval of two-thirds of the aggregate votes cast thereon in all general conferences of Free Methodism and two-thirds of the aggregate votes cast thereon in the annual conferences thereof; but Paragraph A/228 may not be amended or changed in any way. To ascertain basis for voting see Paragraph A/251, Section 3.

¶A/226. Upon a two-thirds vote of a general conference, proposals for amendment of Paragraphs A/250-253, whether originating in an annual conference or in a general conference, shall be referred to the Constitutional Council which shall then supervise the referendum voting on the proposed amendment or amendments in all the general conferences and their constituent annual conferences.

¶A/227. The Free Methodist Church of North America may not enact, either by vote of the general conference or by concurrent vote of the general and annual conferences, any order, policy, or legislation that conflicts with, changes, subtracts from, or adds to:

1. The Articles of Religion, the covenant, any condition or standard of membership, any standard or rule of doctrine, as set forth in Paragraph A/100 to A/160, or
2. Any part or rule of government so as to do away with substantially equal lay representation, or an itinerant (conference appointed) ministry, or the general superintendency, or the free seat system in our churches; but

Any such change as designated in 1 and 2 preceding may be made only by the procedures set forth in Paragraph A/225 above.

¶A/228. Neither the General Conference of the Free Methodist

Church of North America nor any or all of the general conferences of Free Methodism by any procedure or method whatever (including deletion or amendment of this paragraph, number A/228), shall have the power to deprive preachers or lay members of the right of trial by an impartial committee, or the right of appeal.

C. INTERRELATION OF GENERAL CONFERENCES

¶A/250. New General Conferences.

1. The Free Methodist Church recognizes the need to preserve unity in faith and fellowship, yet allow for the distinctives of nation, language, and culture. Therefore it provides for a regional or national body to develop into a general conference.

2. A new general conference may be authorized by the sponsoring general conference when the body seeking such status has adopted the provisions of this constitution which are for all general conferences as defined in Paragraph A/251, Section 1, as a part of its constitution and *Book of Discipline*, and has been recommended by the general administrative board of the sponsoring general conference on the grounds that the following desirable standards are satisfied:

- a. An effective church organization on the local, conference, and/or general levels.
- b. Effective programs for the nurture and training of members, new converts, children, young people, and lay workers.
- c. An effective program for ministerial training.
- d. Evidence of responsible stewardship of life and possessions including the proper management of funds and the provision for the support of its own pastors, workers, and officers.
- e. A definite program of evangelism, church extension, and missionary outreach on an indigenous basis.
- f. The existence of a property-holding body, or more than one such body if required by local laws.
- g. A *Book of Discipline* as approved by the general administrative board of the sponsoring general conference.

¶A/251. Constitution for the General Conferences.

1. Definition. The Preamble, Articles of Religion, Membership and Covenant, General Organization, Restrictive Rules and Methods of Amendment of the Principles of Free Methodism, and Interrelation of General Conferences (Pars. A/100-253), shall be binding upon all general conferences and shall be part of each constitution and *Book of Discipline*. These provisions may be translated into various languages and dialects,

including colloquial and idiomatic English, provided the meaning is not changed.

2. Church name. Wherever the use of the name “Free Methodist Church” is impossible or impractical, a general conference, or in the interim of its sessions, its general administrative board, may authorize an adaptation of the church’s name, subject to the approval of the Constitutional Council.

3. Amendments. The provisions of this constitution for all general conferences as defined in Paragraph A/251, Section 1, may be added to or amended only by the concurrent approval of all the general conferences by a two-thirds aggregate vote of those present and voting and of all the annual conferences thereof by a two-thirds aggregate vote of those present and voting. An amendment may be initiated by any general conference or by any of the annual conferences. When such an addition or amendment has been adopted as herein provided, the Constitutional Council shall declare the result, and it shall be in effect.

4. Emergency provision. Whenever any general conference is unable to meet and conduct its business because of an emergency or other unforeseen conditions, or if for any reason any general conference fails to vote on a proposed amendment, the Constitutional Council shall be authorized and empowered to declare the results of the voting, which shall be in effect for all general conferences.

¶A/252. Provisional General Conferences.

1. One or more annual conferences may petition the general conference to which they belong for status as a jurisdictional conference when the following prerequisites are fulfilled:

- a. Evidence of maturity in spiritual leadership.
- b. A membership growth pattern spanning several years.
- c. Evidence of being an evangelistic, sending church.
- d. Demonstrated loyalty to the doctrines and practices of the Free Methodist Church as set forth in its constitution.
- e. Evidence of ability to understand and articulate biblically and theologically the essentials of the Wesleyan-Arminian persuasion.
- f. Development of its own *Book of Discipline*, including a provisional general conference constitution according to guidelines set forth by the general conference to which it belongs.
- g. Adequate financial strength and stability.
- h. Where agreements have been made concerning the deployment of missionaries and management of mission properties, approval by the Department of World Missions or its equivalent.

2. When the above prerequisites are met, the petition shall be presented to the Board of Administration which shall have the power to authorize the formation of a conference.

¶A/253. Constitutional Council.

1. The Constitutional Council shall be established by the several general conferences to maintain fidelity to the provisions of this constitution which are for all general conferences as defined in Paragraph A/251, Section 1, to decide matters of comity, and to supervise referendums involving more than one general conference.

2. The Constitutional Council shall be composed of the bishop(s), or comparable officers, together with an equal number of representatives from each general conference with the provision that no general conference shall be entitled to representation by more than one bishop and one other representative for each 15,000 members or major fraction thereof. The representatives shall be elected by the general conference or its interim administrative body, with due regard for the principle of lay representation.

3. The officers of the Constitutional Council shall be the chair, vice-chair, secretary, and treasurer (the offices of secretary and treasurer may be combined). They shall be elected by the Constitutional Council from among its members, and shall serve for four years or until their successors are elected.

4. Each general conference secretary shall provide copies of the legislation, orders, and policies enacted by the general conference to the chairman of the Constitutional Council or other officer as designated by that board.

5. The Constitutional Council does not have administrative authority or governing power over the general conferences. Its duties shall be:

- a. To review the legislation, orders, and policies of all the general conferences to determine whether any act appears to be in conflict with the provisions of this constitution which are for all general conferences as defined in Paragraph A/251, Section 1. When the Constitutional Council rules that an act is in conflict with such provisions, the implementation of said act shall automatically be suspended. Upon request by a two-thirds vote of the interim administrative board of the general conference whose action is called in question, further action in the case shall await the opportunity of said general conference at its next session to reconsider the act. If the act should be rescinded, the process shall immediately terminate.

If no such request is made within one year or if it should be made and a general conference not rescind the act in question, the act and the findings thereon of the Constitutional Council shall be submitted to all general conferences for vote. If the findings of the Constitutional Council should be approved by a majority of the aggregate votes cast thereon in all of the general conferences, the act in question shall thereby be annulled. Otherwise, the act shall be sustained and the suspension of the act shall terminate.

If the general conference whose action has been called into question should refuse to abide by the referendum, the Constitutional Council shall be empowered to provide, at its discretion, for the reorganization of the loyal elements of the Free Methodist Church within the area of that general conference and to declare all other ministers and members to be withdrawn from the Free Methodist Church.

- b. To decide any matter that may arise between general conferences involving boundaries, recognition of credentials, and other matter of comity. If no solution satisfactory to the involved conferences should be reached, the recommendation of the Constitutional Council shall prevail. If within six months either conference shall appeal, the Constitutional Council shall arrange a referendum vote to decide the issue.
- c. To supervise the voting of the general conferences and their respective districts on all matters to be voted on by more than one general conference, including additions or amendments to the provisions of this constitution which are for all general conferences, and when the vote has been completed to declare the results (Par. A/251, Secs. 3-4).

6. The Constitutional Council shall meet at least once each five years, preferably at the time and place of the meeting of a general conference. Special meetings may be called by the officers when necessary.

D. ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA *

1. PASTORAL CHARGES, DISTRICT AND

ANNUAL CONFERENCES

a. Pastoral charges

¶A/275. The lay membership of the church shall be divided into local societies, one or more of which shall constitute a pastoral charge.

b. Districts and District Conferences

¶A/276. The pastoral charges embraced within each annual conference may be grouped into districts, and if so, a district conference shall be organized in each district, composed of such official members of the several pastoral charges and invested with such powers as the General Conference shall direct.

c. Annual Conferences

¶A/277. The General Conference shall organize the work at large into annual conferences, of which the ministers (not being members of any local societies) shall be permanent members; and to which, at each session, one lay delegate shall be admitted from each society, and in case there be more than one minister in full membership appointed to a pastoral charge, such pastoral charge shall be entitled to one additional lay delegate for every such additional minister and, where a charge has more than one hundred (100) full members, sixteen years and over, an additional lay delegate may be elected; and for each additional two hundred (200) full members, sixteen years of age and over, an additional lay delegate may be elected. The election of a delegate and any reserve delegate shall be by separate ballot and shall each require a majority vote of those present and voting.

¶A/278. In consultation with the area bishop, each annual conference shall provide for substantially equal ministerial - lay representation in its annual sessions.

2. THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

a. Of Whom Composed

¶A/280. The General Conference shall be composed of the bishops and ministerial and lay delegates, to be chosen as hereinafter provided.

*This may serve as a suggestion for the organization and government of other general conferences.

b. Ministerial Delegates

¶A/281. 1. Each annual conference and extension conference shall be entitled to one ministerial delegate in the General Conference, and whenever an annual conference shall reach an aggregate of eight hundred full members, it shall be entitled to two ministerial delegates, and to an additional ministerial delegate for every subsequent six hundred full members, provided, however, that in no case shall a minister be counted more than once in the election of delegates.

2. The ministerial delegates shall be elected by the ministers of the annual conference by ballot. They shall be elders, and at the time of their election, as also at the time of the General Conference, shall be members of the annual conference which elected them. When a ministerial delegate leaves the conference from which he is elected prior to the time of the General Conference, by accepting an appointment to serve another conference, he shall be automatically disqualified as a delegate.

3. Ministerial delegates and reserve ministerial delegates shall be elected by separate ballot and each shall require a majority vote of those present and voting. In emergencies where neither elected nor reserve delegates can serve in this capacity, the board of administration (or its equivalent) of that annual conference shall have the authority to elect by majority vote the additional reserve delegates to serve.

c. Lay Delegates

¶A/282. 1. Each annual conference and extension conference shall be entitled to the same number of lay as ministerial delegates in the General Conference.

2. Lay delegates to the General Conference shall be elected by ballot of the lay delegates of the annual conference they are to represent. They must at the time of election and at the time of the General Conference be members of the church in full relation within the bounds of the conference which elects them.

3. Lay delegates and reserve lay delegates shall be elected by separate ballot and each shall require a majority vote of those present and voting. In emergencies where neither elected nor reserve delegates can serve in this capacity, the board of administration (or its equivalent) of that annual conference shall have authority to elect by majority vote the additional reserve delegates to serve.

d. Credentials

¶A/283. The secretary of each annual conference shall furnish certificates of election to the delegates severally, signed by the president

and the secretary, as the credentials upon which they are to be admitted to the General Conference.

e. Sessions

¶A/284. 1. The General Conference shall meet at such times and places as the General Conference itself may from time to time determine. The Board of Administration shall have the power in emergency to change the time and place for the meeting of the General Conference.

2. The bishop or bishops, or if there be none, the secretary of the General Conference, shall, whenever two thirds of the annual conferences shall demand it, call an extra session of the General Conference, fixing the date thereof and the time of assembling later than the next ensuing session of each of the annual conferences.

f. Presiding Officers

¶A/285. The General Conference shall elect by ballot one or more traveling elders to the office of bishop; and the bishops shall preside at the sittings of the General Conference in such order as they may determine; if no bishop be present, the General Conference shall elect by ballot an elder as president pro tem. The term of office of bishops shall begin at the close of the General Conference session at which they are elected.

g. Other Officers

¶A/286. The General Conference shall have general organizational, promotional, and supervisory powers over the activities of the church and shall be the only lawmaking body of the same. It shall have power to determine the number of its officers, their qualifications for office, and the manner of their selection.

h. Board of Administration

¶A/287. The General Conference is empowered to set up a board of administration, to determine its powers, and to prescribe the qualifications of its members and manner of their selection.

i. Quorum

¶A/288. At all times when General Conference is in session, it shall require two-thirds of all the delegates elected by the annual conferences to form a quorum to do business; but a smaller number may adjourn from time to time until a quorum is obtained.

j. Voting

¶A/289. The members of the General Conference shall deliberate and vote as one body; nevertheless, upon the call of one-fourth of the members present and voting, the house shall divide; and it shall require a majority of the ministerial and of the lay delegates to pass any vote or transact any business.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

- A. Christian Experience
- B. Christian Conduct
- C. Christian Community
- D. Christian Worship

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

A. CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

PREAMBLE

¶A/300. The Christian life can be consciously experienced because it is a relationship between persons — the personal God and humans made in His likeness. Every person is confronted by this personal God, and the outcome of this confrontation is primarily affected by how the person responds.

In love God has fully provided for the salvation of all mankind. But only those who respond in repentance and faith can experience His grace as a redemptive reality.

God deals with all men as free and responsible persons. Therefore, He not only makes His grace available on condition of a free response, but He also reveals Himself and makes known His life to all who put their trust in Him. The redemptive relationship with Jesus Christ is experienced as an awareness of His love and fellowship.

Those who are justified by faith experience the peace of God. When His Holy Spirit comes to the heart, there is joy. The Holy Spirit's indwelling presence is the assurance of our relationship to God as His dear children.

1. AWAKENING TO GOD

¶A/301. The Scriptures teach that men and women are corrupt in every aspect of their nature and have gone far from original righteousness. Added to the depravity common to human beings because of the Fall there are the enslaving effects of committed sins. It is impossible for them to come to God in themselves, but God in His grace reaches out to every sinner.

God takes the initiative in making sinners aware of their needs, using His Word, the revelation in Jesus Christ, the gospel proclamation of the church, the witness of individuals, and the circumstances of life. By such means, the Holy Spirit awakens sinners to their needs and to the truth of the gospel (John 16:8, 13). Awakened, they must make a response, either rejecting the call of God or turning to God in repentance and faith.

2. REPENTANCE AND RESTITUTION

¶A/302. Awakened by the Holy Spirit to their lost condition before God, sinners may move toward God. Since "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), all must repent in order to come into

a right relationship with God.

Repentance calls for a sincere and thorough change of mind. To repent is to turn from sin with genuine sorrow and to turn to God in confession and submission. The whole person is involved: mind, feelings, will. Repentance is more than regret for wrongdoing or sorrow at being caught. It is personal sorrow that one has sinned against God. Repentance demands a radical turning from sin and a sincere turning to God. The result is a saving relationship with Christ.

Sincere repentance leads to moral renewal, often evidenced by restitution — the effort to right one's wrongs whenever possible. Acts of restitution, as in the case of Zaccheus, are certainly fruits befitting repentance (Luke 19:8; 3:8). Neither repentance nor restitution save, however, without faith in Christ (Romans 3:22).

3. TRUST

¶A/303. Trust is confidence in and utter reliance upon God (2 Corinthians 3:4-5; 1 Timothy 4:10). Trust includes full acceptance of the promises of God, complete dependence on Christ's sacrifice for salvation, and unconditional commitment to the will of God. God's grace and blessings are open to those who turn to Him with firm reliance on His integrity, love, and ability.

Christians experience God's loving care and guidance as they trust and follow Him (Ephesians 3:12). When they think they are sufficient unto themselves they become frustrated by trying to do for themselves what God wants to do for them. Self-sufficiency is inconsistent with perfect trust (1 Timothy 6:17).

4. ASSURANCE

¶A/304. God gives assurance of salvation and peace of heart to all who repent and put their faith in Him (Romans 5:1-2). The Holy Spirit witnesses to their own spirits that they are forgiven of their sins and adopted into the family of God (Romans 8:16).

The Christian has peace with God through Jesus Christ because guilt is taken away and fear of judgment is removed (Hebrews 10:22; 1 John 4:17-18). God continues to give assurance to believers through the Scriptures, the conscious presence of the Holy Spirit, and love for and fellowship with other Christians (1 John 3:14).

5. CONSECRATION

¶A/305. God calls His people to set themselves apart to His will and purpose (Romans 6:13; 12:1). Anything thus set apart is said to be consecrated.

All Christians are called to be holy and without blame before God in love (Ephesians 5:27). Christ demands that His disciples follow Him in mind and spirit (Romans 7:24-25). If Christians are to witness effectively in the world they must be distinguished by righteousness, peace, joy, faith, hope, and love (John 13:35; 14:15; Galatians 5:22-24). God wants a special kind of people for His work (Matthew 16:24; Romans 14:17; 8:6-9; John 17:17; Psalms 100:2). When Christians sincerely follow Christ and listen to the Holy Spirit as He speaks in the Scriptures, they should sense their need of cleansing from inward sin. They should desire earnestly to be filled with the love of God and long for a relationship with Christ which will satisfy their deepest inward need and empower them to serve and obey the Lord (Ephesians 5:1-14; 1 Corinthians 13:13; 14:1; Acts 1:8).

Christians, therefore, must consecrate themselves to God and surrender their wills to the will of the Heavenly Father (Matthew 19:21). Those who desire inward sanctification must deny themselves, bear the cross, and follow Christ. Devotion to self is idolatry. Christians who are divided in their loyalty cannot serve God victoriously and steadfastly. Christ must be given the preeminence. He must be the Lord of the Christian's life (John 15:10; Mark 14:36; 1 Peter 1:14).

Therefore, to be open to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, believers must give themselves without reservation to God, freely yielding all they have to the purposes of God and devoting every desire and ambition to the service of Christ rather than to self (Colossians 3:8-13). No Christian can be delivered from the dominion of sin if self is permitted to reign in the life. No one can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24).

6. ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION

¶A/306. Christ gave himself even unto death for the cleansing of His church (Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 13:12). His disciples are called to be holy (1 Peter 1:15-16; 2 Corinthians 7:1). Christ has provided in the atonement for the believer to be entirely sanctified (Hebrews 9:13-14; 10:8-10). Sanctification begins with regeneration and results in a deeper relationship when the believer is fully cleansed in heart (Psalm 51:5-13; 1 John 1:5-2:1). This cleansing accompanies the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:25-27; Acts 15:8-9).

Paul prayed: "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it: (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

God the Holy Spirit is the sanctifier (1 Thessalonians 4:7-8; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2). Coming into the life at conversion, He fills with His presence when the Christian's consecration is complete, cleansing the heart and empowering for witness and service (John 3:5; Romans 8:9; Galatians 3:3; Acts 1:8). He sheds God's love throughout the heart and life of the Christian (Romans 5:5; 1 John 4:12-13).

Accepting the promise of God by faith, believers will enter into a deepened relationship with Christ (2 Corinthians 7:1; Galatians 2:20; 4:6-7; Romans 8:14-17). They will be enabled to love God with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind, and their neighbor as themselves (Matthew 22:37-40; Galatians 5:25-6:2). They will know an inner surrender to all the will of God, and life will be transformed from one of inward conflict to one of glad obedience (Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 5:16-25).

Inward sanctification cleanses the Christian from sin and delivers from the idolatry of self (1 Peter 3:2-3; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:15-20). Cleansing makes one perfect, not in performance, but in love (Matthew 5:43-48; 1 John 4:12-13).

7. GROWING IN CHRIST

¶A/307. The Christian has a new relationship with God and a new life in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. The joy of this new life in Christ may for a time obscure the need for growing up in Christ, often referred to as Christian maturity. The new Christian must ultimately choose between growth and decline.

The Bible is the Christian's growth manual. It must be taken seriously, read, and studied for meaning. If the growing Christian is listening, God will speak through its pages. The value and meaning of life are found in this book. Scripture is a means of cleansing and changing attitudes and acts.

The growing Christian is increasingly sensitive to both good and evil, steadily learning to distinguish between them. The Holy Spirit will guide in harmony with the Scriptures. One must be alert to the Spirit's directives, immediately resisting temptation and responding to God's call to higher living.

Maturity involves personal development which yields growing respect for one's self and for others. Respect for others necessitates self-respect. The Ten Commandments, summarized into two by Jesus, teach the nature of respect in the growth of the moral person. The quality of a Christian relationship to others affects the quality of one's own life. Growth in Christ requires readiness to mend relationships both with God and with others (James 5:16).

Growth in Christ involves responsibility for the well-being of others,

all of whom are loved by God and made in His image. Christians need to love and to be loved. They will express their love both by deeds of kindness and by personal words of witness that Christ is the embodiment of God's love and the Savior of the world.

Maturity in Christ should develop adequacy for life and a concern for the transformation of the world according to God's will. Trusting in God and sustained by the Holy Spirit, the Christian will replace attitudes of defeat and futility with those of courage and confidence.

Prayer is an indispensable means of growth toward Christlikeness. In prayer the Christian talks and listens, confesses and adores, asks and thanks. It should be as conversation, avoiding artificial phrases and tones. Sincere prayer changes the supplicant and often circumstances (James 5:16). The Bible teaches that both individual and group praying are effective for those who are in Christ. Prayer takes us beyond ourselves and emphasizes our dependence on God. Both prayer and Bible study should be regular, without becoming mere rituals (Psalms 119:11, 105).

Growing Christians find their proper environment in the fellowship of believers. They do not live independently from the body of Christ. Worship requires a proper attitude toward God. It involves the believers' active participation. They must prepare mind and spirit for communication with God. Sincere followers of Christ reach out to God in praise, thanksgiving, dedication, confession, faith, and service. As a part of the body of Christ they must involve themselves in corporate worship, as well as in the other ministries of the church. Support, insight, inspiration, and discipline are fruits of fellowship. Small group participation is a means of grace and growth.

Growth comes with the acceptance of duty in the life of the church. The Holy Spirit provides Christians with talents which can be developed for the common good. The use of these talents is a means of growth. God ministers to them as they engage in activities pleasing to the Lord.

8. THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

¶A/308. The Holy Spirit distributes, as He wills, gifts of speech and service devoted to the common good and the building of the church. Gifts are to be exercised under the lordship of Christ. The believer is to seek as the evidence of the Holy Spirit's fullness, not the gifts themselves, but the giver. The greater gifts, however, are to be desired above the lesser. "Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy" (1 Corinthians 14:1).

The Apostle Paul gives guidelines, helping the church to discern the authenticity of gifts of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings order out of chaos. This is true of His work in creation, as well as in redemption.

He is never the author of confusion but is the source of love, power, and a sound mind. Therefore, in public worship everything is to be done decently and in order. Speaking or teaching to speak with unintelligible sounds is not consistent with such order. The language of worship is to be the language of the people. All communication in worship is to be experienced with understanding (1 Corinthians 14:6-12).

Life in the Spirit is characterized by pure love. The gifts of the Spirit are to be accompanied by the fruit of the Spirit. Every gift of the Spirit is exercised with the love and compassion of Christ. Unkind critical attitudes and schism in the church are evidences of the flesh (Galatians 5:13-15).

9. DIVINE HEALING

¶A 309. We believe that all healing, whether of body, mind, or spirit has its ultimate source in God who is “above all and through all and in all.” He may heal by the mediation of surgery, medication, change of environment, counseling, corrected attitudes, or through the restorative processes of nature itself. He may heal through one or more of the above in combination with prayer, or He may heal by direct intervention in response to prayer. The Scriptures report many cases of the latter kind of healing which centers in the life and ministry of the apostles and the church. Consistent with the Scriptures (James 5:14-15), therefore, we urge our pastors to make opportunity for the sick and afflicted to come before God in the fellowship of the church, in strong faith that the God and Father of Jesus Christ is both able and willing to heal. At the same time, we recognize that although God’s sovereign purposes are good and He is working toward a final redemption which assures wholeness to all believers, He may not grant physical healing for all in this life. We believe that in such cases He can glorify himself through the resurrection to life everlasting.

B. CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

¶A/315. We expect all who are received into the adult membership of the church to be good examples of Christian conduct. Free Methodists

seek to live according to scriptural principles expressed in the membership covenant (Pars. A/156-160), and applied to life in the following statements.

AS REGARDS GOD

1. FALSE WORSHIP

¶A/320. Jesus Christ affirmed the Old Testament commandment, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:29-30; Deuteronomy 6:4-5). This precludes the worship of any other person, spirit, or thing.

Our people are to abstain from all practices which lead to idolatry. New Age teachings, and occult practices such as spiritism, witchcraft, and astrology must be avoided. Moreover, Christians must be on guard against the idolatries of the heart — the worship of things, pleasures, and self (1 John 2:16).

2. SECRET SOCIETIES

¶A/321. 1. Christians’ supreme loyalty must be to Jesus Christ who is Lord (Romans 14:9; Acts 2:36). In all associations, Christians must keep themselves free to follow Christ and obey the will of God (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). Therefore, we require all members to avoid solemn bonds of fellowship with unbelievers which may confuse their identity and cloud their witness.

2. Those voluntary associations which demand an oath, affirmation, promise of secrecy, or a secret password as conditions of membership are to be considered secret societies. In contradiction to the teaching of Christ and the New Testament, these societies require pledges and vows which bind the future actions of those who join (Matthew 5:34-37). Christians, therefore, who swear their unreserved loyalty to any secret society are in direct conflict with their unconditional surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord. Christians must keep themselves free to follow the will of the Lord in all things.

3. Most secret societies are religious in nature. Prayers are offered, hymns are sung, and members engage in acts of worship before an altar. Chaplains are chosen to lead in worship and to conduct funerals. But the worship of these societies is unitarian, not Christian; the religion is moralistic, not redemptive; and the ends are humanistic, not evangelical (Acts 4:12). We insist, therefore, that those who are members of our church refrain from membership in all secret societies and that those who unite with the church resign from active membership in any lodge or secret

order previously joined.

4. We do not require those who become members of the church to cease all payments necessary to keep in force insurance benefits previously contracted through lodge membership.

3. THE LORD'S DAY

¶A/322. God makes clear in Scripture by both example and command that one day in seven is to be devoted to worship and rest (Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:8-11). Jesus declared, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). We need a special day in which we turn from our work and concerns to worship God and to renew body, mind, and spirit. The New Testament reveals that the early church moved from observing the last day of the week — the Jewish sabbath — to worshipping God in Christ on the first day of the week — the Lord's day, the day of resurrection.

In keeping the sabbath principle in a Lord's day setting, we urge our people to make corporate worship with the Christian community the essential activity of Sunday (Hebrews 10:25) and to set the day apart by engaging in worship, fellowship, and ministries that express their praise to God, nurture their faith in Christ, build the Body of Christ, and serve the needs of persons around them. We urge our people to refrain from unnecessary labors and commerce on the Lord's Day, recognizing that salvation and all the resources of life come not from our own strivings but by grace as we rest in God (Isaiah 58:13-14; Hebrews 4:9). We encourage pastors and others who must be involved in necessary work on Sunday to observe the sabbath principle on another day.

AS REGARDS MYSELF AND OTHERS

4. HUMAN RIGHTS

¶A/330. We believe in and are committed to the worth of all persons regardless of differences of sex, race, color, or other distinctions (Acts 10:34-35). We are pledged to respect the inherent rights of, and to seek justice for, every person in any society or government where we may live as citizens.

Our commitment is based on the creation of all persons in the image of God (Genesis 1:26); the respect of all persons implicit in the commands of God through Moses and in the summary of the law given by Jesus (Deuteronomy 5:11-21; Matthew 22:36-40); the needs of all persons which Jesus placed above institutions and to which He ministered without discrimination; the redemption of all persons by the act of God as recorded in the Bible; the love of all persons as shown in the cross of Christ (John

15:12; 3:16; Romans 5:8).

We are therefore pledged to active concern wherever and whenever human beings are demeaned, depersonalized, or subjected to demonic forces in the world, whether by persons or institutions (Galatians 3:28; Acts 10:34). We are committed to give meaning and significance to every person as God grants us the capability.

As Christians we must grow in awareness, not only of the rights and needs of others but of our own proneness to prejudice.

5. THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

¶A/331. Induced abortion, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide are the intentional destruction of human life by surgical or other means.

The decision to terminate a pregnancy or end the life of a terminally ill person involves religious and moral values, as well as medical and legal realities. Therefore, Christians may not determine their rights and privileges only by the extent of the permissiveness of the law of the state or the possibilities of safe medical procedures.

Christian morality demands that we consider both the biblical commandment and the human situation in which the law must be applied. Human life in any of its stages, whether nascent, mature, or senile, is sacred to Christians because of their faith that life exists in relation to God.

The intentional destruction of human life is murder when any degree of malice or selfishness accompanies the decision and act. Therefore, induced abortion is morally unjustifiable except when the act has been decided upon by responsible and competent persons, including Christian and professional counsel, for the purpose of saving the life of a pregnant woman. Abortion, when it serves the ends of population or birth control, personal preference or convenience, and social or economic security, must be considered as selfish and malicious. Therefore, the intentional abortion of nascent life from conception on, except when extreme circumstances requires termination of a pregnancy to save the life of the pregnant woman, must be judged to be a violation of God's command, "You shall not commit murder."

Likewise, there is no justification for euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide. It is understood that a terminally ill person's request that life not be sustained by heroic measures does not constitute euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide.

We recommend that Free Methodists offer compassionate alternatives and long-term care to women considering abortion.

We advise both physicians and parents that the moral commandment and the law of love are transgressed when human life is destroyed for

selfish or malicious ends.

6. WAR AND PEACE

¶A/332. 1. We recognize the sovereign authority of government and the duty of all Christians to reverence the power, to obey the law, and to participate righteously in the administration of lawful order in the nation under whose protection they reside (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1-7). Members of our church should bear the responsibilities of good citizenship, and they have the right to act in the enforcement of law and the defense of the peace in accord with the conscience of each person.

2. We believe, however, that military aggression is indefensible as an instrument of national policy and strategy (Isaiah 2:3-4). The destruction of life and property, and the deceit and violence necessary to warfare are contrary to the spirit and mind of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 5:44-45). It is, therefore, the duty of all Christians to promote peace and goodwill, to foster the spirit of understanding and mutual trust among all people, and to work with patience for the renunciation of war as a means to the settlement of international disputes (Romans 12:18; 14:19).

3. It is our firm conviction that none of our people should be required to enter military training or to bear arms and that the consciences of our individual members should be respected (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29). Therefore, we claim exemption from all military service for those who register officially with the church as conscientious objectors to war.

7. CIVIL OATHS

¶A/333. Vain and rash swearing is forbidden by our Lord (Matthew 5:34-37; James 5:12). However, we hold that the Christian religion does not prohibit the taking of an oath where it is required by a public official. In every case, the Christian must speak in justice and in truth (Exodus 20:16; Ephesians 4:25).

8. PUBLIC SCHOOLS

¶A/334. The Free Methodist Church views the education of its youth as a parental responsibility (Deuteronomy 6:5-9; Ephesians 6:4). Part of that responsibility may be delegated to either public or Christian day schools.

The church gives moral support to the public school system. However, we reserve the right of our children and youth to be exempted from participating in dancing, assignments, and other school-related activities which conflict with the moral and social values held by the denomination. When such conflicts arise, we ask that the students' academic standing not be in jeopardy, but when necessary other suitable assignments be

substituted.

The church is concerned that concepts of first origins shall have completely fair consideration in our public schools. Instructional materials are available that permit a scientific treatment of the several concepts of origin, including special creation. We, therefore, expect that the concept of special creation (that all basic life forms and life processes were created by a supernatural Creator) will be presented in, or along with, all courses, textbooks, library materials, and teaching aids dealing in any way with the subject of first origins.

We believe that materials used in classrooms should reflect historical accuracy, as in the description of a country's religious roots. We reject historical revisionism that repudiates or distorts religious influences. Accordingly, we will work to promote legislation and school management policy to encourage history course development and the selection of materials which present these religious themes as they occur in reliable historical sources.

9. DISCIPLINE OF THE BODY

¶A/335. 1. The Scriptures instruct us to honor the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). One attribute of the Spirit's indwelling presence is self-control (Galatians 5:23).

2. Christians should be characterized by balance and moderation. Extreme patterns of conduct must be avoided. They are also to keep themselves free from addictions or compulsions. For example: watching television, drinking coffee, and eating sweets are not evil in themselves, but when used to excess are injurious to one's health and witness.

3. Christians are to be characterized by a disciplined style of life. They should not indulge selfishly in the pleasures of this world. To the contrary, they are to live simply in service to others, and practice stewardship of health, time, and other God-given resources.

4. The Free Methodist Church is committed to help every Christian attain such a disciplined life. Although unhealthy habits are not easily broken, believers need not live in such bondage. They find help through the work of the Holy Spirit, prayer, and the counsel and support of other Christians.

10. MISUSE OF DRUGS

¶A/335.1. Christians find that life is full, abundant, and free in Jesus Christ (John 8:36; 10:10). Therefore, our people abstain from whatever damages, destroys, or distorts His life in them. Illicit drugs are prime offenders. Marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, widely used in our time, cause

untold damage to people and relationships. Such drugs restrict personal development, damage the body, and reinforce an unrealistic view of life.

2. Because Christ admonishes us to love God with all our being and our neighbor as ourselves, our people abstain from the use of alcoholic beverages (Mark 12:30-31). Alcohol, a legalized drug, is damaging to individuals, families, and society. It is unpredictably addictive and its destructive effects cannot be fully measured. Where it is used, it leaves a trail of broken marriages, family violence, crime, industrial loss, ill health, injury, and death. As concerned Christians, our people practice abstinence for the sake of health, family, and neighbors. Moreover, we see the adverse social consequences as so pervasive that we seek by abstaining to make a united social witness to the freedom Christ gives.

3. Because Christians are to treat their bodies as sacred trusts, our people refrain from the use of tobacco. It is a major cause of a variety of cancers and other diseases, as well as an expensive and offensive addiction. Free Methodists take seriously the words of Paul, the apostle, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

4. Because drug dependency of any kind inhibits fullness of life in Christ, we caution our people against indiscriminate use of prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Though the therapeutic value of such substances may be great, their potency, proliferation, and easy accessibility require that Christians be vigilant against their misuse.

5. We counsel our congregations to be understanding and supportive toward those who come to Christ with problems of addiction. We believe in Christ's power to deliver (Romans 6:13; Galatians 6:2). But we urge our people to recognize fully the addictive power of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, and to give whatever helps and support are needed while new Christians seek full deliverance.

6. As a further evidence of an awakened conscience, our people refrain from the cultivation, manufacture, or sale of any of these harmful substances.

11. STEWARDSHIP OF POSSESSIONS

¶A/336. The Scriptures teach the privilege and responsibility of private ownership. Christians hold title to possessions under civil law, but regard all they have as the property of God entrusted to them as stewards. Although they may accumulate goods they lay not up for themselves treasures on earth (Matthew 6:19-20; Luke 12:16-21), but give liberally for the needs of others and the ministry of the church (2

Corinthians 8:1-5; 9:6-13).

12. GAMBLING

¶A/336.1. Gambling contradicts faith in God who rules all the affairs of His world not by chance but by His providential care. Gambling lacks both the dignity of wages earned and the honor of a gift. It takes substance from the pocket of a neighbor without yielding a fair exchange. Because it excites greed, it destroys the initiative of honest toil, and often results in tragic addiction. Government sponsorship of lotteries only enlarges the problem. Because of the evils it encourages, we refrain from gambling in all its forms for conscience' sake, and as a witness to the freedom we have in Christ.

13. ENTERTAINMENT

¶A/336.2. 1. General Guidance.

Many forms of entertainment (television, videos, movies, recorded music, printed material, electronically distributed media, etc.), though not inherently evil, may have content that arouses fleshly impulses, rather than nurturing life in the Spirit.

In an increasingly secular society, Christians must carefully evaluate every form of entertainment in light of biblical principles (Philippians 4:8, Colossians 3:1-3, Galatians 5:13-26), avoiding every form of evil, while honoring Christ in everything (Colossians 3:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:22).

2. Dancing.

In the Psalms, we are encouraged to praise God with songs, clapping, shouting, instruments, and dance. Christians throughout the ages have glorified God with bodily motions.

However, many modern forms of dance contribute to the life of the flesh rather than the life of the Spirit. The music is frequently designed to arouse sexual excitement, the atmosphere is conducive to drug and alcohol use, and dance steps and postures may be sexually provocative. We hold that such activities and their environments do not honor Christ and are contrary to the admonition of God's Word to avoid every kind of evil.

3. Evaluate all entertainment.

Questions such as the following should, therefore, be considered regarding any form of entertainment: Is this activity compatible with my witness as a Christian? Is it consistent with a conscience responsive to the Holy Spirit? Will participation or observation expose me to unnecessary temptation? Are my motives pure?

We expect Free Methodists to evaluate all forms of entertainment in the light of biblical standards for holy living, and to abstain from those that do not meet such standards.

14. PORNOGRAPHY

¶A/336.3. Pornography awakens lust in the heart. It depicts and encourages indecent and deviant sexual conduct such as adultery, bestiality, incest, rape, sodomy, and child molestation. Its effects are a progressive decay of moral values, beginning with addiction, followed by a desensitizing of conscience, and tending toward the wanton acting out of illegitimate or perverted sexual conduct, often victimizing the innocent and unsuspecting.

For society, pornography is a virulently degenerative force. It damages and destroys. For Christians, pornography is an abomination which must be opposed by any legitimate means.

15. SIMPLICITY OF LIFE

¶A/337. While customs and man-made standards change from age to age throughout the world, we recognize that there are certain scriptural principles which should govern Christians in their attitudes and conduct. Whatever we buy, use, or wear should help us in winning others to Christ, edifying the body of Christ, and glorifying Christ (1 Corinthians 10:31-33).

Those biblical principles which should govern Christians in their choice and purchase of all possessions include simplicity, modesty, purity, propriety, humility, and economy. Christians should avoid extravagance, endeavoring to be clean, tidy, attractive, modest representatives of Christ (1 Timothy 2:8-10; 1 Peter 3:1-5).

The principles of simplicity of life should be considered when we purchase or build or furnish a home, buy a car, select clothes, shop for food, and in all other matters.

16. EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE

¶A/338. 1. All persons have the right to gainful and meaningful employment irrespective of sex, race, color, national origin, or creed (Romans 10:12).

2. We recognize the right of employees to organize for the purpose of seeking in a proper way their betterment in labor, industry, and business. Oath-bound secret pacts or acts of violence designed to violate or

defend these rights cannot be condoned.

3. We also recognize the right of the individual to remain independent of organization. It is our firm conviction that none of our people should be required to become members or fee payers of any labor union or professional organization whose activities and policies violate the individual member's religious values and convictions as expressed in the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church. Therefore, on the basis of conscience, we claim exemption from membership or fee paying for those members who find their religious convictions in conflict with the activities and policies of a particular labor union or similar organization.

4. In labor relations, justice is an indispensable ingredient in the Christian's code of ethics. It is a part of God's nature and of His norm for us. The Christian concern for justice is a peculiar one; it is primarily a concern to do justice and only secondarily a concern to obtain justice. This norm is equally applicable to employer and employee (Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22, 4:1).

5. The Christian should not view management and labor as ultimately hostile opponents. Distrust and hostility should not be brought either to the place of work or to the negotiating table. There is no place in the Christian ethic for exploitation, for using people as a means to a selfish end, or for seeing them primarily as economic units. The adversary system for rigid confrontation is not used, but a problem-solving approach is supported and implemented.

6. Our people should endeavor to make their witness effective where they work, remembering that a Christian workman is responsible first to God and then to the employer and the organization (Matthew 7:12; Colossians 3:17).

AS REGARDS THE INSTITUTIONS OF GOD

17. CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

¶A/340. Christians are citizens of the kingdom of God and also of this world. They receive benefits and bear responsibilities from both relationships. Their first allegiance is to God, but that does not release them from responsibilities to country if they do not conflict with the clear teachings of the Scriptures (Romans 13:1-7). They should pray for "all who are in high positions" (1 Timothy 2:2) and should "be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution" (1 Peter 2:13). They should

actively participate in civic life by involvement in constructive efforts for the improvement of social, cultural, and educational standards (Matthew 5:13-16); by opposition to degrading influences (2 Peter 2:4-10); and by the exercise of the right to vote.

18. MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

¶A/341. 1. Nature of Marriage.

At creation God instituted marriage for the well-being of humanity (Genesis 2:20-24; Mark 10:6-9). Marriage is the joining of one man and one woman into a lifelong relationship which the Scriptures call "one flesh." In this union the two retain their individual identities, but subordinate them to the larger relationship of marriage.

Marriage is the only proper setting for sexual intimacy. Scripture requires purity before and faithfulness within marriage. It condemns all unnatural sexual behavior such as incestuous abuse, child molestation, homosexual activity and prostitution (1 Corinthians 6:9; Romans 1:26-27).

Marriage, therefore, should be safeguarded and supported by both church and society. This calls for public vows. It is not enough for a couple to live together in private commitment; they are to covenant before God and state.

2. Nurturing Healthy Marriages.

The Free Methodist Church urges its people to enter the covenant of marriage prayerfully. In accordance with the Apostle's command (2 Corinthians 6:14), we expect them to marry only believers. Before entering into marriage, all should counsel with their Christian leaders. Young people contemplating marriage should seek parental consent. Our ministers shall not officiate at the marriage of any person under age, unless parents or guardians are present or have given written consent, and unless two witnesses are present who know the couple.

We require our churches to provide graded materials for instruction in sex education and preparation for marriage. Pastors shall see that all candidates for marriage have received premarital guidance, using materials consistent with denominational teaching. We further encourage local churches and conferences to provide resources such as seminars and retreats to strengthen marriages and build Christian homes.

3. Healing Troubled Marriages.

The church which is alive to God has spiritual resources for marriages in trouble. The chief resources are the renewing power of the Holy Spirit and the Word, prayer and the sacraments, counsel and support. Through the church's ministry, God can bring healing and reconciliation.

Domestic violence, either emotional or physical, increases with the

decadence of society and does occur in church-related families. It often jeopardizes the safety of a spouse or children and may threaten life itself. Family members so threatened need both spiritual and emotional support and healing (Malachi 2:13-16).

Therefore, if members find their marriage in crisis, they should seek the counsel of the pastor and submit to the guidance of the church.

4. Separation.

When an impossible situation is destroying the home, Christians may separate. In such cases, the way to reconciliation must be kept open (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

5. Divorce.

When marriages break down completely, we recognize that, in the words of Jesus, "hardness of heart" is implicit (Matthew 19:3-8; Mark 10:5-9).

Regarding divorce, the following scriptural principles apply:

- a. When one marriage partner is a Christian and the other a nonbeliever, the Christian may not for that reason divorce the unchristian mate (1 Corinthians 7:12, 13), because Christian love may redeem the unbeliever and unite the home in Christ (1 Corinthians 7:16).
- b. A person denies the faith who deserts a spouse deliberately and for an extended period of time. When the desertion leads subsequently to divorce, the deserted partner is no longer bound by the marriage (1 Corinthians 7:15).
- c. Even when a marriage is violated by sexual infidelity, the partners are encouraged to work for restoration of the union. Where reconciliation is impossible, divorce may be unavoidable (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).

6. Recovery After Divorce.

Divorce always produces trauma. It is a breaking of covenant, thus violating God's intention for faithfulness in marriage (Malachi 2:13-16). For this reason divorced persons should be helped to understand and remedy the causes for the divorce. They should seek pastoral counsel. Professional counsel may be necessary. If unhealthy patterns of relating exist, they must be replaced by new attitudes and behaviors which are Christlike (Colossians 3:1-15). Where hardness of heart is present repentance and forgiveness are required. The goals of the process are personal healing and restoration to ministry within the church. The church must extend its concern to family and others affected by the divorce.

Leaders who minister to the divorced must be persons of integrity who are mature in faith and in control of their own sexuality.

7. Remarriage.

A divorced member or one who is considering marriage to a divorcee shall submit to and follow the counsel and guidance of the church.

Persons who have been involved in divorce while in a state of unbelief shall not for that reason alone be barred from becoming members, even though they remarry. Similarly, believers are not prohibited from marrying a person who was divorced while an unbeliever. A member of the church divorced from an adulterous spouse or deserted by an unbelieving mate, after attempts at forgiveness and reconciliation have been rejected, may remarry (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-11; 1 Corinthians 7:15).

8. Refusal of Counsel.

When a member divorces a spouse in violation of the Scriptures, or remarries without seeking the counsel or following the guidance of the pastor or the membership care committee, the committee shall review the case and recommend appropriate action to the official board. Corrective action may include removal from leadership, suspension, or expulsion from membership.

9. Exceptional Cases.

Cases may arise for which the pastor or the membership care committee can find no explicit direction in the *Book of Discipline*. In such cases, the pastor or the committee shall confer with the conference superintendent.

10. To meet the needs of conferences in countries where civil law makes the application of the prior sections of this paragraph impossible, the bishop of the conference is authorized to work with the conference and to implement solutions compatible with the law of the country, consistent with scripture, and in line with our purpose to be redemptive.

19. HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR

¶A/342. Homosexual behavior, as all sexual deviation, is a perversion of God's created order (Genesis 1-3). The sanctity of marriage and the family is to be preserved against all manner of immoral conduct (Exodus 22:16-17; Deuteronomy 22:23-28; Leviticus 20:10-16).

Homosexual behavior is contrary to the will of God as clearly stated in Scripture (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:8-10).

Persons with homosexual inclinations are accountable to God for their behavior (Romans 14:12).

The forgiving and delivering grace of God in Christ is all-sufficient for the homosexual (1 John 1:9; Hebrews 7:25; Luke 4:18; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

The church has a personal and corporate responsibility to be God's

instrument of healing, restoring love to the homosexual seeking recovery of Christian conduct and life-style (2 Corinthians 2:7-8).

The church opposes legislation which makes homosexual conduct or life-style legitimate.

C. CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AS REGARDS THE CHURCH

1. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LIVING CHURCH

¶A/350. 1. The church is the body of Christ in the world. In worship, the church comes together to meet the holy God and to respond in obedience and love. In witness, the church makes known the good news of Christ throughout the local community and to the ends of the earth, calling the lost to repentance and faith. In making disciples, converts are brought into the body, baptized, trained, and equipped for service to Christ. In fellowship, redeemed people experience their oneness in Christ by sharing in one another's lives with love and concern. In service, the church corporately cares for the needs of its own and others (Revelation 4; Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-13; Acts 2:42; 26:17).

2. The Free Methodist Church is committed to developing and maintaining caring fellowships. Our societies are to be characterized by understanding, forgiveness, mutual discipline, and assistance. To experience Christian fellowship, we must know one another well enough to share strengths and weaknesses, joys and sorrows. This enables us to build one another up in the faith.

3. When persons are born of the Spirit of God, they become members of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). Church membership offers new Christians the opportunity to pledge publicly their love and loyalty to Christ and the church, and to identify through membership with a local congregation. It makes them integral parts of a loving community, gives them a sense of accountability necessary to spiritual growth, and through mutual Christian commitment enables them to better carry out their mission in the world.

4. Ethnic groups in North America who, for cultural reasons, encounter difficulties with membership procedures as outlined in Paragraphs 351-361 may revise these procedures so long as they do not violate the doctrine or ecclesiology of the Free Methodist Church. Revised procedures shall be sponsored by the Council on Ethnic Ministries which shall study them to assure that the constitutional requirements and guarantees of membership are carefully safeguarded and submit them to the Board of Administration for approval.

2. PHILOSOPHY OF MEMBERSHIP

PREAMBLE

¶A/351. In harmony with our mission statement that we “... invite into membership and equip for ministry all who respond in faith” the New Testament model of repentance, faith and baptism shall constitute the primary requirements for membership. This makes membership in the Free Methodist Church as nearly as possible synonymous with entering into the Body of Christ. We are open to all whom God has awakened and support them with the healing and equipping power of the Holy Spirit in His church. The principles of Christian conduct as expressed in Paragraphs A/315-342 are not to be used as excluding boundaries which keep people out but are the maturing life goals of all who are invited into membership.

*a. Holiness:**The Great Commandment of Our Community*

¶A/352. 1. The church pursues holiness in its most comprehensive meaning of loving God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves. John Wesley rightly identified happiness as the fruit of holiness; freedom, the result of surrender to God; and peace, as the child of forgiveness. We call on God for a renewed and clear vision of holiness that brings the presence of God near to the people of our time. This call to holiness not only reaffirms our historical values, but heightens our responsibility to openly confront contemporary sin, be it addiction, selfishness, evil speaking, or anything else that dishonors the name of God.

*b. Disciple-making:**The Great Commission of Our Community*

2. The church earnestly engages in evangelization and disciple-making. We are not casual about pointing out the way of life and holiness. We are concerned for the spiritual growth of all those in our charge, whether pre-Christians, new Christians or long-time Christians.

*c. Christian Conduct:**The Lifestyle of Our Community*

3. The church presents our vision of the Christian life described in Chapter III of the *Book of Discipline* as the conduct descriptive of our maturing Christian lives.

*d. Entry Requirements of Our Community:
Repentance, Faith and Baptism*

4. The entry level for membership in our church focuses on repentance, faith and baptism as the primary requirements. We strive to follow the New Testament model, thus making entry into membership of the Free Methodist Church, as nearly as possible, synonymous with entering into the Body of Christ.

3. ADMISSION INTO MEMBERSHIP

¶A/353. 1. The conditions for membership in the Free Methodist Church are:

- a. awakening to God, a desire to seek God (Par. A/301);
- b. assent to participate in the maturing opportunities offered by the church, such as classes, Bible studies and small groups (Par. A/307);
- c. evidence of genuine conversion (Par. A/302);
- d. receiving the catechism of baptism and the sacrament of baptism, or, if baptized in infancy, giving public assent to the baptismal covenant (Par.A/124);
- e. completing the approved course of instruction for prospective members, which clearly teaches the history, theological distinctives and mission of the Free Methodist Church;
- f. commitment to the membership covenant (Pars. A/154-160), and the Christian Conduct section of the *Book of Discipline* (Pars.A/315-342);
- g. interview by the pastor and/or membership care committee, who will verify the person's conversion, baptism and willingness to commit to a holy Christian life (Pars.A/306-307);
- h. approval by the church's official board upon recommendation of the membership care committee (Par.A/404.4, Sec.4); and
- i. giving affirmative answers to the questions for membership before a public meeting of the church (Par.A/353.1)

2. The numbering of the above steps for membership is the normative order. The sequence of some steps may vary according to individual need. The purpose is to allow new believers or transfers to:

- a. identify life issues and receive assistance;
- b. identify theological/ doctrinal questions and attain answers; and
- c. learn the mission of the church and express commitment to it.

A local church or annual conference may designate steps 1:a-c as

requirements for preparatory membership. The ritual for reception into preparatory membership (Par.A/360) may be used.

¶A/353.1. (Ritual other than questions and answers is optional.)

[Those who are to be received into membership shall be called forward by name, and the pastor, addressing the people, shall say:]

Into this holy fellowship the persons before you, who have received the sacrament of baptism, who have learned the nature of these privileges and duties, who have been instructed in the teachings and mission of the Free Methodist Church, and who have been approved by the official board, come to be welcomed into membership. We now propose, in the fear of God, to question them as to their faith and purpose, that you may know that they are ready to be admitted into this church.

(Then, addressing those seeking admission, the pastor shall say:)

Beloved in the Lord, you have come to be received into membership in the Free Methodist Church. We rejoice that you have decided to undertake the privileges and duties of membership in this church. Before you are admitted, you shall here publicly renew your vows, confess your faith, and declare your purpose, by answering the following questions:

1. Have you now the assurance of the Holy Spirit that your sins are forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ?
2. Do you now experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit with His cleansing of heart and empowerment for service, or, if not, will you seek His fullness through study, counsel, and prayer?
3. Do you intend to serve God by the full use of the abilities He has given you?
4. Do you believe the Holy Scriptures to be the revealed will of God containing all things necessary to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ?
5. Do you accept the Articles of Religion, the Membership Covenant, and the Organization and Government of the Free Methodist Church, and will you endeavor to live in harmony with them?
6. Will you, in fellowship with your pastor and fellow-members, avail yourself of the means of grace, such as, public worship of God, the ministry of the Word, the Lord's Supper, family and private prayer, and the searching of

the Scriptures?

7. Will you practice the principles of Christian stewardship, giving freely of your time, talents, and possessions to Christ and His church?

(Here the pastor shall introduce each candidate by name to the congregation, and shall continue as follows:)

You, my fellow-members of this congregation, have heard the vows of these who have completed the requirements for membership in the Free Methodist Church. Let us now welcome them into our fellowship.

(The method of welcoming shall be left to the discretion of the pastor.)

(Here the pastor may offer an extemporaneous prayer.)

This is optional:

(Then those to be received into membership shall kneel, and the pastor laying hands upon each of them in turn, shall say:)

_____, I receive you into the fellowship of the Free Methodist Church. May the Lord confirm you in the faith and fellowship of the true disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Those being received shall rise, and the pastor addressing the candidates shall say:)

We rejoice to recognize you as members of the Free Methodist Church and bid you welcome to all its privileges; and in token of our love we give you the right hand of fellowship and pray that you may be numbered with His people here and with His saints in glory everlasting. May the church be a blessing to you, and may you be a blessing to the church.

(Then shall the pastor say to the congregation:)

Friends in Christ, I commend to your love and care these persons whom we this day recognize as members of our church. Do all in your power to strengthen their faith, confirm their hope, and perfect them in love.

¶A/354. 1. The person meeting the requirements of Paragraph A/353 shall be admitted to all the privileges of membership.

2. Any person in good standing in any evangelical church may be received into membership upon meeting the requirements of Paragraph A/353.

¶A/355. When two or more societies vote to merge, individual membership is automatically transferred to the united society.

¶A/356. 1. Members who withdraw from the church with no complaints against them at the time, may by action of the official board be reinstated into membership if the following conditions are met:

- a. evidence of present faith in Christ;
- b. reaffirmation of the membership covenant.

2. Members living at a great distance from the society in which membership is held and unable to attend, shall send to the pastor a written testimony at least once a year. Distant members who do not write or support their home church financially may, after one year, have their names removed from the active membership by action of the official board.

3. When members do not keep the covenant and habitually violate their vows, it is the responsibility of the pastor(s) and the membership care committee to seek in love to restore them. If such members refuse the ministry of restoration, they must be dealt with according to the due process of the church (Pars. A/404.4; A/740).

4. Members whose membership is terminated by any cause except death or transfer to another church shall have their names placed on an inactive list. This list shall be held by both the pastor and the Christian growth group (class) leader in the hope of restoration to active membership and fellowship in the church. Membership for persons on the inactive membership list may be restored according to the provisions of Paragraph A/356, Section 1. Inactive members shall not be reported in the *Yearbook* or any other official membership data.

5. Members whose membership is terminated by death or transfer to another church shall have their names placed on a separate list to be kept as a record of former members.

4. ADMISSION INTO PREPARATORY MEMBERSHIP (Optional)

¶A/360. (Ritual other than questions and answers is optional.)

(Those who are to be received as preparatory members shall be called forward by name, and the pastor, addressing the people, shall say:)

Dearly beloved, that none may be admitted into the Free Methodist Church without instruction, we receive persons who seek fellowship with

us into preparatory membership, during which they may be properly instructed, and also give proof, both to themselves and to the church, of the sincerity and depth of their convictions and of the strength and purpose of their desire to lead a new life.

(Then addressing the persons seeking admission as preparatory members, the pastor shall say:)

Beloved in the Lord, you have by the grace of God made your decision to follow Christ and to serve Him. Your confidence in so doing is to be based not on any notion of fitness or worthiness in yourselves, but on the gracious promise of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ who loved us and gave himself for us.

That the church may know your purpose, will you please answer the following questions:

1. Do you have the assurance that God has forgiven your sins through faith in Jesus Christ?

Answer: I have.

2. Are you willing to receive membership instruction as offered by our church?

Answer: I am.

3. Have you received Christian baptism?

Answer: Yes or no.

If not, will you receive this sacrament at a duly appointed time?

Answer: Yes.

4. You have been won to Christ. Will you endeavor to win others to Christ and the church?

Answer: I will.

(Then shall the pastor say:)

On behalf of the Free Methodist Church and in the hope that you will go forward to complete membership therein, I extend to you a cordial welcome.

(Then shall the pastor offer extemporaneous prayer.)

¶A/361. Preparatory members shall not be continued longer than two years on the membership roll in that relation without a two-thirds vote of the official board that circumstances warrant a continuation for a longer period.

5. ADMISSION INTO YOUTH MEMBERSHIP

¶A/363. (Ritual other than questions and answers is optional.)

(Those who are to be received as youth members shall be called forward by name, and the pastor shall say:)

Beloved, our Lord Jesus, by His Holy Word, has expressly given to everyone who believes in Him a place in His kingdom and church. Before you are admitted into the church, it becomes my duty to inquire of you as to your purpose of mind and heart.

1. Do you believe that Jesus Christ has forgiven your sins and is now your Savior?

Answer: I do.

2. Have you received Christian baptism*, or if not, are you willing to be baptized?

Answer: Yes.

3. Have you attended, or if not, will you attend your pastor's class of instruction on living the Christian life and serving God through your church?

Answer: Yes.

4. As a faithful member, will you pray for your church, attend regularly, give to your church, and help wherever you can?

Answer: Yes.

5. Will you try to show others by the way you live what it means to be a Christian, and will you do your best to bring them to Christ?

Answer: I will.

Optional:

(Here the pastor may offer an extemporaneous prayer. Then those to be received as youth members shall kneel, and the minister, laying his hands upon each of them in turn, shall say:)

I receive you into the fellowship of the Free Methodist Church as a youth member. May God confirm you in the faith and fellowship of all true disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen.

* Those received into youth membership who have been baptized in infancy are required to affirm the baptismal vows. See Paragraph A/903.

¶A /364. All members under sixteen years of age shall be known as youth members. They shall not be counted in the allocation of financial goals by the annual or general conference. Their number shall be kept in a separate column in the statistical report. They are not eligible to vote in business meetings.

The names of youth members shall be reviewed by the official board at least once each year, with a view to character cultivation and Christian nurture, but in no case shall any change in their membership status be made until they reach their sixteenth birthday, other than the provisions in Paragraph A /153.

Upon reaching the sixteenth birthday, youth members shall be approved by the official board either for adult membership or for entrance into the membership process at the appropriate stage. To be admitted to voting membership, they must answer satisfactorily the questions for adult membership before a public meeting of the church.

Youth members shall be reported in a separate column in the *Yearbook*.

5. ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

¶A/365. Free Methodist students and servicemen and women, and their families, living at a distance from their home and church, may be granted associate membership in any other Free Methodist church. All rights and privileges except the right to vote shall be granted. Associate members shall be recorded on a separate list.

6. TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

¶A/366. 1. Only members desiring to move to another society or to unite with another evangelical church are entitled to a letter of transfer, and if in good standing, shall receive it upon request.

2. Members wishing to transfer to another society must have a letter of transfer from the pastor (see Par. B/1026, Sec. 1). When giving such a letter of transfer, the pastor shall at once give notice of the fact to the pastor of the society to which the letter is addressed. The letter of transfer is valid for one year.

Members holding such letter shall remain members of, and be amenable to, the society by which the letter was given until it is presented to another society, which shall receive them into membership. After that they shall be responsible to the new society for their conduct including that during the time the letter was held.

It shall be the duty of the pastor receiving the letter to notify the pastor who gave it (see Par. B/1026, Sec. 2).

3. Letters of transfer may be given to members of our church who wish to unite with other evangelical denominations (see Par. B/1026,

Sec. 3).

4. Youth members may be transferred to another society by the pastor giving a letter of transfer (see Par. B/1026, Sec. 4).

5. The conference superintendent must give consent for the issuing of a letter of transfer for a supply pastor in charge of a society.

¶A/367. Reception of Members by Transfer

(Those who are to be received into membership by transfer shall be called forward by name, and the pastor, addressing the congregation, shall say:)

The Free Methodist Church is a welcoming fellowship which provides a home for those committed to the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom. We count it a privilege to receive these members into our fellowship by transfer. Their letters of transfer read:

(The pastor will read only the first letter in each category of membership in its entirety. The others can be named along with the name of the church from which they are transferring.)

Let us pray.

(The pastor shall lead in an extemporaneous prayer.)

(Name) I welcome you into the fellowship of the _____ church.

(The pastor will give a handshake of welcome to each new member.)

(Members transferring from another evangelical denomination must previously have met the requirements of Pars. A/353 and A/354.)

D. CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

PREAMBLE

¶A/375. We believe rites and ceremonies of the church are to be accorded respect. Members should not through private judgment willfully and purposefully disregard the rites of the church to which they belong. Such rites are not the same in all places or churches. There have always been differences reflecting the diversity of times and countries and the customs of society. Therefore, we acknowledge the right of every denomination to change and ordain rites and ceremonies, for the edification of all. But let nothing be ordained against God’s Word.

¶A/376. Public worship in our churches shall seek a balance be-

tween freedom and form. Preaching shall be emphasized as a means of edifying believers and converting sinners. All public worship shall be in the language of the people.

1. ORDER OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

¶A/377. The Sunday morning corporate worship service should provide four basic results: (1) to provide opportunity for the praise of God; (2) to give worshipers insight into the will of God; (3) to lead individuals to commit themselves personally to God's revealed will; and (4) to strengthen the dedicated person to perform the will of God. To accomplish these desired results, each service should include congregational singing, reading from the Scriptures, pastoral prayer, the Lord's Prayer, and preaching. The apostolic benediction is recommended for dismissing the congregation.

Other services shall include congregational singing, prayer, reading from the Scriptures, and preaching. On occasion, sharing, healing of human hurts, and other forms of worship may be used. The order of services should avoid routine by providing fitting variations in worship forms within the limitations of propriety, the Scriptures, and specific rituals when used (Chapter IX).

By precept and example, the minister shall insist on reverence and a worshipful attitude before, during, and after worship.

2. MUSIC

¶A/378. Qualified persons whose character and life reveal the scriptural principles and support the standards of the Free Methodist Church shall be selected to lead the singing in public worship and, where instrumental music is in use, to play the instrument(s).

The pastor is responsible to provide for the cultivation of sacred music and to guard against complexity and formality in singing. Singing is a part of divine worship in which all persons present should unite. Congregational music shall not be subordinated to special music. Hymns fitting to the occasion should be chosen, and seldom should more than four or five stanzas of one hymn be used. The Free Methodist hymnal is expected to be used in the morning worship service.

The use of instrumental music is the decision of the local church or other ecclesiastical unit conducting worship.

The purpose of music in divine service is to inspire and to sustain worship. Vocal and instrumental music used in the service shall seek to contribute to reverence and exalted worship and not the display of talent, however excellent.

3. LOVE FEAST

¶A/379. the love feast is one of the fascinating yet least understood aspects of the rites of the early church. John Wesley reintroduced it to millions of modern Christians, to whom it proved (and still proves) an inspiring means of grace. Historically, Free Methodists observed the love feast at least once in three months.

Love feasts are characterized by the singing of hymns, opportunity for testimony, extemporaneous prayer, and the breaking of bread in symbolizing the meals shared by the early Christians. The love feast is not to be confused with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

4. CHRISTIAN GROUP GROUPS (CLASSES)

¶A/380. In the year 1739 eight or ten persons sought the spiritual counsel and guidance of Mr. Wesley in London. They asked that he spend time with them in prayer and the study of the Scriptures. Thus began the Methodist United Societies. Members saw themselves as "a company of persons having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."

For the purpose of Christian nurture and more intimate fellowship, societies were divided into classes, not exceeding twelve in number. These classes proved to be one of the most important features in the perpetuation of the Methodist revival. The practice of Christian nurture through small groups has always been regarded as a vital feature of the Free Methodist Church.

Christian growth groups should be formed within the congregation for the careful oversight of the members and the confirmation of seekers in the assurance of God's forgiveness in Christ. Membership in the groups ideally should be not more than twelve. A leader shall be chosen by the group, and the pastor may nominate. The groups should meet in a convenient location on a regular schedule.

Group meetings should be devoted to meaningful creative prayer; the study of the Scriptures; the sharing of needs, aspirations, and victories; and fellowship in Christian love. Persons not yet believers should be invited into the fellowship as they desire to learn of Christ.

Leaders of small groups should be chosen carefully. They shall be members of the Free Methodist Church, persons of mature Christian faith and experience. They should have a good understanding of the Scriptures and agree fully with the doctrines and practices of the church. (See Pars. A/620, A/621.)

5. SERVICES WITH SACRAMENTS AND RITUALS

¶A/381. Rituals are provided in Chapter IX of the *Book of Discipline* to provide for uniformity in certain special services used throughout the denomination. However, the total service providing the context in which the appropriate ritual is used is left to the discretion and order of the minister in charge. Appropriate variations in forms of worship may be used with propriety to enrich the worship experience. Pastors are exhorted to prayerfully consider making every service involving a ritual a fresh means of grace for the worshiper.

CHAPTER IV

OFFICIAL BODIES OF THE CHURCH

PREAMBLE: Connectional Nature and Mission
of the Free Methodist Church

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 - Preamble
 - 1. Church Planting Projects
 - 2. Fellowship Status
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- B. Local Church Administration
 - 1. Society Meeting
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 - 3. Evaluation of Ministry Effectiveness
 - 4. Board of Christian Education
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 - 6. Board of Evangelism and Church Growth
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- C. Conference Administration
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- E. General Administration
 - 1. General Conference
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OFFICIAL BODIES OF THE CHURCH

PREAMBLE: Connectional Nature and Mission

of the Free Methodist Church

¶A/400. The Free Methodist Church of North America is a body of earnest Christians committed to the will of God as revealed in the Bible, Methodist in doctrine and practice, who consider themselves to be spiritually members of the body of Christ in the world, the visible and universal church of Jesus Christ.

The membership of the Free Methodist Church of North America is organized into annual conferences, and these into local congregations. These along with the several institutions, auxiliaries, and agencies are united by means of a common constitutionally structured organization and are governed under the authority of the *Book of Discipline* by duly appointed leaders. We thus share forms of worship, fellowship, and a common mission.

Each local congregation accepts members on condition of agreement with a covenant commonly approved and accepted by all local congregations of the church.

Each holds its real estate and all of its property and assets in trust for the Free Methodist Church of North America.

Each participates in the formulation of policy and the approval of programs and procedures of the church by duly elected ministerial and lay representation at conference and general levels.

The Free Methodist Church of North America therefore is a connectional church, a body of Christians whose local congregations are united by a constitution democratically established and ratified which provides a common character and purpose for all. Consequently, all local congregations shall clearly identify themselves with the Free Methodist Church.

The Free Methodist Church admits to no geographic, social, racial, or cultural limitations on Christ's command to preach the gospel of redemption and to share His message of wholeness. We are called, within our power and resources, to introduce all people to Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). This includes the inner city, the countryside, the villages, and the marketplaces around the world.

Mission begins in worship. Therefore we encourage congregations to establish worship centers where through prayers, music, meditation, and the preaching of God's Word true worship might take place.

True worship of God demands service to one another within the

church and to those outside the church with their varied needs. This service we define as the mission of the church which includes Christian education, evangelism, world missions, and social services.

Christian education is a means of teaching the Word of God so that both young and old can understand Christian doctrine and life. To this end we conduct home Bible studies, Sunday schools, weekday activities, and other programs. We establish day-care centers, elementary and secondary schools, and institutions of higher education, including seminaries, colleges and universities. The Free Methodist Publishing House produces and markets books, magazines, and other literature.

Evangelism is the work of witnessing and bringing people to faith in Christ. To help our members bear such witness, we provide opportunities for training and experience. We promote evangelism through study, seminars and workshops, college and university degree programs, use of lay witnesses, home Bible studies, and outreach ministries. Radio broadcasts, television programs, audio and video tapes, and all other means of personal and mass communication are used.

World missions involves sending the gospel message to areas of need around the world. This is done through a missionary endeavor that involves both career missionaries and short-term volunteer workers. Evangelism in the mission context is carried on through churches, schools, hospitals, clinics, bookstores, and other appropriate means. The goal of our world mission is to minister to the needs of the whole person.

Social service is the activity of the church in caring for human need as an expression of the love of God. At the level of the local church this may range from day-care centers to senior citizen activities. Free Methodists, individually or through the several agencies, cooperate in the support of retirement homes, hospitals, and city missions. They also provide care for unwed mothers and unwanted or orphaned children.

Many of these ministries converge in camping programs in all sections of North America. Entire families are united in family camps, youth and children have specialized camping programs, and many other groups are brought together for instruction, fellowship, and service.

As real property is needed for the ministry of the church it is held in the name of the Free Methodist Church of North America and those other auxiliary, affiliated, and subsidiary corporations, organizations, and conference and local church bodies.

A. FORMATION OF NEW CHURCHES

PREAMBLE

¶ A/401. The mission of the Free Methodist Church is to make known to people everywhere God's call to wholeness through forgiveness and holiness in Jesus Christ, and to invite into membership and equip for ministry all who respond in faith. The biblical Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) commands believers to make disciples in every place and among all peoples. The fulfillment of this mission requires larger and more effective local churches as well as more and varied local churches.

Reaching unreached people is the motive for the planting of new churches. Each church should be eager and open to win all people to Christ and incorporate them into membership. Yet within each population group there are persons who, because of geographic distance or language or cultural differences, can more readily be reached by new churches than by existing ones. Creative strategies and multiple styles of ministry are required.

Most new churches will come into being as local churches form new groups nearby or use their facilities for new kinds of ministry. Others will come about as individuals or teams are commissioned at the local, conference, or general level to enter new areas. In still other cases, already existing groups may discover the benefit of affiliating with the Free Methodist Church and sharing in its mission. In each instance, the ultimate goal is not only to reach more people and see them mature in Christ, but also to reproduce new local churches.

New Free Methodist churches shall be known as "church planting projects," "fellowships," or "affiliated churches" in preparation for society status. These terms will be used in reporting appointments and for official denominational records. However, the term "Free Methodist Church" may be used in public reference by groups in any of these categories. All local congregations shall clearly identify themselves with the Free Methodist Church. The following guidelines provide consistency in policy while allowing latitude in strategy for multiplying local churches.

1. CHURCH PLANTING PROJECTS

1. A Church Planting Project is the first phase in the formation of most new churches.
 - a. Authority to Form: Each church planting project must have a sponsoring agency, which may be a local society or conference board or committee, or the Department of Evangelism and Church Growth. The project comes into existence when the sponsoring agency announces its decision.

- b. Accountability and Responsibility: The church planting pastor or lay project leader is accountable to the sponsoring agency which is responsible for providing assistance and support in the form of consultation, personnel, materials, and/or finances.
- c. Membership: A church planting pastor or lay project leader is responsible for preparing persons to become members of a new Free Methodist fellowship or society with assistance as needed from the sponsoring agency. Free Methodist members participating in the project retain membership in their home church.
- d. Financial Matters: Full self-support should be attained as early as possible. The church planting project may hold or disburse its own funds only if authorized by the sponsoring agency, which retains auditing responsibility.
- e. Local Organization: A church planting pastor or lay project leader may appoint a ministry committee to provide counsel and direction.
- f. Duration: Church planting projects are encouraged to move to fellowship or society status as soon as possible. Only under special circumstances approved by the sponsoring agency should a church planting project continue more than two years if it has not progressed to the fellowship status.
- g. Conference relationship: A lay project leader shall have an honorary seat in the conference and may be named in the appointments at the discretion of the ministerial appointments committee.

2. FELLOWSHIP STATUS

2. Fellowship status is the second phase in the formation of most new churches. Groups which have become established outside of Free Methodist sponsorship and wish to become part of the denomination may enter as affiliated churches which are similar to fellowships. The conference board of administration or board of evangelism shall serve as their sponsoring agency.

- a. Authority to form: A conference superintendent, with the concurrence of the sponsoring agencies, may recognize a group as a fellowship or affiliated church when: (1) enough prospective members have been adequately prepared. Although preparation is required, this is the only circumstance under which full members may be received without letters of transfer or from youth membership; (2) these prospective

members give public joint assent to the adoption of the *Book of Discipline* and individually answer the questions for full membership; (3) a document of agreement has been signed by these prospective members, the superintendent, and representatives of the sponsoring agency. This document shall contain the denominational mission statement, the official name of the group, and adequate statements of mutual responsibility and accountability between the fellowship or affiliated church and the conference.

- b. Accountability and responsibility: The pastor or lay project leader and the fellowship or affiliated church shall be accountable to the conference superintendent and their sponsoring agency. Together they shall guide the group toward becoming a Free Methodist society. A quarterly written report of progress and needs for further guidance shall be submitted to the superintendent and sponsoring agency.
- c. Membership: A fellowship or affiliated church may receive members in all relationships and shall report them in the same manner as societies.
- d. Financial Matters: (1) A fellowship or affiliated church shall hold and disburse its own funds but the sponsoring agency shall retain authority to audit. (2) An affiliated church which owns real property at the time of affiliation need not incorporate the trust clause of Paragraph A/856 into its deed until the time of recognition as a society. Any conference or denominational financial assistance to affiliated churches for capital improvements shall be in the form of loans repayable if the church chooses not to become a Free Methodist society. (3) Any real property acquired by a fellowship prior to recognition as a society shall be in the name of the conference or the Free Methodist Church of North America or its trustees, rather than in the name of the fellowship. (4) In the case of dissolution of a fellowship, its accumulated assets become the property of the sponsoring agency. (5) A fellowship or affiliated church is encouraged to give a tithe of church income to conference and denominational ministries as the first step towards full participation in these financial responsibilities.
- e. Local Organization: Members of the fellowship shall elect an official board of no fewer than three members, including the secretary, treasurer, and honorary delegate. The pastor in charge may nominate officers or members at-large other than the delegate. The official board may form other boards and

committees as needed.

- f. Duration: A fellowship or affiliated church shall remain in this relationship no longer than three years without the consent of the sponsoring agency. In the event of the dissolution of a fellowship, letters of transfer shall be issued to its members in good standing.
- g. Conference Relationship: A fellowship or affiliated church shall be represented in the annual conference by an honorary delegate with a voice but no vote.

3. SOCIETIES

3. A society is the term for a fully organized local Free Methodist church.

- a. Authority to Form: A conference superintendent, in consultation with the conference board of administration, may authorize a fellowship or affiliated church to become a Free Methodist society, when: (1) it has developed a mission statement that is in harmony with the denomination; (2) it has sufficient members, maturity, and financial stability to function in this relationship; (3) it has fulfilled the provisions of Section 2:a:2, 3.
- b. Financial Matters: (1) An affiliated church must insert the trust clause of Paragraph A/856 into any of its property deeds or articles of incorporation before being recognized as a society. (2) new societies must acknowledge the trust clause requirements in the written document of agreement. (3) The conference may provide a phased plan to bring new societies into full participation in all conference and denominational financial responsibilities as soon as possible.
- c. Conference relationships: Only recognized societies shall be entitled to voting representation in the annual conference, but members of Free Methodist fellowships or affiliated churches shall be counted in conference and denominational totals for all other purposes.

B. LOCAL CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

¶A/402. 1. A local church is composed of two classes of members*: adult and youth. The steps to membership are found in the sections of the constitution entitled Membership and Covenant (Pars. A/150-160) and Christian Community (Pars. A/350-367).

A business meeting of the members is called a society meeting, and is conducted at least annually. The purpose and agenda for this meeting are found in Paragraph A/402.1 and 402.2.

In instances where two societies are served by one pastor, a combined annual business meeting is provided to elect a delegate to annual conference, and for such other business as the combined societies need to conduct. If the annual conference so desires, a delegate to annual conference may be elected from each society.

New societies should view the organization outlined as a goal to be reached as the church grows and the ministries expand. Some offices/ functions may be omitted or combined in such instances.

2. Selecting Leaders.

- a. The following boards and committees give substance and direction to the church's goals, bringing together committed Christians who share in ministry — i.e. missions, education, evangelism, or stewardship. They draw up plans or programs that bring to focus the energies of the whole body. Therefore, for the health of the local church, it is crucial that the official board and committee/board chairs be persons of spiritual depth, vital in faith, faithful in church attendance, and in agreement with the doctrine, conduct and mission of the Free Methodist Church.
- b. The Scriptures provide guidance for persons in leadership. See Exodus 18:21, Acts 7:3, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, and Titus 1:5-9. Nominating committees and societies should consult these guidelines when considering persons for delegate to annual conference, leadership positions, teaching assignments and public ministry roles. The lifestyle of such leaders shall be in harmony with the Scriptures above and Chapters I and III of the *Book of Discipline*.

1. SOCIETY MEETING

¶A/402.1. 1. The society meeting shall be composed of the full

* An option for preparatory membership is provided. (See Par. A/353, Sec. 2.)

members of the society. Youth members (under sixteen years of age) are ineligible to vote (see Par. A/364).

2. The pastor shall be chair of the meeting without vote. The secretary of the official board shall be the secretary of the society. The minutes of the society meetings shall be kept in the record book of the official board.

3. The meeting shall be announced at least ten days before it is held. Absentee voting is not permitted.

Prior to the annual election process, the pastor shall present to the society the scriptural qualifications for lay leadership positions such as those listed in Matthew 20:26-28, John 15:12-17, Acts 6:1-7, and Ephesians 4:1-17.

4. Annual Conference Delegates.

a. The society shall, from their number, elect by ballot delegates to the annual conference according to the provisions in Paragraph A/277. The election of delegate(s) and reserve delegate(s) shall be by separate ballot and shall each require a majority vote of those present and voting. Adult members, with the exception of conference ministerial candidates, are eligible to be a delegate. However, a delegate who is received as a conference ministerial candidate during the current session shall not be disqualified to serve as a delegate.

b. Delegates serve as liaison between the society and its appointed personnel, as well as between the conference and the society. Their primary tasks include: representing the local church at annual conference; participating in conference activities as requested; representing the church to the superintendent; preserving unity within the body by promoting peace and harmony between the members.

c. Delegates are to conform to the conditions outlined for leaders in Paragraph A/402, Sec. 2:b.

d. Lay delegates are to support the pastor and staff in the planning and promotion of Great Commission strategies.

5. Nominating Committee.

a. At the annual meeting, the society shall elect by ballot from its adult membership a standing nominating committee of not fewer than three and not more than nine persons, plus the senior pastor. The society shall consider persons for this committee who are spiritually mature and who understand and actively pursue the mission of the church.

The society shall determine the size of the nominating committee, the duration and rotation of terms, and any term

limits. Nominations to the nominating committee may be received in advance. If so, a form for nominations shall be provided at least one month prior to the election. The official board shall process these nominations and provide a ballot including all available persons. Nominations may be received from the floor if the society has so determined in advance by a standing rule. The nominating committee may not present nominations for the next nominating committee.

- b. The objective of the nomination process is to identify persons of spiritual maturity, giftedness and fruitfulness in ministry, and to provide appropriate roles for each to participate in the overall mission of the church.
- c. Duties:

The nominating committee shall recommend to the society persons to serve in the leadership roles of standing committees or boards. (This may include two-thirds of the pastor's cabinet [see Par. A/404.3.Sec.1]; treasurer of the society; director of Christian education and the age-level directors; directors or chairs of the board of stewards, trustees, evangelism and church growth, missions, finance and stewardship; and other leadership positions as determined by the society.) Ministry teams of these boards and committees may be nominated by the respective directors or by the nominating committee as determined by the society.

Delegates to annual conference may be nominated by the nominating committee if the society so chooses, presenting at least two nominations for each delegate position for election by ballot (Par. 402.1, Sec.4).

The report of the nominating committee shall be made available to the society at least ten (10) days prior to the election.

6. The society meeting shall elect adult members from the local church to serve in various capacities on the official board, in addition to those named by virtue of office. (See Par. A/402.3, sec. 1).

7. The society meeting shall determine the number of stewards and shall elect the board of stewards. (See Par. A/404.5).

8. Trustees shall be elected as specified in the charter or bylaws or by civil law. (See Par. A/850 and A/851.)

9. The society meeting shall elect the treasurer of the society who shall be an adult member of the Free Methodist Church, who shall keep a record of all moneys raised on the pastoral charge and of the manner in which they are expended, and shall give a full report of it at the annual

society meeting. An auditor shall be selected.

10. The society meeting shall elect other personnel to serve the church: a statistical auditor from the membership who shall verify the statistical reports to the annual conference, and the accuracy of the permanent record book of the society; a director of Christian education; a director of children's ministries; a director of youth ministries; a director of adult ministries; a Sunday school promoter; a Dime-a-Day director; a missions coordinator; and at least two members at large of the board of missions (see Pars. A /404.1, B /496, sec. 4). When necessary, it may elect a committee to try members in accordance with Paragraph A /745.

11. The society meeting shall elect a pastor's cabinet composed of at least three, but no more than nine lay members, including the delegates to annual conference. The pastor may nominate as many as one-third of the cabinet members. (See Par. A /404.3.)

12. The society shall determine the propriety of incorporating (see Par. A /855).

13. The annual society meeting shall hear reports from the pastor on the state of the church, and from the trustees, the stewards, and various officers and directors.

14. The pastor may call a society meeting. If absent or refusing to do so, a majority of the official board may call a society meeting whenever in their judgment the interests of the church require.

15. *Robert's Rules of Order* in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure in the sessions of the society meetings.

¶ A/402.2. Suggested Order of Business

1. Devotions.
2. Seat the secretary (secretary of the official board).
3. Calling of the roll.
4. Election of tellers.
5. Reception of reports from: pastor (state of the church), stewards, trustees, treasurer, ministry leaders.
6.
 - a. Election of a treasurer.
 - b. Selection of an auditor of the treasurer's accounts.
7. Election of a statistical auditor.
8. Election by ballot of delegates to the annual conference.
9. Election by ballot of reserve delegates to the annual conference.
10. Election by ballot of pastor's cabinet.
11. Decide the number of stewards; elect.
12. Election by ballot of trustees (see Par. A /851).
13. Election of official board personnel.
14. Election by ballot of director of Christian education. The pastor

may nominate.

15. Election of directors of children's ministries, youth ministries, adult ministries, and Sunday school promoter.

16. Election of Christian education personnel (if so decided) or authorize election by the board of Christian education.

17. Election of a missions coordinator.

18. Election of a Dime-a-Day director.

19. Election of members-at-large to the board of missions.

20. Election of trial committee (if necessary).

21. Election of a church nominating committee.

22. Decision regarding incorporation (if necessary) (see Par. A/855).

23. Miscellaneous business.

24. Approval of minutes.

25. Adjournment.

2. OFFICIAL BOARD

¶ A/402.3.

1. a. The official board shall be composed of the senior pastor and ministry leaders in the church as determined by the society. It is recommended that there shall be no less than seven and no more than twelve members. At least one delegate and one trustee* shall be included. It is also recommended that no member, with the exception of the pastor, shall serve for more than six consecutive years.
- b. Board members shall be representative members of the local church, faithful in worship attendance, involved in ministry, and should also be supportive financially at least to the level of the tithes.
- c. Whenever practicable the board shall meet once a month. Only full members of the local church may have a seat on the official board, except that members of an annual conference who are elected by the local church to any one of the above offices may serve on the official board.
2. a. The pastor shall be chair of the board, except as provided for in Paragraph A/580, Sections 3-4, and when absent a chair shall be elected.
- b. The pastor is a member *ex officio* of all boards and committees.
3. The official board shall look after the spiritual and temporal interests of the pastoral charge.

* Exception: in the United Kingdom, membership of trustees on the official board shall be by annual rotation and shall include no more than two at any one time.

4. The official board shall elect a secretary, an adult member of the Free Methodist Church, who shall also serve as the secretary of the society. The secretary shall keep, in a suitable book provided for that purpose, faithful minutes of the proceedings of the official board and of the society meetings, and shall record all marriages and baptisms.

5. The treasurer of the society shall keep a record of all moneys raised and of the manner in which they are expended. The treasurer shall be responsible for furnishing, in writing, a detailed monthly financial statement, and a full report to the annual society meeting.

To safeguard the treasurer, it is recommended that the official board elect tellers who shall count each offering and provide the necessary documentation for the annual audit. The treasurer shall retain all such forms which shall be available for the audit.

It is also recommended that a financial secretary be elected if the size of the congregation and amount of funds handled make it advisable. Duties of the financial secretary shall be defined by the official board.

Upon the joint request of the pastor and the finance committee, the financial books shall be made available for examination.

6. It is recommended that the official board elect from the members of the church a budget or finance committee of which the pastor and the treasurer shall be members, to prepare for the consideration of the board an estimate of the amount needed for the support of the pastoral staff and for the other expenses of the pastoral charge.

7. The members of the finance committee shall see that each member of the society is solicited for the support of the local work and urged to give regularly (weekly, monthly, or quarterly) according to his means. (See Par. A/804 re raising of funds.)

8. The official board shall provide a permanent book in which the pastor shall enter the following information: a complete and up-to-date account of all baptisms, weddings, and funerals; a list of the names and addresses of all members, with time and method of reception, date of birth and baptism, completion of pastoral instruction classes of each, and time and reason for termination of membership.

9. The official board shall organize itself to provide oversight for the ministries of the church according to need. It shall give attention to providing leadership for evangelism and church growth, world missions, Christian education, and the spiritual health of the congregation.

10. The official board shall provide for a membership care committee consisting of the pastor(s) of the church and up to five additional members of the church who shall be chosen on the basis of demonstrated Christian maturity, and with representation of both women and men.

Where a separate membership care committee is not feasible, these

duties may be assigned to an existing committee which meets the above requirements, such as the pastor's cabinet.

(See Par. A/404.4 for the duties of the membership care committee.)

11. The official board serves as the agency for licensing of local ministerial candidates according to the following guidelines. (See Par. A/520, B/477,477.1.)

- a. Completion of a course of study designed by the Department of Higher Education and the Ministry.
- b. Interview and licensing by the official board.
- c. Appearance before the congregation to answer questions.
- d. Presentation of certificate by pastor.
- e. Reporting of name to conference board of ministerial education and guidance and Department of Higher Education and the Ministry.
- f. Responsible to and guided by official board and pastor/pastor's cabinet.
- g. Renewal of license annually by official board (up to four renewals). (See Par. A/520, Sec. 4.)
- h. Recommendation to conference board of ministerial education and guidance for acceptance as conference ministerial candidate.

12. The official board serves as the agency for licensing of lay ministers. (See Pars. A/600-603.)

- a. Recommendation to candidate by pastor/pastor's cabinet of appropriate curriculum of two courses as recommended by the Department of Christian Education.
- b. Upon completion of two courses, recommendation by pastor/pastor's cabinet to official board that candidate answer questions before congregation.
- c. License granted by official board.
- d. Review annually by pastor's cabinet with renewal granted by official board. Two courses required for seven years, one course per year thereafter.

13. *Robert's Rules of Order* in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure in the sessions of the official board.

¶ **A/402.4.** Suggested order of business.

1. Devotions.
2. Election of a secretary.
3. Calling of the roll.
4. Reading of the minutes of the previous meeting.
5. Election of a committee on social ministry.

6. Election of a church calendar committee. (The pastor's cabinet may serve. See Par. A/404.3, Sec. 2:h.)

7. Evaluation of pastoral leadership and church effectiveness (every three years — see Par. A/403).

8. Inquire:

a. Are there any sick?

b. What is the status of membership?

(1) Have any been received as youth members?

(2) Have any been received as preparatory members?

(3) Are converts and youth members receiving instruction in Christian living and church membership?

(4) Are there any youth members whose terms of training have expired?

(5) Have any been received into adult membership?

(6) Have any been received into associate membership?
(See Par. A/365.)

(7) Have any died?

(8) Have any been otherwise removed?

c. Are there any violating our rules of church membership who will not be reproved?

d. Are there any persons to be recommended as local ministerial candidates?

e. Are there any persons to be recommended to be licensed as conference ministerial candidates? (See Pars. A/520, B/477.1.)

f. Are there any local ministerial candidate's licenses to be renewed?

g. Are there any lay minister's licenses to be granted? to be renewed?

h. When, where, and how should we begin a church planting project?

i. Have any been married or baptized?

j. Report of the board of Christian education.

k. Treasurer's report:

(1) Amount raised as ordered by the conference.

(2) Amount raised for pastoral support.

(3) Amount raised for United Ministries for Christ.

(4) Report of other money received and disbursed.

(5) Balance in the treasury.

l. Are there any claims to be presented?

m. Is there any unfinished business, or are there any committees to report?

n. Is there any new business, or are there any committees to be

- appointed?
- o. Reports of department heads:
 - (1) The president of the Women's Ministries International.
 - (2) The president of the Men's Ministries International.
 - (3) The board of stewards.
 - (4) The board of trustees.
 - p. Are there any vacancies in the board of trustees?
 - q. Is the title to the church property secure?
 - r. Are the legal documents for this pastoral charge deposited for safekeeping; and if so, where? Are the official records in safekeeping?
 - s. Is the church property insured?
 - t. Are the advices and requirements regarding the cultivation of vocal music found in Paragraph A/378 being observed?
 - u. Annually at a fall meeting (October, if possible) the pastor, with the aid of the local board of Christian education, shall report in writing the following information concerning members of the congregation, particularly young people who are in college and other educational institutions at home and away from home, and also those in the armed services.

It is expected that these reports shall include names and current addresses of those away in school and elsewhere, including names of schools being attended if of collegiate level.

The report is expected to be divided according to answers to the following questions:

- (1) What young people of our church are members of the senior class in the local high school?
- (2) What young people are members of the second year in a local junior college?
- (3) What people, younger or older, are now away from home in theological seminaries? Give the name of the seminary in each case.
- (4) What individuals are enrolled in other colleges, universities, or graduate schools, or schools of nursing? Give name of the school in each case.
- (5) What individuals are now in the armed services, and what are their present addresses?
- (6) Has the list of seniors in the local high school or second year students in the local junior college been sent to the admission officer of the area Free Methodist college/university?

- (7) What is being done to extend and maintain the church's ministry to students away from home/church in attendance at college and graduate institutions?
- (8) What is being done to extend and maintain the church's ministry to those individuals in the armed services?
10. Reading the minutes.
11. Adjournment.

3. THE EVALUATION OF MINISTRY EFFECTIVENESS

¶ A/403. 1. Preface. The evaluation of ministry effectiveness is intended to provide input for the pastor and congregation on their effectiveness in ministry. In addition, the information gleaned from the evaluation is valuable to both the conference ministerial appointments committee and board of ministerial education and guidance as they carry out their work.

The board of ministerial education and guidance functions not only to certify pastors for work in the conference but also to identify areas of pastoral ministry which need improvement and make provision for avenues to bring improvement to pass. Information from the evaluations facilitates this work.

The ministerial appointments committee makes its decisions after reflection on information and opinions from the delegate(s), recommendations from the superintendent, a confidential report from the pastor, and the results from the evaluation.

We encourage all who participate in the evaluation to do so with Christian grace, prayer and fasting, as the Lord may lead.

2. The contents of Paragraph A/403, section 1, shall be printed on materials used or read aloud.

3. The Evaluation of Ministry Effectiveness.

- a. A pastoral evaluation will be conducted annually by the superintendent to assist the pastor in setting goals and objectives for his/her ministry. Periodically, the superintendent will review progress with the pastor. The pastor will review the evaluation with the pastor's cabinet and/or official board.
- b. Each church shall undergo an evaluation of its ministry effectiveness every three years with the society participating. The superintendent or designee, with the pastor, will facilitate the evaluation. The results will be communicated to the church, and shared with the board of ministerial education and guidance.

- c. During the local church ministry effectiveness evaluation, opportunity to assess the effectiveness of conference ministries shall be provided.
- d. The evaluation tools will be developed by the board of ministerial education and guidance in consultation with the area bishop.

4. BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

¶ A/404. 1. The local board of Christian education shall be composed of the director of Christian education, director of children's ministries, director of youth ministries, director of adult ministries, Sunday school promoter, and as many assistants as each age-level director may need.

The executive committee shall consist of the director of Christian education, director of children's ministries, director of youth ministries, director of adult ministries, and the Sunday school promoter. They shall all be full members of the Free Methodist Church. The pastor shall be an *ex-officio* member.

Smaller churches may have a board of Christian education of fewer than five members, but shall work toward the basic age-level structure as ministries are needed and persons are available for each position.

2. The board of Christian education shall submit an organizational plan and list of officers needed for the new year to the annual society meeting. (The organizational plan will take into consideration the size of the church and its ministry needs.) The board may submit nominations for the new board of Christian education to the church nominating committee.

3. Upon authorization by the society the newly-elected board of Christian education shall name all staff personnel for: the Sunday school (including officers, departmental superintendents, and teachers); Christian Life Club; young teen and Free Methodist Youth programs; the variety of adult programs such as those emphasizing family life or for senior citizens; and other programs, such as vacation Bible school, junior choir, and children's church. As an alternative, if a society chooses to elect such personnel, the newly-elected board shall present its nominations to the society.

Leaders and teachers in Christian education should be persons who:

- a. have a vital Christian experience;
 - b. are faithful in church attendance and fellowship;
 - c. are diligent in prayer; and,
 - d. are in agreement with the doctrinal position of the Free Methodist Church;
4. The responsibilities of the local board of Christian education

shall include the following:

- a. to provide for administration of all Christian education programs;
- b. to coordinate all Christian education activities;
- c. to promote the growth of the church through Christian education programs and ministries;
- d. to implement denominational curricula for all Christian education endeavors;
- e. to make sure training is provided for Christian education workers, including certification and workers' conferences;
- f. to encourage adherence to denominational doctrine and standards by Christian education workers;
- g. to project, plan, and evaluate total Christian education programs;
- h. to take care that the local church is supplied with library materials; and
- i. to review all Christian education financial programs.

5. BOARD OF MISSIONS

¶ A/404.1. 1. A local board of missions shall be composed of the pastor, missions coordinator, representatives of the Women's Ministries International and Men's Ministries International, local Dime-a-Day director, director of Christian education, directors of youth and children's ministries, with two or more members elected at large where practicable.

2. The local board of missions shall develop a year-round program of missions education and activities in cooperation with the Department of World Missions.

3. The missions coordinator shall serve as chair of the local board of missions unless the board elects its own chairperson.

4. The responsibilities of the local board of missions shall include the following:

- a. alert the church to missions prayer needs through such resources as Missions Hotline and *Free Methodist World Missions People*;
- b. promote the formation of missions prayer cells;
- c. inform the church concerning opportunities for missionary service through VISA and career appointment;
- d. forward to the personnel department of the Department of World Missions the names and addresses of young people in the local church sensing a call to missionary service;
- e. coordinate all church missions activities and programs for the year; and,

- f. utilize projects and other methods for fund-raising.

6. BOARD OF EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH

¶ A/404.2. 1. A board of evangelism and church growth shall be elected by the society to function throughout the year. In smaller churches, the official board may serve as the local board of evangelism.

2. The duties shall be to:

- a. cooperate with the conference board of evangelism and church growth programs;
- b. study established patterns of church growth;
- c. seek practical means with which to apply these principles to the local church;
- d. prepare growth goals and objectives with time lines to be presented to the official board and the society for approval at the beginning of each conference year, and file the same with the conference board of evangelism;
- e. submit the above goals and objectives for a quarterly evaluation by the official board which shall report annually to the society, the conference superintendent, and the conference board of evangelism;
- f. develop strategies to sponsor a church planting project in another part of the city or in an adjacent community. To adopt a church planting project in another area, or share the church facilities to start an ethnic Free Methodist church; and,
- g. motivate the people of the church to implement these principles.

7. PASTOR'S CABINET

¶ A/404.3. 1. Each society shall elect a pastor's cabinet. It shall be composed of not fewer than three nor more than nine lay members, including the delegates to annual conference. The pastor may nominate one-third of the cabinet and shall serve as chair. A lay vice-chair may be chosen to serve in the event of the pastor's absence or to consider congregational complaints when necessary. No meeting shall be held without the pastor's knowledge and consent.

2. The cabinet is to assist the pastor in of making his ministry more effective in the following ways:

- a. serve as a prayer cabinet;
- b. be available for counsel;
- c. keep the congregation informed concerning the nature and function of the pastoral office;
- d. keep the pastor advised concerning conditions within the

- congregation as they affect relations between pastor and people;
- e. serve as a planning committee;
 - f. serve as a personnel committee, offering counsel on staff employment, reviewing compensation, and making recommendations relative to pastoral and staff compensation to the appropriate committee or board;
 - g. assist in selecting suitable supply ministers when the pastor is to be absent, groups for special services, and special speakers, unless otherwise provided for by the official board;
 - h. serve as the church calendar committee;
 - i. serve as the membership care committee when so designated by the official board;
 - j. assist the pastor in counseling and guidance of local ministerial candidates (see Par. A/520, Sec. 1);
 - k. act as consultant to the pastor in recommending appropriate curriculum of two courses (as recommended by Department of Christian Education) to lay minister candidates (see Par. A/600.1(2:b));
 - l. act as consultant to the pastor in recommendation of persons to be licensed as lay ministers upon completion of the two courses (see Par. A/600.1); and,
 - m. review lay ministers annually and recommend renewal to the official board (see Par. A/601, Sec. 3.).

8. MEMBERSHIP CARE COMMITTEE

¶ A/404.4. 1. The local church shall have a membership care committee. It shall consist of the pastor(s) of the church and up to five additional members of the church who shall be chosen on the basis of demonstrated Christian maturity, and with representation of both women and men.

2. When a separate membership care committee is not feasible, these duties may be assigned to an existing committee which meets the above requirements, such as the pastor's cabinet.

3. If cases arise for which the membership care committee can find no disciplinary direction, it shall refer the matter to the conference superintendent who may confer with the area bishop (see Par. A/356, Sec. 3).

4. Duties:

- a. assist the pastor(s) in identifying and recruiting members;
- b. review the membership rolls at least annually;
- c. counsel with members whose conduct and relationship to the

- church may be cause for concern (e.g., the threatened breakup of a marriage — see Par. A/341);
- d. make recommendations to the official board regarding the membership status of those who have been counseled;
 - e. provide continuing ministry to former or inactive members (see Par. A/356, Sec. 4); and,
 - f. perform the duties of discipline prescribed in Paragraph A/740, Section 3-4.

9. BOARD OF STEWARDS

¶A/404.5. 1. Stewards shall be persons of recognized piety who subscribe to the *Book of Discipline*, support their local church, and have the ability to transact temporal business.

2. The number of stewards shall be not fewer than three, and at least two-thirds of the members shall be adult members of the church.

3. The stewards shall be elected by ballot at the regular annual society meeting.

4. They shall have the following privileges and responsibilities:

- a. assisting the society in social ministries by:
 - (1) soliciting help for its needy (and others, within its means);
 - (2) comforting the sick and sorrowing;
 - (3) assisting the aged;
 - (4) initiating the establishment of children's day care centers and schools where practicable;
 - (5) seeking support and encouragement for youth preparing for kingdom service;
 - (6) assisting in the promotion of accredited social institutions as listed in Paragraph B/463, Section 5.
- b. preparing the elements for the Lord's Supper;
- c. working with approved community agencies to minister to human need, keeping in mind always that all of these services must work toward the ultimate objective, salvation through Jesus Christ; and,
- d. performing such other duties as may be assigned by the society.

C. CONFERENCE ADMINISTRATION

1. ANNUAL CONFERENCE

(See John Wesley's admonitions preceding Paragraph A / 440.)

¶ A/405. Annual Conferences.

There shall be the following annual conferences: Arizona, California, Centenary, Central Illinois, Columbia River, East Michigan, Florida, Genesee, Great Plains, Illinois-Wisconsin, Iowa, Keystone, Louisiana, Maryland-Virginia, Minn-I-Kota, New York, North Michigan, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Ozark, Pacific Coast Japanese, Pacific Northwest, Pittsburgh, Rocky Mountain, Southeastern Regional, Southern California, Southern Michigan, Susquehanna, Texas, United Kingdom-Great Britain, United Kingdom-Northern Ireland, Wabash, West Virginia; the following overseas and/or missions related conferences: Brazilian, Burundi Eastern, Burundi Western, Dominican, Goldfields, Haiti Inland, Hong Kong, India, India Central, India South, India Western, Mexican, Mozambique Central, Mozambique Southern, Nikkei, Philippines — Eastern Mindanao, Northern Mindanao, Northern Philippine, Southern Mindanao; Southern KwaZulu-Natal, Taiwan, Zimbabwe; and the following overseas provisional conferences: Chile, Korea, Malawi, Northern KwaZulu-Natal, Northwest Mexico, Paraguay, Southern Africa — Eastern Cape, East-North Transvaal; and others as may be duly organized.

¶ A/406. Annual Conference Membership.

Each annual conference shall be composed of all traveling and retired ministers in full membership, and lay delegates elected by the several pastoral charges, as provided in Paragraph A / 277. Delegates are not members of the annual conference until they are present with their credentials and have been seated. Conference ministerial candidates are without vote except for those who are appointed as pastors in charge of a society. Delegates shall be considered as liaison between the local church and the conference during the interim of conference sessions, their tenure continuing until the next annual election.

¶ A/406.1. Responsibilities of Annual Conference Delegates.

In the Free Methodist connectional system, annual conference delegates have a two-fold responsibility: to represent their society and to act for the good of their conference. They are expected to report significant actions of the conference to the society which elected them. (See Par. A / 402.1, Sec. 4.)

¶ A/407. Annual Conference, Place and Time.

Each annual conference shall appoint the place and, with the concurrence of the bishop, the time of its own sessions. If for any reason a conference cannot be held at the place appointed, the determination of the place shall be left with the superintendent(s) and the secretary of the last conference. The Friday preceding each annual conference should be observed by our people as a day of fasting and prayer.

¶ A/408. Annual Conference, Voting.

The ministerial and lay members composing the annual conference shall deliberate and vote as one body; but at the call of one-fourth of all the members present and voting, the house shall divide and the ministers and lay members vote separately; and it shall require a majority of both branches to constitute a vote of the conference. *Robert's Rules of Order* in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure in the annual conference sessions.

¶ A/408.1. Nominating Committee.

1. Each annual conference shall elect a standing nominating committee of not less than six (6) members, giving consideration to equal representation of ministerial and lay members.

General considerations in the selection of the local church nominating committee shall also apply to the annual conference (see Par. A/402.1,Sec.5). Representation by districts/regions or other appropriate distinctions shall be determined in advance by the conference body.

The nominating committee members may be elected to rotating terms as determined by the conference.

The chair shall be elected by the nominating committee.

2. It shall be the duty of the committee to:

- a. prepare for the annual conference a list of nominations for positions vacated by either resignations or expiration of terms; and,
- b. review board and committee memberships in light of the standing rules of the annual conference.

¶ A/409. Annual Conferences, Officers.

1. In the absence of the bishop and of the elder who may have been appointed, the conference shall elect, by ballot, an elder from its own number to preside. All other conference officers must be members of the church within the bounds of the conference.

2. It shall elect, by ballot if it wishes, a secretary who shall continue in office until a successor is elected with duties as follows:
 - a. to record in a suitable book the proceedings of the conference, excluding anything not actually conference business;
 - b. to keep, in a book to be preserved with the journal, the original or so-called rough minutes as approved by the conference;
 - c. to keep on file the reports adopted by the conference and record in the journal only financial and such other reports as the conference may order;
 - d. to be custodian of the conference records and journal;
 - e. to transcribe from the annual conference records all the decisions of disciplinary law rendered by the president, giving the number of the pages upon which those decisions are recorded, and forward the transcript promptly to the secretary of the General Conference and, if there are no such decisions, to send a statement to that effect to the secretary;
 - f. to send a copy of the annual conference minutes following completion of each annual conference to the office of the Board of Bishops for examination on behalf of the General Conference;
 - g. to report annually to the Department of Higher Education and the Ministry following the annual conference session the names of ministers whose ordination parchments are no longer valid, whether by issuance of certificates of transfer to other denominations, uniting with other denominations without our papers, withdrawal, expulsion, or death, and listing the reason for such invalidation; and
 - h. to keep a proper register containing names, addresses, and dates of declaration of all members of the church within the conference who declare themselves to be conscientious objectors and to make a prompt report of these declarations to the secretary of the General Conference, who shall keep a complete record of them. (See Pars. A/332 and A/445.)
3. It shall elect a treasurer who shall be bonded. In case of a vacancy the superintendent of the conference may appoint a treasurer to act until the next conference session. All funds due the general church treasurer shall be remitted monthly. The general church treasurer shall, immediately after the conference session, notify the conference secretary of any deficit.
4. It shall elect an auditor who shall carefully audit the accounts

of the treasurer and report to each annual session.

5. It shall elect a secretary of stewardship who shall direct attention to tithing by:

- a. setting a date when pastors shall preach on this subject and informing them of it;
- b. arranging for the distribution of literature by the pastors on their charges;
- c. providing cards to be used by each pastor who shall secure pledgers to the tithing system, and tabulate results and forward them to the stewardship secretary to be used as a part of the annual report;
- d. making such other provisions as may be judged best to create interest; and
- e. making a report at the close of each conference year to the general director of stewardship and to the annual conference.

6. The annual conference shall require of its members a financial report of their receipts from the field. This report shall be published in the *Yearbook*.

7. The annual conference shall designate a pension plan agent who will be responsible to oversee the administration of the pension plan at the conference level in harmony with guidelines developed by the general pension board.

8. It shall elect a conference Dime-a-Day director.

9. Each annual conference shall elect a conference claimants executive secretary with duties as follows:

- a. to study all claims and recommend to the annual conference the amount of each claim. In no case, however, shall income from insurance or life savings be considered a reason for reducing any claim in which contributive service constitutes all or part of the service record;
- b. to receive emergency claims in the interim of annual conferences and recommend them directly to the General Board of Conference Claimants. These emergency claims shall be only temporary and must be submitted to the next session of the annual conference for recommendation to the general board; and
- c. to receive all Claimants' Applications; see that they are properly filled out with all necessary information; transmit them to the general executive secretary after they have been properly acted upon; and certify to the general executive secretary annually all the claimants in

the conference.

¶ A/410. Superintendency. (See Par. A/580-583.)

1. Each annual conference shall elect one elder as superintendent, except as otherwise provided according to Paragraph A/581, Section 4. A conference may elect, appoint, or make provision to employ one or more elders to serve as assistant(s) to the superintendent.

The conference may instruct a superintendent to work under the general direction of an advisory committee, provided that there be no infringement of the disciplinary powers of the superintendent.

2. If two or more contiguous conferences so desire, they may request that they be under common direction of an area superintendent. The superintendent shall be nominated by a committee composed of one lay and one ministerial member from each of the conferences involved with the area bishop serving as chair. The nominee must receive a majority vote in each conference involved. Election shall be by ballot.

¶ A/411. Superintendent's Cabinet.

Each annual conference may establish a superintendent's cabinet, to meet at the call of the superintendent.

1. The purpose of the superintendent's cabinet shall be:
 - a. to serve as a forum for the superintendent, pastors, and laity;
 - b. to aid the superintendent in counsel, encouragement, and evaluation; and
 - c. to inform the churches concerning the nature and function of the superintendency.

2. The members of the superintendent's cabinet shall be the superintendent and not more than six members elected by the annual conference, two-thirds of whom may be nominated by the superintendent. The superintendent may chair or name a member to chair the cabinet.

¶ A/412. Administrative Committee.

Each annual conference shall elect a standing administrative committee of not less than four members to act as the executive committee of the conference in the interim between annual conferences to care for routine business and items specifically delegated to it by the conference within the limits of the *Book of Discipline*.

¶ A/413. Board of Christian Education.

1. The conference shall elect a board of Christian education which shall consist of the conference director of Christian education, director of children's ministries, director of youth ministries, director of adult ministries, Sunday school promoter, the sub-directors of each of the three age levels (where elected), conference Bible quiz director, and any necessary additional personnel. The superintendent is an ex officio member of the board and all committees.

2. The conference board of Christian education shall divide itself into three age-level committees. The director of Christian education shall be an ex officio member of each of these committees. The responsibilities of the board of Christian education and of the age-level committees will be outlined in denominational handbooks.

3. The executive committee of the conference board of Christian education shall include the directors of Christian education, children's ministries, youth ministries, adult ministries, the Sunday school promoter, and any others nominated by the conference nominating committee and elected by the annual conference.

4. The assistants to the age-level directors shall be nominated by the conference nominating committee after consultation with the conference board of Christian education. If the annual conference so decides, the executive committee of the conference board of Christian education may appoint these assistants.

5. A full-time conference director of Christian education may be given the privilege to present nominations to the nominating committee for the conference board of Christian education.

6. The previous board of Christian education may submit nominations for the executive committee of the new board through the conference nominating committee.

7. It shall be the duty of each local church to cooperate with the conference-approved program for the support of Christian education ministries.

¶ A/414. Board of Evangelism.

1. Each annual conference is required to organize a conference board of evangelism which shall be authorized to carry on aggressive evangelistic work in the conference.

2. Each annual conference shall elect a member of the Free Methodist Youth and a member of the Men's Ministries International to the conference board of evangelism. The Free Methodist Youth and the Men's Ministries International may nominate.

3. This board shall have power to raise funds and to employ evangelists, crusade teams, and helpers to labor within the conference,

who, with the concurrence of the superintendent(s), shall be authorized to establish new societies, provided it make provision and be responsible for the support of all the laborers it employs.

4. The conference board of evangelism shall:
 - a. develop a strategy for church growth and church planting;
 - b. challenge local churches to sponsor a church planting project;
 - c. identify opportunities for church planting within the conference and develop conference-sponsored church planting projects;
 - d. work with the conference board of Christian education in developing strategies and training for church planting;
 - e. oversee the development and evaluate the progress of church planting projects, fellowships, and affiliated churches;
 - f. provide training and church growth resources at the conference and local levels for individuals and societies seeking to plant new churches;
 - g. recommend potential church planters to the board of ministerial education and guidance and the ministerial appointments committee; and
 - h. cooperate with the Department of Evangelism and Church Growth in presenting the interests and needs of evangelism, church planting, urban, and ethnic ministries.

¶ A/415. Evangelists. (See Par. A/560.)

1. All evangelists shall be recommended by the conference board of evangelism according to the guidelines established by the Commission on Evangelism, and the approval of the conference board of ministerial education and guidance, prior to their appointment by the ministerial appointments committee. They shall be entitled to the rights and privileges of those appointed to pastoral charges and shall be subject to the same rules and regulations, so far as they apply to their circumstances. They shall be subject to the restrictions of Paragraph A/560, Section 3. They shall prepare a prospectus for publicity and use the standard forms for evaluation as prescribed in Paragraph B/481, Section 2:c.

2. Lay ministers, gifted and called of God for special ministries such as music or personal evangelism, may be appointed conference lay evangelists without having satisfied the requirements for ordination, provided that all other requirements in Section 1 of this paragraph

are satisfied. Such evangelists shall receive the assistance normally given conference evangelists by the Department of Evangelism and Church Growth. They shall be commissioned for their ministry in a public ceremony arranged by the board of ministerial education and guidance.

¶ A/416. Board of Ministerial Education and Guidance.

1. Each annual conference shall have a standing board of ministerial education and guidance, composed of the members of the ministerial appointments committee and additional members as determined by the electing body. Such additional members may be elected to rotating three-year terms, and may not serve more than nine consecutive years. (*Ex officio* members are excluded from term limits.)

Total membership of the board shall not exceed twelve nor be less than four members, with due regard to a proper division between laypersons and ministers.

When a new superintendent is elected, the immediate past superintendent shall not serve on the board for the succeeding year.

2. This board shall assist in recruiting personnel and shall be invested with the responsibility of carefully screening candidates for reception into the conference or advancement in conference relation or ordination. The board shall guide and counsel those who are received, that they may be able to meet all the demands of their holy office. For instructions on administration of multiple staff, see Paragraph A/536 and the *Board of Ministerial Education and Guidance Manual*.

3. The annual conference, acting upon the recommendation of the board of ministerial education and guidance, has final responsibility for the approval of all conference ministerial candidates in keeping with the standards outlined in Paragraphs A/530, B/477.2, and B/477.5, and the certification of the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services.

4. This board shall identify potential church planters among current pastoral personnel and new recruits.

5. Each pastor shall present to the board annually a program for continuing education which board shall monitor the program.

6. It shall be the duty of this board through the year to serve as a planning committee and as a counseling body for the superintendent.

7. A superintendent or a board of ministerial education and guidance, planning to recommend that a minister should not receive a pastoral appointment the ensuing year, shall so notify that minister at least sixty days prior to the session of the annual conference. However,

final decision in the case shall rest with the ministerial appointments committee, according to Paragraph A/419, Section 2.

8. A board of ministerial education and guidance may grant a certificate of standing with view to transfer to another conference during the interim between annual conference sessions.

9. This board shall give consideration to the character of and performance of duty by each ministerial member of the conference in light of Paragraph A/428, Section 17, and shall present to the annual conference a statement as to the integrity and Christian discipleship of the ministerial members of the conference. (See Par. A/553 for restrictions regarding divorce of ministers of spouses.)

The board of ministerial education and guidance shall pass the character of local deacons and local elders, reporting such action to the annual conference.

10. The early identification of young people sensing God's call to the ministry shall be a primary responsibility of the board of ministerial education and guidance in cooperation with the local church. Every attempt shall be made to discover such young people before they graduate from high school. Proper records shall be kept of their educational progress, and regular communication shall be maintained.

11. This board shall receive recommendations from a local pastor or the conference superintendent of lay ministers for licensing (and annual renewal) as conference lay ministers for special service within the conference. The board shall screen and interview the applicants (similar to Par. A/600.1, Sec. 3), and grant the licenses. (See Par. A/609.)

12. The board shall provide sabbatical options for pastors in conformity with the denominational sabbatical policy.

¶ A/417. Board of World Missions.

1. The annual conference shall elect a board of world missions to cooperate with the Department of World Missions in presenting the interests and needs of overseas missionary work. The Women's Ministries International, the Men's Ministries International, and the Free Methodist Youth shall elect representatives to the board. In addition the conference may elect an equal number of ministerial and lay members on rotating tenures. The chair shall serve as a liaison to the Department of World Missions. The board shall designate its chair or some other person to serve as conference missions coordinator.

2. Functions of the board may include the following:

a. to coordinate conference-wide missions-related activities,

- including major events and scheduling of missionaries in cooperation with the Department of World Missions;
- b. to encourage churches to achieve excellence in missions programing and promotion by such means as workshops for pastors and lay leaders; and
 - c. to stimulate the participation of churches in missions projects, to recruit individuals for career missionary service and VISA activities, and to increase the financial support of worldwide missionary outreach.

¶ A/418. Committee on Social Issues and Ministries.

1. Each annual conference shall elect a committee on social issues and ministries to deal with the needs and hurts of people which demand that as Christians we be open and sensitive to the unique qualities and social problems of all ages, classes, sexes, and social groups.
2. It shall be the duty of the committee:
 - a. to study and recommend to the annual conference or, in the interim, to the administrative committee, the establishment of conference positions on current social issues;
 - b. to communicate to the local societies and the public the conference positions on social issues and bring about appropriate action; and
 - c. to organize the resources, both human and material, of the conference to assist the local society in meeting the needs and hurts of people.

¶ A/419. Ministerial Appointments Committee.

1. The superintendent and one lay member of the conference to be elected by ballot in open conference without debate or nomination shall, together with the area bishop or appointed deputy, constitute a ministerial appointments committee of which the area bishop or appointed deputy shall be chair and have a vote. An annual conference may, if it so desires, increase the number of members on the ministerial appointments committee by electing an additional elder and an additional lay member. When a new superintendent is elected, the immediate past superintendent may not serve on the ministerial appointments committee for the succeeding year. An annual conference may elect members of the ministerial appointments committee to three-year terms, with provision for rotation and continuity.

The conference superintendent shall be the vice-chair of the ministerial appointments committee.

If for any reason, a member is unable to serve during the conference session, the conference may elect an elder or lay member to serve. No person who is recommended to the annual conference to be received as a conference ministerial candidate, nor a supply, though acting as a delegate, shall be eligible to serve on the ministerial appointments committee.

The committee shall serve until the close of the following annual conference.

2. It shall be the duty of the ministerial appointments committee to appoint ministers to their various fields of labor for an indefinite tenure. The committee shall monitor progress in each church and make changes at each annual conference when deemed necessary.

To assist in the assessment of the work in each church, pastors shall be offered an opportunity to express themselves, and each church shall be given opportunity every three years to participate in a ministry effectiveness evaluation (see Par. A/403, 1, 2, 3) which shall be considered by the ministerial appointments committee but none of which shall be binding. Proposed changes shall be discussed with both pastor and delegates of churches involved.

In the event a change in pastoral leadership becomes necessary between annual conferences, the ministerial appointments committee shall have authority to make such change and any subsequent appointments. Delegates of churches involved shall be consulted, but final authority rests with the ministerial appointments committee.

See Paragraphs A/608 and A/609 for the conditions for appointment of lay ministers and conference lay ministers.

3. The ministerial appointments committee may approve a time during the annual conference other than the conclusion of the annual conference business session to announce the pastoral appointments.

4. The ministerial appointments committee may initiate church planting appointments, either by requesting a local church to sponsor a church planting project or by creating a new church planting project by appointing a church planter in consultation with the conference board of evangelism.

5. A minister may be appointed to a pastoral charge without having charge of it; the administration of it shall then devolve upon the superintendent and the official board.

6. Any minister who refuses to serve a pastoral charge when appointed by the conference or who has not been given a pastoral appointment shall not be appointed to any work by another conference or superintendent without the consent of the ministerial appointments committee of the previous conference.

7. The ministerial appointments committee shall have authority to suspend any conference appointee for cause (see Par. A/703) according to due process (see Par. A/713, Sec. 2). This is in no way to be construed as conflicting with a minister's rights as outlined in Chapter VII. (See Par. A/553 for restrictions regarding divorce of ministers or spouses.)

¶ A/420. Appointments — Left Without Appointment.

An annual conference may, upon the unanimous recommendation of the ministerial appointments committee, leave a minister without appointment. Any minister so left without an appointment two years in succession may be located by vote of the annual conference.

¶ A/421. Appointments — Leave of Absence.

Any ordained minister not regularly in active relationship to the ministry of the Free Methodist Church may be given a leave of absence by the annual conference on the recommendation of the ministerial appointments committee. After two years on leave of absence, a minister who is not restored to an active relationship shall be located to a local Free Methodist church as a local deacon or local elder. One two-year extension of leave of absence may be granted by an annual conference, with further consideration for extenuating circumstances upon recommendation of the ministerial appointments committee. A minister so located to a local church may be restored to the itinerant relationship only by the annual conference that voted the location. The published appointments of ministers on leave of absence shall designate the reason for the leave.

¶ A/422. Appointments — Location.

When a minister is located by an annual conference, the ministerial appointments committee shall fix the place of membership, after consultation with the minister involved and the pastor and official board of the church involved. Ordained persons in good standing shall be listed as local elders or local deacons as the case may be.

¶ A/423. Return to Lay Status.

An ordained minister who leaves special Christian ministry to pursue secular employment shall deposit his/her credentials with the secretary of the annual conference where membership is held. Individuals who wish to again pursue active ministry must make application to and be recommended by the board of ministerial education and guidance where their credentials are held. This does not

pertain to special leaves of absence as authorized by the conference board of ministerial education and guidance.

¶ A/424. Board of Stewardship and Finance.

Each conference shall elect a board of stewardship and finance with not less than five members. Its duties shall include the preparation of the conference budget and the supervision of the performance of that budget. It shall assist the superintendent in stewardship education and the promotion of the United Ministries for Christ throughout the conference. The conference superintendent and treasurer shall be *ex officio* members.

¶ A/425. Conference Year.

The conference year of each annual conference shall close automatically with the adjournment of that conference. The fiscal and statistical year for the local churches, conferences, and the general church shall coincide with the calendar year.

¶ A/426. Limitation of Powers.

An annual conference is not a legislative body. It cannot enact laws, nor can it interpret the *Book of Discipline* by resolutions or reports and bring ministers or laymen to trial for violation of them.

¶ A/427. New Societies on Conference Boundary.

A new society, organized near the boundary line between the conferences and in a conference which has no organized work within forty miles, shall be permitted to decide for itself to which of the two conferences it shall belong.

¶ A/428. Annual Conference, Order of Business.

Each annual conference shall inquire:

1. What are the names of ministers and delegates having a seat in this conference?
2. Who are the ministerial appointments committee?
3. Who are to be admitted as ministerial candidates?
4. Who remain as ministerial candidates?
5. Who are to be admitted into full membership?
6. Who are the deacons?
7. Who are to be elected and ordained elders this year?
8. Who are the missionaries with honorary membership? (See Par. B/499.)
9. Who has located this year?

10. Who are the ministers on leave of absence?
11. Who are the retired ministers?
12. Who has been received by transfer, and from what conferences? (It is the duty of the conference receiving a minister by transfer to send notice of reception to the secretary of the conference from which transferred.)
13. Who has withdrawn from the conference this year?
14. Who has been given a certificate of good standing with a view to transfer to another conference?
15. Has any been permitted to withdraw under charges or complaints?
16. Has any been expelled?
17. Has the board of ministerial education and guidance given due consideration to the character of and performance of each ministerial member of the annual conference? (See Pars. A/501-506. Let the president call attention to these portions of the *Book of Discipline*.)
18. Who has died this year?
19. What is the number of church members? (Gain or loss as reported in the statistical forms refers to total membership.)
20. What is the number of ministerial candidates and ministers in full membership in this conference? Who is returned to lay status?
21. How many church planting projects/fellowships have been started this year? Have any been received? What church planting strategies are in process for the coming year?
22. Has the conference raised or exceeded its assigned share of the United Ministries for Christ budget?
23. Have all the churches raised their assigned shares of the conference budget?
24. Number of Sunday schools? Of officers and teachers? Of scholars? Of members on the cradle roll? Of members in the home department? Of volumes in the library?
25. What has been expended during the year in the societies for Sunday schools? What has been raised in the Sunday schools for foreign missions and other benevolences?
26. How many copies of *Light and Life* are taken?
27. What amounts are recommended for the retired ministers and widows and orphans of ministers?
28. Where are the ministers stationed this year?
29. Where, and when, shall our next conference be held?

2. ANNUAL CONFERENCE BOUNDARIES

a. General Conference of North America

¶ A/433. 1. Genesee (1860). The Genesee Conference shall include that portion of the state of New York lying west of a line beginning at the Irondequoit Bay and running due south to West Bloomfield, New York, thence following the eastern line of Livingston County to Wayland, New York; thence along Route 2 to Savona, New York, thence due south to the Pennsylvania line. All cities or villages on this boundary line shall be in the Genesee Conference, except those on Route 2, which shall remain in the Susquehanna Conference.

2. Illinois-Wisconsin (1966). Illinois (1860); Wisconsin (1875). The Illinois-Wisconsin Conference shall include all that part of the state of Illinois north of a line beginning at Fort Madison, Iowa, running east to the Illinois River, thence down the river to a point due west of Fowler, Indiana, and thence east to the state line. It shall include the state of Wisconsin. It shall also include Davenport, Iowa.

3. Susquehanna (1862). The Susquehanna Conference shall include the counties of Tioga, Sullivan, and Bradford, in the state of Pennsylvania, and all that part of the state of New York east of the Genesee Conference and north of a line beginning at Great Bend, Pennsylvania, and running due north to the Delaware and Hudson railroad, thence east along that railroad to Oneonta, but not including the villages situated immediately upon that portion of the Delaware and Hudson railroad. From Oneonta, north on Route 28 to Poland, but excluding the city of Herkimer; thence on Route 8 to Route 9, then along this highway to Route 73, and then due east on this route to Lake Champlain; from this point north on the New York state line to the Canadian border.

4. Southern Michigan (1865). The Southern Michigan Conference shall include that part of the state of Michigan in the two southern tiers of counties; the part of Eaton County south of a line running east and west five miles north of Charlotte; and the parts of Oakland and Macomb Counties east of Novi Road and south of a line running east and west one mile north of Twelve Mile Road, with the addition of an area inside a line from Thirteen Mile Road and Coolidge Road north to Coolidge Road and Wattles Road, then east to Wattles Road and Crooks Road, then south to Crooks Road and Thirteen Mile Road.

5. Great Plains (1983). Kansas (1871); Nebraska (1890). The Great Plains Conference shall include all of the states of Kansas and Nebraska.

6. Minn-I-Kota (1965). Northern Iowa-Minnesota (1872); Dakota (1883); North Minnesota (1887). The Minn-I-Kota Conference shall include all of the state of Minnesota and that portion of the state of

Iowa not included in the Iowa Conference; the state of North Dakota; that part of the state of Montana lying east of the 110th meridian; and all of the state of South Dakota.

7. New York (1873). The New York Conference shall include the state of New Jersey, Fairfield County, Connecticut and all parts of the state of New York and Pennsylvania not included in Genesee, Pittsburgh, Oil City, Centenary and Susquehanna Conferences.

8. Iowa (1875). The Iowa Conference shall include all of the state of Iowa except Davenport south of a line beginning at Clayton on the Mississippi River running straight west to the Big Sioux River.

9. North Michigan (1876). The North Michigan Conference shall include that portion of the state of Michigan lying north of the Southern Michigan Conference and west of a line running north and south parallel with the eastern boundary of Eaton County, except for the portion of Eaton County bounded on the south and west by Interstate Highway I-96 and on the north by Grand River Avenue, and except the towns of Grayling, Frederick, Gaylord, and Vanderbilt, in Crawford and Otsego Counties. It shall also include the Upper Peninsula and Drummond's Island.

10. Central Illinois (1879). The Central Illinois Conference shall include that portion of the state of Illinois not included in the Illinois-Wisconsin and Wabash Conferences. On the east it shall be bounded by a line running from Shelby County south through Teutopolis, Illinois, and then south to Shawneetown. It shall also include the city of St. Louis, Missouri.

11. Ohio (1879). The Ohio Conference shall include the state of Ohio, except the towns included in the Pittsburgh and Oil City Conferences.

12. Texas (1881). The Texas Conference shall include all of the state of Texas.

13. California (1883). The California Conference shall include all the state of California lying north of San Luis Obispo, Ventura, Los Angeles, and Inyo Counties, and all the state of Nevada lying north of Clark County.

14. Ozark (1966). Ozark (1895) formerly Arkansas and Southern Missouri; Missouri (1883). The Ozark Conference shall include the state of Arkansas and all of the state of Missouri except the city of St. Louis.

15. Pittsburgh (1883). The Pittsburgh Conference shall include all that part of the state of Pennsylvania lying west of the Susquehanna River and bounded on the north by a line running west along the Pennsylvania Turnpike, excluding Carlisle, to Fulton County, thence

along the northern boundary lines of Fulton, Bedford, Cambria, Indiana, and Armstrong Counties, directly west across Butler County to the Lawrence County line, thence south to the northern boundary of Beaver County. It shall also include all of the towns from the Pennsylvania state line to Bridgeport, Ohio, on the west bank of the Ohio River. It shall also include Brooke and Hancock Counties of the state of West Virginia.

16. East Michigan (1884). The East Michigan Conference shall include that part of the state of Michigan lying north of the Southern Michigan Conference, with the exception of an area inside a line from Thirteen Mile Road and Coolidge Road north to Coolidge Road and Wattles Road, then east to Wattles Road and Crooks Road, then south to Crooks Road and Thirteen Mile Road; and east of a line running north and south parallel with the eastern boundary of Eaton County, including the northeast portion of Eaton County bounded on the south and west by Interstate Highway I-96 and on the north by Grand River Avenue. It shall also include the towns of Grayling, Frederick, Gaylord, and Vanderbilt in Crawford and Otsego Counties.

17. Louisiana (1884). The Louisiana Conference shall include the states of Louisiana and Mississippi.

18. Oregon (1885). The Oregon Conference shall include all of the state of Oregon not in the Columbia River Conference, and Clark County, Washington.

19. Wabash (1961). Wabash (1885); North Indiana (1922). The Wabash Conference shall include all of the state of Indiana, and that part of the state of Illinois bounded by a line running west from Fowler, Indiana, to a point six miles west of the Champaign branch of the Illinois Central railroad, thence southwest parallel with that railroad to the south line of Shelby County, and thence along the Springfield branch of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad to Shawneetown.

20. Rocky Mountain (1886). The Rocky Mountain Conference (formerly Colorado) shall include the states of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Wyoming.

21. Southern California (1994). Southern California (1891); Pacific Coast Latin American (1965). The Southern California Conference shall include all the state of California not included in the California Conference, and the state of Hawaii; and all of the work of the Free Methodist church among the peoples of Hispanic descent in California, U.S.A.

22. Columbia River (1896). The Columbia River Conference shall include that part of the state of Washington east of Okanogan, Grant and Benton Counties, and that part of Oregon east of Gillian, Wheeler,

and Crooke Counties and north of Harney and Malheur Counties; it shall also include the state of Idaho and that part of the state of Montana lying west of the 110th meridian.

23. Pacific Northwest (1896). The Pacific Northwest Conference shall include all of the state of Washington (except Clark County) west of the Columbia River and the eastern boundaries of Grant and Okanogan Counties; and the state of Alaska.

24. Southeastern Regional (1995). Kentucky-Tennessee (1896); Atlantic Southeast (1951); Georgia-Florida (1913). The Southeastern Regional Conference shall include the states of Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, North and South Carolina, and Alabama, and the panhandle of the state of Florida from Pensacola east to the Ochlockonee River, west of Tallahassee, Florida.

25. Keystone (1899) formerly Oil City. The Keystone Conference shall include all of northwestern Pennsylvania west of a line described as the western and southern boundaries of Tioga County, the eastern and southeastern boundaries of Lycoming County to the West Branch of the Susquehanna River to, and including, Harrisburg. The southern boundary, beginning at the intersection of the Pennsylvania Turnpike and the Susquehanna River, runs west along the Turnpike including Carlisle, to the Fulton County line, thence along the northern boundaries of Fulton, Bedford, Cambria, Indiana, and Armstrong Counties, directly west across Butler County to the Lawrence County line, thence south to the northern boundary of Beaver County and west to the Ohio line. The western boundary is the Ohio state line north of Beaver County, with the exception of the area around the cities of Conneaut, North Kingsville, and Ashtabula, Ohio.

26. Oklahoma (1899). The Oklahoma Conference shall include all of the state of Oklahoma.

27. Florida (1951). Georgia and Florida (1913). The Florida Conference shall include the state of Florida with the exception of the panhandle west of the Ochlockonee River.

28. Maryland-Virginia (1939). The Maryland-Virginia Conference shall include all of the states of Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware, and the District of Columbia.

29. Centenary (1960). The Centenary Conference shall include that part of the state of New York east of the Susquehanna Conference and north of a line beginning at Oneonta, and thence due east to the state line of Massachusetts. This conference shall also include the states of Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, excluding Fairfield County.

30. Pacific Coast Japanese (1963). The Pacific Coast Japanese

Conference shall include all Free Methodist work among the Japanese people in the United States.

31. United Kingdom-Great Britain (1982). The United Kingdom-Great Britain Conference shall include all of England, Scotland, and Wales.

32. United Kingdom-Northern Ireland (1982). The United Kingdom-Northern Ireland Conference shall include all of Northern Ireland.

33. West Virginia (1987). The West Virginia Conference shall include the state of West Virginia, with the exception of Brooke and Hancock Counties.

34. Arizona (1991). The Arizona Conference shall include all of the state of Arizona, and Clark County, Nevada.

Overseas and/or Missions Related Conferences

50. Dominican (1951). The Dominican Conference shall include all Free Methodist work in the the Dominican Republic.

51. Taiwan (1963). The Taiwan Conference shall include all of the work of the Free Methodist Church work on the island of Taiwan.

52. Mexican (1964). The Mexican Conference shall include all of the work of the Free Methodist Church in Mexico not including Baja California.

53. Zimbabwe (1964). The Zimbabwe Conference shall include all of the work of the Free Methodist Church in Zimbabwe.

54. Brazilian (1966). The Brazilian Conference shall include all of the work of the Free Methodist Church among the Brazilian people and such other language groups as may be desired in Brazil.

55. Nikkei (1966). The Nikkei Conference shall include all of the work of the Free Methodist Church among the Japanese people and such other language groups as may be desired in Brazil.

56. Haiti Inland (1979). The Haiti Inland Conference shall include all of the work of the Free Methodist Church in Haiti.

57. Hong Kong (1985). The Hong Kong Conference shall include all of the work of the Free Methodist Church in Hong Kong.

Provisional General Conferences

60. Burundi (1985). Burundi (1961). Burundi Eastern (1985), Burundi Western (1985). The Provisional General Conference of Burundi shall include all of the work of the Free Methodist Church in Burundi.

61. India (1989). India (1961), Central India (1988), South India (1988), Western India (1988). The Provisional General Conference of India shall include all of the work of the Free Methodist Church in India.

62. Mozambique (1993). Mozambique and South Africa Mines (1964). Central Mozambique (1993), Southern Mozambique (1993). The Provisional General Conference of Mozambique shall include all of the work of the Free Methodist Church in Mozambique, and the Mines District work in South Africa.

63. Philippine (1994). Philippine (1963). Eastern Mindanao (1991), Northern Mindanao (1991), Southern Mindanao (1991), Northern Philippine (1991). The Provisional General Conference of the Philippines shall include all of the work of the Free Methodist Church in the Philippines.

64. Southern Africa (1995). Natal-Transkei (1964) divided into Southern KwaZulu Conference, Northern KwaZulu Natal Provisional Conference, and Eastern Cape Provisional Conference; Transvaal (1984) divided into Goldfields Conference and East-North Transvaal Provisional Conference.

b. Other General Conferences

70. Egypt (1960). Districts: Sohag, Tima, Abouteeg, Asyut, Dayrut, Minyeh, Cairo, Northern. Part of the merger of the Holiness Movement Church with the Free Methodist Church in 1958.

71. Japan (1960). Districts: Chubu, Tobu, Seibu.

72. Rwanda (1985). Rwanda (1965). Rwanda East (1985), Rwanda West (1985).

73. Canada (1990). Canadian Jurisdictional Conference (1974-1990). Canada East (1896), Canada Great Lakes (1896), Canada West (1970), Alberta (1914), Saskatchewan (1914), Canada Pacific (1994).

74. Zaire (1995). Zaire (1974). Zaire Northeast (1985), Zaire Southeast (1985), Zaire High Plateau (1990).

¶ A/434. Any question of boundaries that may arise in the interim between General Conferences shall be referred to the Commission on Administration.

D. PROVISIONAL GENERAL CONFERENCE ADMINISTRATION

¶ A/435. A provisional general conference may be organized from one or more annual conferences by the mutual agreement of the Free Methodist Church of North America and the annual conference(s) involved. Such conference, when organized, may continue as a provisional general conference, subject to periodic review, for a maximum of four years before moving to full general conference

status. The constitution shall be drawn up and submitted for approval to the North American General Conference.

¶ A/436. Suggested organizational outline:

1. There shall be a Provisional General Conference for (country) consisting of the Free Methodist Church in (country).

2. The purpose of the ____ Provisional General Conference shall be:

a. to spread the gospel in ____ in order to build the kingdom of Christ in harmony with Free Methodist polity and doctrine; and

b. to pass to future generations biblical doctrines and practices as interpreted by the Wesleyan tradition.

3. The governing body of the ____ Provisional General Conference shall be composed of the bishop, the legal representative, the delegates to the most recent General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America, eight ministerial and eight lay delegates from each annual conference, and the mission chair *ex officio*.

4. The General Conference of North America shall elect, on a separate ballot, an elder, a ____ citizen, as a bishop from the nominees presented by the ____ annual conferences or the ____ Provisional General Conference.

5. The bishop of the ____ Provisional General Conference shall be a member of the Board of Bishops of the General Conference of North America, and shall report annually to the Board of Administration of the ____ Provisional General Conference or to the ____ Provisional General Conference.

6. The ____ Provisional General Conference shall have powers and duties conferred upon it by the General Conference of North America and as set forth in its constitution, including:

a. to constitute the Free Methodist corporation in ____ which shall hold in trust all real estate belonging to the Free Methodist Church in ____ for the use and benefit of its membership;

b. to have general supervision of all matters pertaining to the functions of the Free Methodist Church in ____;

c. to be responsible for all activities such as: women's classes, Bible schools, development projects, medical work, literature work, requesting and assigning missionaries, inter-denominational and cooperative relationships, legal representation, scholarships, and other ministries as need may arise;

- d. to form a board of administration to carry on the work during the interim between meetings of the _____ Provisional General Conference; and
- e. to establish budgets and raise funds to support the work, particularly the office of the bishop and the process of legal representation.

E. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

1. GENERAL CONFERENCE

“It is desired that all things be considered as in the immediate presence of God; that every person speak freely whatever is in his heart. While we are conversing, let us have an especial care to set God always before us. In the intermediate hours, let us redeem all the time we can for private exercises. Therein let us give ourselves to prayer for one another, and for a blessing on our labor.” — John Wesley, *Large Minutes*.

¶ A/440. 1. The General Conference shall be composed of the bishops and an equal number of ministerial and lay delegates to be elected by the annual conferences, at their last sessions prior to the session of the General Conference, except that conferences held within three months of the General Conference may elect their delegates the year before. For further directions see Paragraphs A/280-283.

2. A delegate to the General Conference is not a member until present with credentials and has been seated.

¶ A/441. Conferences of mission origin may send their delegates to General Conference as provided for in their several constitutions which have been approved by the General Conference.

¶ A/442. The General Conference shall meet every four years at the time and place determined by the General Conference, in accordance with the Constitution, Paragraph A/284, which also prescribes the procedure for calling extra sessions.

The determination of the location for the subsequent General Conference shall be an order of the day to be considered prior to final adjournment of a regular General Conference session, with careful consideration given to the use of Free Methodist facilities.

The Board of Administration shall have the power to change the time and place for the meeting of the General Conference.

The Friday preceding every General Conference shall be observed

by our people as a day of fasting and prayer.

¶ **A/443.** The officers to preside at the sittings of the General Conference, the number of members required for a quorum, and the method of voting are defined in the Constitution, Paragraphs A/285, A/288, and A/289.

¶ **A/444.** 1. Each regular session of the General Conference shall elect by ballot two or more traveling elders as bishops to serve as the pastoral overseers of various areas of the denomination (see Pars. A/436, Sec. 4; A/437, Sec. 4). The Board of Administration shall be authorized to employ suitable personnel in the leadership of the various church ministries, such as outreach, missions, education, publishing, stewardship, and administration.

2. The General Conference shall elect one traveling elder and one layman from each of the General Conference administrative districts, with the exception of the district embracing the conferences of mission origin from which two elders and two laymen shall be elected. These, with the bishops and the secretary of the General Conference, shall constitute the Board of Administration. The elective members of the board, a majority of whom must be members of the General Conference electing them, shall first have been nominated by the delegates from their General Conference administrative districts. In making the nominations the delegates of a district shall vote by ballot. Except in cases in which one annual conference forms an administrative district, the minister and the layman shall not be from the same conference.

¶ **A/445.** The General Conference secretary shall continue in office until a successor is named and shall be custodian of the General Conference records and journals. A record of conscientious objectors shall be kept as reported by the annual conference secretaries (see Pars. A/332; 409, Sec. 2:h; and B/451, Sec. 5).

¶ **A/446.** The General Conference is the only legislative body in the church. It alone has the power to authorize a denominational referendum or survey of opinion. It shall have full power to make rules and regulations for our church, under the limitations and restrictions described in Paragraphs A/225-228. *Robert's Rules of Order* in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure in the General Conference sessions.

¶ A/447. It is the inalienable right of any annual conference, society, or individual member of the Free Methodist Church to submit protests, petitions, or resolutions to the General Conference and to have them fully heard. Such papers must be introduced by a member of the General Conference and be subject to the rules of that body.

¶ A/448. The annual conferences shall be grouped into nineteen General Conference administrative districts, as follows:

- No. 1 — California, Pacific Coast Japanese
- No. 2 — Central Illinois, Oklahoma, Ozark
- No. 3 — East Michigan
- No. 4 — Florida, Southeastern Regional, Louisiana
- No. 5 — Southern California
- No. 6 — Genesee
- No. 7 — Great Plains, Iowa, Minn-I-Kota
- No. 8 — Illinois-Wisconsin, North Michigan
- No. 9 — Centenary, New York, Susquehanna
- No. 10 — Keystone, Ohio
- No. 11 — Columbia River, Oregon
- No. 12 — Pacific Northwest
- No. 13 — Maryland-Virginia, Pittsburgh, West Virginia
- No. 14 — American Indian, Arizona, Rocky Mountain, Texas
- No. 15 — Southern Michigan
- No. 16 — United Kingdom-Great Britain, United Kingdom-Northern Ireland
- No. 17 — Wabash
- No. 18 — Brazilian, Dominican, Haiti Inland, Hong Kong, India, Central India, South India, Western India, Mexican, Nikkei, Philippines: North, Eastern Mindanao, Northern Mindanao, Southern Mindanao; Taiwan
- No. 19 — Burundi Eastern, Burundi Western, Central Mozambique, Southern Mozambique, Goldfields, Southern KwaZulu-Natal, Zimbabwe.

2. BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION

(The detailed organizational structure of the Board of Administration and its commissions can be found in the *Book of Discipline*, Part B, Pars. B/450-499.)

¶ A/449. The Board of Administration shall be elected by the General Conference as outlined in Paragraph A/444, Section 2. It shall have general organizational, promotional, and supervisory powers over all the activities of the church during the interim between General

Conference sessions.

The Board of Administration shall meet immediately at the close of the General Conference and shall organize itself into commissions, and assign its work to commissions, committees, and boards as it shall determine.

The Board of Administration shall have power to employ suitable personnel in the leadership of the various church ministries (Par. A/444, Sec. 1), to elect its officers, to accept resignations and fill vacancies, and to remove for cause any of its members or any denominational executive, subject to the provisions of the *Book of Discipline*. Termination of membership in the Free Methodist Church shall automatically terminate membership on the Board of Administration. No General Conference officer other than the bishops and the secretary shall be a member of the Board of Administration.

CHAPTER V

THE MINISTRY

Preamble

- A. The Ordained Minister
- B. Examination of Local Ministerial Candidates
- C. Ministers and Annual Conferences
- D. Deacons and Elders
- E. Evangelists
- F. Chaplains
- G. Retired Ministers
- H. Superintendents
- I. Bishops

CHAPTER V

THE MINISTRY

A. THE ORDAINED MINISTRY

PURPOSE

¶ A/500. A minister is a person called of God by the Holy Spirit and approved by the church to preach the gospel of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and to lead the church in fulfilling the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

PREAMBLE

¶ A/501. It is biblical for the church to set apart particular persons for special tasks of leadership. These persons bear witness to an inward call of the Holy Spirit. They are examined and set apart by public ordination, including the laying on of hands after the pattern of the early church.

These men and women ordained by the church are characterized by both gifts and graces. Gifts are special endowments of abilities. Graces are special qualities of character. Both have their source in the enabling Holy Spirit. Although the church must discern and cultivate those who have such endowments, ordination is always first and foremost an act of God's calling and anointing.

Free Methodist ministers may carry out their task under appointment as pastors of particular congregations or they may be given other assignments. In either case, they are called to provide Spirit-filled leadership in the church to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. A healthy church, reproducing more and better disciples as well as new churches, will be characterized by vital worship, evangelistic and social action, Christian nurture and fellowship.

Ordained ministers commit themselves to equipping the whole body of believers to these ends. Biblically and historically, they are set apart for the study and proclamation of the Word of God, intercessory prayer, the winning of persons to Christ, the administration of the sacraments, and the defense of the gospel.

Free Methodist ministers under appointment as pastors of churches are called to be leaders of God's people. Leadership requires vision, daring, moving people to action, and living with the turbulence change brings. Pastoral leadership is rooted in a deep love for Christ and His compassion for human need. God's resources are abundantly available for all who embrace this task in courageous and radical obedience.

There are four stages to becoming a fully ordained Free Methodist

minister. (1) The person sensing the call of God and the church to ministry is first licensed as a local ministerial candidate. The call is tested by service in the local church where initial training begins. (2) Step two involves acceptance by the annual conference as a ministerial candidate. During this period the candidate prepares for the third step, (3) full conference membership and ordination as a deacon. (4) Ordination to elder's orders completes the ordination process.

A person called of God enters a vocation which through biblical tradition and Methodist heritage carries significant responsibilities. Dealing with the souls of people and leading the church in making disciples requires the following qualities and skills:

1. SPIRITUAL QUALIFICATIONS

¶ A/502.

1. Is committed to Jesus Christ as Lord.
2. Evidences integrity through holiness of heart and life.
3. Displays the fruit of the Holy Spirit.
4. Receives and gives forgiveness.
5. Possesses healthy self-esteem and maintains a positive attitude.
6. Demonstrates faith, creativity and initiative.
7. Respects people regardless of race, gender or economic status.
8. Models a teachable spirit.

2. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

¶ A/503.

1. Is called to ministry.
2. Practices spiritual disciplines.
3. Is gifted for leadership.
4. Models a balanced life and a healthy self-discipline.
5. Maintains freedom from addictions.
6. Engages in life-long learning.
7. Submits biblically to authority.
8. Seeks professional and personal accountability.
9. Has the support of his/her spouse, if married.

3. PASTORAL CARE

¶ A/504.

1. Loves his/her family as Christ loves the church.
2. Responds appropriately and warmly to people.

3. Embodies a passion for making disciples.
4. Ensures appropriate care for the people of God.
5. Builds up people and inspires hope.
6. Demonstrates interpersonal skills.
7. Resolves conflict effectively.

4. COMMUNICATION

¶ A/505.

1. Handles the Word of God correctly.
2. Calls people to faith in Christ.
3. Understands the culture, community and congregation.
4. Utilizes effective means of communication.
5. Affirms and articulates Wesleyan theology.
6. Prepares thoroughly for public presentation.
7. Persuades people to make godly, life-changing decisions.
8. Challenges in love the status quo.
9. Facilitates an environment of holy worship.

5. LEADERSHIP

¶ A/506.

1. Leads out of personal and corporate prayer.
2. Articulates a vision from God.
3. Sets strategic goals to accomplish the vision.
4. Instills congregational ownership of vision and goals.
5. Mobilizes resources to fulfill the vision.
6. Practices sound principles in accomplishing change.
7. Identifies, attracts and equips leaders.
8. Fosters a positive atmosphere.
9. Participates in the denomination's mission.
10. Promotes involvement in world evangelization.

¶ A/510. These categories and lists of qualities for ministers are intended to assist the entire church in its work for God. Ministers should examine themselves in light of these; conference leaders should publicly review these on an annual basis; boards of ministerial education and guidance should employ these qualities and skills while interviewing, helping and correcting ministers; and conferences should consider them when designing evaluation and reporting instruments for pastors.

¶ A/516. Adequate arrangements shall be made for services to be held during the absence of the pastor at the time of annual conference and/or camp meeting. Local ministerial candidates or lay ministers

should be employed for such services if possible.

B. EXAMINATION OF LOCAL MINISTERIAL CANDIDATES

¶ **A/520.** 1. A local ministerial candidate is a member of the Free Methodist Church who is seriously considering a call to full-time Christian ministry. Before being granted a license the local ministerial candidate shall have been a member of the church long enough to have given evidence of possessing those qualities and gifts normally expected of a Christian minister. Spirituality and good conduct and attitudes are the qualities desired. A local ministerial candidate shall be amenable to instruction, supervision, and related discipline to assure growth in grace, knowledge, and usefulness to the church. (See also Pars. A/402.3, Sec. 12, A/404.3, Sec. 2;j, B/477, and B/477.1.)

2. Licensing as a local ministerial candidate at the local level is contingent upon:

- a. completion of a course of study designed by the Department of Higher Education and the Ministry;
- b. interview with and licensing by the church official board upon satisfactory answers to the following questions:
 - (1) When and how did you come to know Christ as Savior and Lord?
 - (2) What is your understanding of the doctrine of entire sanctification?
 - (3) Have you experienced the fullness of the Holy Spirit in your life?
 - (4) Are you open to the call of God to full-time ministry?
 - (5) What preparations and plans are you making in order to follow God's will for your life?
 - (6) In what ways do you plan to witness and minister as a local ministerial candidate?
- c. appearance before the local congregation and giving satisfactory answers to the following questions:
 - (1) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and do you offer yourself in service to Him as a local ministerial candidate in the ____ Free Methodist Church?
Answer: I do.
 - (2) Recognizing that being a local ministerial candidate in this congregation is an important step in confirming the

call of God on your life, do you pledge to diligently seek the Lord's will for your life through prayer and study?

Answer: I do.

- (3) Will you seek and accept the guidance of your pastor and the official board in order to fulfill these goals?

Answer: I will.

(The pastor will present a certificate to the local ministerial candidate.)

- d. The names of all local ministerial candidates shall be reported to the annual conference board of ministerial education and guidance as well as the Department of Higher Education and the Ministry.

3. Upon being licensed, local ministerial candidates shall maintain their membership in a local church.

4. The local ministerial candidate's license is subject to annual review and renewal by the official board. The local ministerial candidate who is not in college or seminary will follow the course of study for lay ministers provided for in Paragraph A/601. After four renewals, if the local ministerial candidate has not become a conference ministerial candidate or is not in college or seminary with that objective in mind, the license will be discontinued. The person shall then be advised to serve in another relationship, e.g., as a licensed lay minister. The official board recommends to the conference board of ministerial education and guidance that the candidate be accepted as a conference ministerial candidate.

¶ A/521. A local ministerial candidate appointed as a supply shall hold membership in the church served.

¶ A/522. A local ministerial candidate appointed by a ministerial appointments committee to have charge of a society may solemnize marriages in that place if civil law permits. Such local ministerial candidates also have the right to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

C. MINISTERS AND ANNUAL CONFERENCES

1. RECEPTION AS CONFERENCE MINISTERIAL CANDIDATE

¶ A/530. 1. Qualifications for reception as a conference ministerial candidate in an annual conference:

- a. must be a licensed local ministerial candidate in good standing;
- b. must be recommended by the board of ministerial education

and guidance of the receiving conference after satisfactory interview in accordance with Paragraph A/530, section 3 (see B/477.2 (6));

- c. must have met preliminary educational requirements as outlined in Paragraph B/477.2 and have filed with the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services a transcript of all post-secondary credits earned and also a Personal Data Sheet properly completed.

2. No candidate who has been involved in a divorce, annulment or dissolution of marriage shall be admitted to the conference as a conference ministerial candidate or in full membership until approved by the Board of Bishops. This shall also apply to a candidate whose spouse has been thus divorced. Divorce prior to conversion shall not in itself bar a candidate from consideration for conference membership.

3. The board of ministerial education and guidance shall examine persons for the relationship of conference ministerial candidate by considering the following:

- a. Is the candidate holy and loving in all personal relationships?
- b. Has the candidate gifts as well as graces for the ministry?
- c. Does the candidate have good judgment, adequate discernment of the things of God, and a proper understanding of salvation by faith?
- d. Is the candidate able to speak effectively?
- e. Does the candidate present the gospel with doctrinal integrity?
- f. Are people convinced of sin and converted to God by the candidate's preaching and witness?

4. A conference ministerial candidate shall be allowed a maximum of four years to complete the course of study required for admission into the conference in full membership (see Par. B/477.3). If the course of study is not completed in that time, status as a conference ministerial candidate may be continued only upon recommendation of the board of ministerial education and guidance.

5. At an appropriate time conference ministerial candidate(s) shall be called before the annual conference, or the administrative committee if so authorized by the annual conference, and the chair shall say:

The leaders and members of this annual conference, having observed your Christian life and conduct, feel you are endowed with the gifts of ministerial leadership. The board of ministerial education and guidance has carefully inquired into your qualifications and has presented you as a candidate for membership. We offer our words of encouragement and congratulations. We know you take seriously this first step on the road to ordination. We expect you to give yourself diligently in prayer and

study in preparation for effective ministry. That you may fix your eyes more clearly upon your goal we ask you the following questions:

- a. Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and offer yourself in service to Him as a conference ministerial candidate in the _____ Annual Conference of the Free Methodist Church?

Answer: I do.

- b. Recognizing that being a conference ministerial candidate in this annual conference is an important step toward full membership and ordination, do you pledge to equip yourself spiritually, morally, and intellectually for the Christian ministry?

Answer: I do.

- c. Will you seek and accept the guidance of your superintendent and the board of ministerial education and guidance to fulfill these goals?

Answer: I will.

The president of the conference shall present a certificate to the newly received conference ministerial candidate(s).

2. RECEPTION INTO FULL MEMBERSHIP

¶ A/531. 1. A minister may be received into full membership and be reported as having a seat in the conference after having been employed in pastoral work two successive years subsequent to reception as a conference ministerial candidate and after satisfactorily completing the required course of study (Par. B/477.3) and giving satisfactory answers to the following questions:

- a. Have you faith in Christ?
- b. Have you present assurance that your sins are forgiven?
- c. Do you believe that purity of heart and life and empowerment for service, through the fullness of the Spirit, is a privilege and responsibility to be experienced by every Christian?
- d. Do you now possess that cleansing of heart and empowerment for service which accompany the fullness of the Holy Spirit?
(If the candidate should answer "no," then ask:

Will you through study, counsel, and prayer seek this experience until you obtain it?

Alternate: Will you make this your purpose?)

- e. Are you resolved to devote yourself to God and the work to which He calls you?
- f. Do you partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper when it is offered?

- g. Since you have studied our *Book of Discipline*, will you abide by its instructions?
- h. Will you endeavor to effectively communicate the message God lays upon your heart?
- i. Will you see that the children and youth are properly instructed and cared for?
- j. Will you visit, ministering to those within and without the church?
- k. Will you recommend fasting and prayer, both by teaching and example?
- l. Will you promote the Free Methodist Church and its ministries in building the kingdom of God?

2. For restrictions upon the admission of divorced persons, see Section 2 of the preceding paragraph.

3. ORDINATION CREDENTIALS

¶ A/532. 1. Ministers, whether local or itinerant, whose ordinations are recognized by an annual conference, shall be entitled to credentials from the president of the conference, certifying their ordination. Duplicate copies of credentials for ministers received after June 10, 1969, shall be remitted by the president of the conference for retention and permanent filing by the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services.

2. Ordained ministers in good standing who unite with another church or are granted permission to withdraw from the Free Methodist Church, shall deposit their credentials with the secretary of the conference and receive a receipt for them. If the credentials are not deposited with the secretary of the annual conference from which the minister has withdrawn, the credentials shall be declared null and void by action of the annual conference.

3. Ministers who are expelled from the church or who are allowed to withdraw under charges, must surrender their credentials. If they refuse or neglect to deposit them with the secretary of the conference from which separated, the conference, by official action, shall declare them null and void.

4. In the event of the loss of ordination credentials, a certified duplicate copy shall be made available through the Board of Bishops office.

4. TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

¶ A/533. 1. Only the credentials of deacons and elders may be transferred from one conference to another. Transfer shall be by means of a certificate of standing from the board of ministerial education and guidance or the annual conference. This certificate is valid until the en-

suing annual conference to which the certificate is given. The certificates of conference ministerial candidates are not transferable.

2. Only an annual conference or its board of ministerial education and guidance may give a certificate of standing to a minister intending to join another denomination. Membership in the conference and the church terminates upon the giving of such a certificate.

3. A minister who unites with another denomination without having requested or received from our church proper credentials of withdrawal may, upon satisfactory evidence of that fact, be declared withdrawn by a majority vote of the conference.

4. A minister who is serving a conference and who plans employment elsewhere the succeeding year shall notify the superintendent prior to the sixty-day period immediately preceding the session of the annual conference, or, failing to give such notice prior to the specified date, shall apply to the board of ministerial education and guidance for permission to withdraw from the service of the conference at the close of the current conference year.

5. RECEPTION FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

¶ A/534. 1. Ministers from other evangelical churches who desire to unite with the Free Methodist Church may be received according to our procedures, provided that they:

- a. satisfy an annual conference of holding ministerial orders;
- b. give satisfactory answers to the questions which we propose to:
 - (1) lay persons for membership;
 - (2) ministers for admission to annual conference membership;
- c. indicate agreement with our doctrine, discipline, government, and usages;
- d. submit full academic credentials to the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services;
- e. complete courses in Free Methodist History and Polity and in Arminian-Wesleyan theology.
- f. be certified by the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services, and by the board of ministerial education and guidance; and
- g. give evidence of appropriate gifts, graces, and usefulness.

2. In determining the level of ordination to be recognized, equivalency is of most importance. No person may attain ordination status more easily by transfer from another denomination than through following the requirements of the *Book of Discipline* for all Free Methodist ministers.

The candidates must qualify in full, both academically and in itinerant service.

3. Candidates recognized as deacons or elders shall be given an appropriate certificate in lieu of ordination credentials.

4. We do not recognize the credentials of ministers from other denominations if they have remarried and have a divorced spouse living, or if their spouse has a divorced spouse living, unless at the request of the board of ministerial education and guidance, the Board of Bishops has reviewed and approved admission into the conference.

6. TERMINATION OF CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP

¶ A/535. Conference membership.

1. Conference membership ceases when:

- a. a conference honors the request of a minister to return to lay membership status in a local church and receives the minister's credentials;
- b. a minister voluntarily withdraws from the conference and denomination, having surrendered credentials (Par. A/713, Sec. 3d);
- c. a conference allows an accused minister to surrender credentials and return to lay membership in a local church (Par. A/713, Sec. 3c);
- d. a conference allows an accused minister to surrender credentials and withdraw from the conference and denomination under charges or complaints (Par. A/713, Sec. 3e);
- e. a minister joins another denomination;
- f. a minister is expelled.

2. Conference relationship changes when a minister is located, either voluntarily or by unilateral action of the conference. In such instances their membership and voting rights are transferred to the church where they are located while they remain accountable to the conference for their doctrinal integrity and character. (See Pars. A/421-422.)

3. Ministers who leave the church after complaints have been lodged against them and who regain membership by any means, shall not be allowed to exercise any of the functions of the ministerial office until they have fulfilled the requirements for restoration according to Paragraph A/722.

7. SELECTION, APPOINTMENT, AND CONTINUANCE OF PASTORAL STAFF ASSISTANTS

¶ A/536. The following guidelines apply to part-time or full-time paid local church pastoral staff, ordained or lay, such as associate/assistant pastors, ministers of visitation and outreach, ministers/directors of music, ministers/directors of Christian education, and ministers/directors of youth. These provisions do not apply to short-term appointments of less than four months or to unpaid positions.

1. Selection/Appointment.

When a local church determines that additional pastoral staff is needed, the senior pastor shall consult the conference superintendent before any local action is taken. The superintendent shall represent the board of ministerial education and guidance and the ministerial appointments committee in the initial stages of selecting a suitable person for the proposed position.

The process of selecting a staff member shall involve the senior pastor, the local church, the board of ministerial education and guidance, and the ministerial appointments committee.

- a. The senior pastor shall have the privilege of nominating pastoral staff. They shall be in harmony with the doctrine of the church, agreeable with the pastor's approach to ministry, and willing to work under leadership.
- b. The local church shall select a personnel committee which may be the pastor's cabinet. They, with the pastor, shall establish a job description which delineates the responsibilities of the staff member. They shall screen the candidate using conference applications and reference forms, recommend salary and benefits, and present their report to the local church. If the local church accepts a recommendation of the pastor and personnel committee, it shall then forward the recommendation to the board of ministerial education and guidance for approval.
- c. The board of ministerial education and guidance shall review the application and recommendation from the local church.
- d. If the board of ministerial education and guidance approves the recommendation and the prospective staff member is (or anticipates being) in conference relationship, the recommendation shall be referred to the ministerial appointments committee, which shall have final jurisdiction regarding appointment.

2. Supervision.

The pastoral staff assistant shall work under the supervision of the senior pastor, in accordance with the job description. The pastor and assistant(s) shall meet regularly (preferably weekly) for prayer and planning. They shall meet at least once yearly with the personnel committee

to review the relationship of the assistant to the senior pastor and to the church.

In case of a problem between the pastor and the assistant, the following procedure is recommended:

- a. The pastor and the assistant shall first seek to resolve the problem themselves.
- b. If they cannot resolve the problem, the matter shall be referred to the personnel committee for counsel and assistance.
- c. If, after a reasonable period of time, the problem is still unresolved, the pastor or the assistant shall request a formal hearing with the personnel committee. The committee shall listen to both the pastor and the assistant and make recommendations for resolution.
- d. If this procedure fails at the local church level, the pastor or the assistant or the personnel committee shall consult the conference superintendent who may convene the board of ministerial education and guidance or the ministerial appointments committee to take whatever steps are necessary to solve the problem.

3. Tenure.

Appointment of pastoral staff assistants shall be on a yearly basis, ending with the annual conference. An assistant who desires a change shall notify the senior pastor who shall notify the personnel committee.

The assistant shall also notify the conference superintendent and, if in conference relationship, the ministerial appointments committee.

If for whatever reason the senior pastor finds it impossible to work effectively with the assistant, the conference superintendent shall be notified. The senior pastor shall then communicate this information to the assistant, the personnel committee of the church and, if the assistant is in conference relationship, the ministerial appointments committee. The personnel committee or the ministerial appointments committee, as appropriate, may then take action. This shall not occur prior to the annual conference without due cause and process.

If the ministerial appointments committee wishes to appoint the assistant (when he is in conference relationship) to another church, the conference superintendent shall first consult the senior pastor, then the assistant, the delegate(s) and the personnel committee of the church where the assistant serves.

If the senior pastor is to be moved at the time of the annual conference, the incoming pastor shall be given the privilege of deciding whether to retain the existing assistant(s) or to select a new assistant(s). When such a move is to take place, the ministerial appointments committee

shall communicate this information to the assistant and the personnel committee of the church.

D. DEACONS AND ELDERS

¶ A/550. Traveling Deacons.

1. A minister who has been employed in the regular itinerant work for two successive years after reception as a conference ministerial candidate and who has satisfactorily completed the course of study (see Par. B/477.3) may be constituted a traveling deacon by a majority vote of the annual conference and the laying on of hands of the president. On mission fields, the conference shall have authority to elect to the deacon's office sooner if it is judged expedient.

2. The deacon has the authority to baptize, to officiate in marriage ceremonies, to administer the Lord's Supper, and, when appointed to a charge, to perform all the other responsibilities of a traveling minister.

¶ A/551. Traveling Elders.

1. A traveling deacon shall exercise that office two years before being eligible to the office of elder, except in the case of missions, when the conference shall have authority to elect to the elder's office sooner if it is judged expedient. A traveling deacon who has satisfactorily completed the course of study for traveling ministers (see Par. B/477.4) shall be constituted a traveling elder by a majority vote of the conference and by the laying on of the hands of the president and of some of the elders present.

2. In time of war the Board of Bishops shall have authority to elect to elder's orders an ordained deacon who has completed only a part of the two-year time requirement of Paragraph B/477.4, if approved as a candidate for the chaplaincy in the armed services of the United States and has been recommended by the annual conference.

3. Election to elder's orders constitutes the acknowledgement of the annual conference that the person so elected has met all the biblical (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1) and ecclesiastical requirements to serve as an overseer in the church. Only an ordained elder may serve as a ministerial delegate to General Conference, a conference superintendent, or a bishop.

The elder shall administer baptism and the Lord's Supper, solemnize marriages, and lead in divine worship. When appointed to a charge, an elder shall perform the responsibilities of a traveling minister.

¶ A/553. A ministerial member of a conference who divorces or is

divorced by the spouse may not remarry while the former spouse lives until the Board of Bishops reviews the case and determines that the minister has scriptural grounds for remarriage. A minister who marries contrary to these guidelines shall not be reappointed by the annual conference. This provision shall apply to a minister whose spouse has been divorced from a mate who still lives.

No person may be appointed to serve as a supply pastor who does not meet the qualifications of a minister outlined in Paragraphs A/530, Section 2, and A/553.

¶ A/554. 1. In the case of ethnic ministries, where circumstances warrant, upon recommendation of the board of ministerial education and guidance, or, in the case of extension districts, the Department of Evangelism and Church Growth, and upon approval of the area bishop, candidates may be ordained having earned less than the normally required itinerant credits.

2. An ordained deacon may be allowed to serve as acting superintendent or as assistant to the conference superintendent for ethnic districts until such time as a qualified elder is available for the position.

E. EVANGELISTS

¶ A/560. Evangelists are a class called of God to promote revivals and to spread the gospel of Christ abroad in the land, but not necessarily called to pastoral charges or to government in the church.

1. General evangelists devoting full time to their ministry are approved by the Commission on Evangelism. Conference evangelists are those limited by circumstances to a part-time ministry.

2. All evangelists are amenable to the annual conference of which they are a member.

3. No evangelist shall appoint or hold meetings where they will interfere with the regular work of any society, without the consent of the pastor and the superintendent. (See Pars. A/415 and B/481, Sec. 2:c.)

F. CHAPLAINS

¶ A/565. The Free Methodist Church of North America provides ministry to persons in special situations beyond the local church, such as in the military, prisons, institutions, and law enforcement agencies, through ordained ministers who are chaplains.

¶ A/566. Ecclesiastical chaplain endorsement procedures and guidelines of the Free Methodist Church of North America are established by its Commission on Christian Education and approved by the Board of Administration. Endorsement procedures are printed in a *Chaplain Guidelines Manual*.

¶ A/567. The Free Methodist Church of North America hereby recognizes the Association of Chaplains, whose name is The Free Methodist Chaplains Association of North America, together with its constitution and duly elected officers.

G. RETIRED MINISTERS

¶ A/570. Ministers may be retired because of failing health, or upon reaching age sixty-five; otherwise they shall be retired at the time of the annual conference following their seventieth birthday. The question of disability shall be determined by the annual conference, on the recommendation of the ministerial appointments committee.

H. SUPERINTENDENTS

¶ A/580. It shall be the duty of conference superintendents:

1. To look after the spiritual and temporal interests of the churches within their assigned areas; to take charge of societies without pastors; and to have general oversight of the work in their areas.
2. To see that the permanent record book of each society is kept up-to-date and that all other parts of the *Book of Discipline* are enforced.
3. To visit each church as they deem to be in the best interest of the work. They may hold an official board, a society, or an annual meeting in connection with the visits.
4. To visit a pastoral charge when requested to do so by the official board in an emergency, with power to call an official board, a society, or an annual meeting and preside over it. The requesting pastoral charge shall pay the traveling expenses.
5. To convene and preside over area conventions, workshops, and rallies in cooperation with the interests and needs of the varied organizations of the conference as is deemed necessary and advisable by the conference board of administration.
6. To labor as an evangelist in the assigned area when directed to do so by the annual conference.
7. To promote and oversee the development of specific strategies

and to mobilize personnel and financial resources for church planting.

8. To maintain close contact with the conference ministers for the purpose of encouragement and counsel by meeting periodically with them, being a pastor to pastors. The superintendent may assign a mutually acceptable experienced pastor as mentor to each senior pastor with less than four years pastoral experience.

9. To recommend appointment, reception, and change of ministers in the assigned area to the ministerial appointments committee in the interim between the annual reading of the appointments.

10. To suspend a conference appointee according to Paragraph A/713, Sections 2, 3.

11. To see that deeds of lands upon which it is proposed to build churches or parsonages are properly made out and recorded, or that good and sufficient bonds or contracts are given before the buildings are begun.

12. To divide pastoral charges in the interval of the annual conferences, if in their judgment the interests of the work require it and the pastor and official board consent. They may not appoint a pastor to serve two pastoral charges at once, but may unite an unsupplied one with another with the consent of the official board of the former.

13. To give the bishop all the necessary information of the state of the conference and cooperate in setting goals and framing plans.

14. To be the liaison between the pastor and the general church.

15. To notify the superintendent of another conference before giving serious consideration to the employment of a minister from that conference, and, when possible, to observe the same sixty-day notification rule that applies to ministers in Paragraph A/533, Section 4.

¶ A/581. 1. Superintendents must be elected from among the ordained elders of the denomination upon due nominating process, viz. the annual conference shall designate the board of ministerial education and guidance or a special committee of not less than six plus the area bishop as chair to nominate the superintendent. The incumbent superintendent shall not serve on the committee.

Should the nominating process fail, the superintendent may, by decision of the conference, be elected in open conference without debate or petition.

In overseas conferences the special committee may elect its own chair or the conference may elect a superintendent by open ballot without debate or petition.

2. Superintendents shall be elected by a majority vote for three-year terms, except for special arrangements approved by the area bishop for

a shorter term.

3. The area bishop shall assist the annual conference in determining the qualifications desired in a superintendent. A prospective superintendent shall meet the following criteria:

- a. must have demonstrated productive leadership within the past five years of ministry;
- b. must have a favorable result from a job related professional evaluation;
- c. must articulate a vision for the conference for review and approval by the area bishop and the superintendency nominating committee;
- d. must commit to spending a total of four to ten weeks in leadership training programs on a sabbatical accountability model during the first two years in a superintendency, as approved by the Board of Bishops and the conference administrative committee;
- e. must commit to attend and participate in training events provided by the church for superintendents.

4. Full conferences in the United States are expected to demonstrate fiscal viability by providing a workable budget, including a base remuneration for the superintendent which is at least equivalent to the level of a general departmental executive.

- a. Where such is not attainable, the area bishop shall assist the conference administrative committee in preparing a leadership plan which shall be presented to the Board of Bishops and upon their approval implemented.
- b. A conference may propose to have a stationed superintendent and/or stationed assistant(s) to the superintendent, in which event the ministerial appointments committee will nominate. Such provision shall not countervene the provisions of Section 4(a) above.

5. When a superintendent is elected and accepts office in another conference, the superintendent's membership shall be transferred to that conference.

6. Recall shall be by a two-thirds ballot vote by any succeeding annual conference.

7. If a vacancy should occur in the office of the superintendent between conferences, the area bishop shall call an adjourned sitting of the annual conference, authorizing the conference secretary to notify the members of the conference, the delegates, or the reserve delegates, of the time and place of such sitting at least ten days prior to the sitting, for the purpose of filling the vacancy and for any other items of business.

¶ A/583. The superintendent shall be supported by the conference to which elected with each pastoral charge contributing its proportion as agreed upon by the annual conference. A stationed superintendent shall be supported by the pastoral charge to which appointed. The conference shall assist when necessary. A conference shall provide for the superintendent's office and travel expenses, whether stationed or traveling.

I. BISHOPS

¶ A/590. 1. The General Conference shall elect by ballot two or more traveling elders as bishops to serve as the pastoral overseers of various areas of the denomination who shall constitute the Board of Bishops. They shall remain in office for the years of the interim between General Conferences and, unless the General Conference decides upon a lesser number of bishops, until others shall be elected in their places. (See also Par. A/436, Sec. 4.)

2. It shall be the duty of the Board of Bishops:
 - a. to organize with a chair and a secretary;
 - b. to meet at least four times a year;
 - c. to exchange experiences and to counsel and formulate plans for the work of the church;
 - d. to group the conferences, except the full conferences of mission origin, into areas, equal in number to the number of bishops;
 - e. to assign themselves to the several areas, including the British Isles, to give consideration to making such assignments for the period of the interim between the General Conferences, and to arrange the conference schedules so that, as far as practicable, no substitute other than a bishop will preside at any one conference for two successive years;
 - f. to administer the full conferences of mission origin of the North America General Conference. The bishop of the area, in consultation with the conferences and the area directors of world missions, shall designate the presiding officer for the conference; and
 - g. to give concerted leadership in the articulation of policy, the planning of strategy, the ordering of priorities, and the evaluation of programs of the general ministries of the church through the Board of Administration and all of its commissions.

¶ A/591. It shall be the duty of the bishops:

1. To visit each conference in their respective areas during the year, and, as far as possible, call the pastors and conference leaders together to counsel and advise them in the promotion of the spiritual and temporal interests of the church in accordance with the plan of the Board of Bishops.

2. To form, and be chairmen of, area cabinets which may meet annually. The cabinet shall be composed of the superintendent and one layperson from each conference, to be elected by the annual conference. Each conference shall care for the travel expenses of its respective members.

In the case of a conference of less than six hundred members, or of a conference with membership falling below ten ministers in full membership and/or six hundred members, or any other conference showing continuous loss, the area cabinet shall have authority to initiate and recommend corrective measures to the general Board of Administration and those conferences affected.

3. To travel throughout the church at large. To oversee the spiritual and temporal interests of the church, and to labor to promote its purity, peace, and prosperity. The bishops are requested to reside in the area where they serve.

4. To encourage the establishment of new societies.

5. To assist superintendents in personal and professional development through periodic training, giving special training for newly elected superintendents.

6. To suspend conference appointees according to Paragraph A/713, Sections 2, 3.

7. To serve as chairmen of the ministerial appointments committees of their assigned areas (see Par. A/419).

8. To transfer a minister from one conference to another with the consent of the minister and of the conference to which transferred; provided, that no minister shall be transferred to another conference without a certificate of good standing and general acceptability, given by the board of ministerial education and guidance or the annual conference.

9. To cite a conference appointee to show cause according to Paragraphs A/703 and A/720.

10. a. To assist the area fellowships in the development of national leadership and in achieving the level indicated in the disciplinary standards for new general conferences.

b. To form new conferences in the interim between general conferences, as the needs of the work demand, subject to the approval of the General Conference; provided that no new conference shall be formed without the consent of the confer-

ences whose territory is affected, nor without the consent of two-thirds of the members of the Commission on Administration; and that no new conference shall be organized with less than ten ministers in full membership and six hundred lay members within its bounds, with exceptions to be approved by the Board of Administration upon recommendation of the Board of Bishops. In the event an annual conference no longer meets these minimum standards, the area cabinet shall make a study of the situation, and submit recommendations for change to the Board of Administration.

- c. The Board of Administration may prepare proposals to merge two or more conferences or otherwise revise existing conference boundaries and recommend such proposals to the conferences involved and to the area bishop. Changes will be made upon the majority vote of the annual conferences concerned and with the consent of a majority of the Commission on Administration. In the event that the proposal is rejected, a written rationale for the rejection shall be submitted to the Board of Administration by the conferences. The Board of Administration shall have authority to revise the proposal if it deems it wise and resubmit it to the conferences. The Board of Administration may send representatives to the conferences to make a full explanation.
- d. Conferences considering merger or the revision of their boundaries (except as provided in Par. A/427) may initiate discussions with their concerned neighbors keeping their area bishop informed. The bishop shall inform the Board of Administration which may convey its thinking to the conferences through the area bishop if it so desires. Approval requires a majority vote of the annual conferences involved, voting separately, and a majority vote of the Commission on Administration.
- e. Nothing in (b) preceding shall prevent the organization of conferences of mission origin out of provisional conferences, the areas of which may extend over the boundaries of other conferences, when such other conferences have approved and all other requirements for full conference status have been met. For an overseas provisional conference to become a full conference, there must be no less than five national elders and four hundred adult lay members.

11. To preside at the sessions of the General Conference and of the annual conferences, and at the trial of appeals taken from annual con-

ferences, and to decide all questions of law therein, subject to an appeal to the General Conference.

A bishop's decision upon a point of law arising in annual conference proceedings shall be the rule until reversed by the General Conference.

When bishops are requested by annual conferences of which they are president to rule upon a point of law not arising in conference proceedings, the question shall be presented in writing, together with a full written explanation of the circumstances out of which the question has arisen and, if there be any, statements by the opposing parties in the dispute; all this information shall later be placed in the hands of the General Conference when the bishop's decision is referred to it. The bishop immediately upon ruling shall appeal to the other bishops for their opinions; and the ruling shall become binding upon them only after they have been notified that at least two of them have concurred in writing and until reversed by the General Conference.

12. To set policies for the credentialing and continuing education of ministers as supervised by the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services (Par. B/476, Sec. 1:a).

13. To receive from one whom they have appointed to hold an annual conference a comprehensive written report of all the administrative proceedings which arise in that conference.

14. To ordain ministers who qualify according to the *Book of Discipline*. A credential of ordination shall be presented to each minister ordained, and a duplicate copy shall be remitted to the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services. The authority to ordain rests only with bishops or their deputies.

¶ A/592. The bishops shall be amenable to the General Conference for the discharge of their official duties. They shall give a state of the work report annually to the Board of Administration. They shall be responsible to the annual conference to which they belong for their Christian conduct.

¶ A/593. 1. Bishops' retirement shall be as follows:

- a. at the time of the General Conference following the sixty-eighth birthday;
- b. following the sixty-second birthday if the bishop so chooses;
- c. at any time because of failing health. Any question of disability shall be determined by the Board of Administration.

2. When bishops, or former bishops retire, they shall be given the title of bishop emeritus provided they have served the church as bishop for a minimum of six years.

CHAPTER VI

LAY MINISTERS AND CHRISTIAN LAY LEADERS

A. Licensed Lay Ministers

B. Crusade Teams

C. Christian Growth Group (Class) Leaders

CHAPTER VI

LAY MINISTERS AND CHRISTIAN LAY HELPERS

A. LICENSED LAY MINISTERS

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, effectively used lay ministers in enlarging and edifying the body of Christ. Persons who accept the challenge to consecrate their resources, time, and gifts in active church ministry are encouraged to become licensed lay ministers.

¶ **A/600.** All believers are called of God to serve actively in the ministries of the church. In order to extend the ministry of the local church, lay ministers are called of God and selected by the pastor in consultation with the local church. Lay ministers are members in good standing in the Free Methodist Church who do not plan to become fully ordained clergy. They are persons of good reputation, full of wisdom and the Spirit, who acknowledge their spiritual gifts as given by God and confirmed by the pastor and the local church. They are willing to dedicate themselves to the development of those gifts under the guidance of the pastor for use in the local congregation. These gifts may be used in such areas as worship, administration, evangelism, nurture, social action, Christian education, visitation, counseling, and other ministries deemed appropriate by the pastor.

¶ **A/600.1.** 1. Characteristics

The following characteristics must be evident in the individual being considered for a lay minister's license:

- a. is a person who knows God — in His pardoning and loving grace, desires to seek Him in all things, and demonstrates this desire in manner of life;
- b. is a member in good standing of the Free Methodist Church in that society;
- c. has sound understanding and right judgment in the things of God, proper conception of salvation by faith, and effective utterance;
- d. has evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, with others being converted through their deeds and words; and
- e. demonstrates a willingness to work with the pastor in extending the ministry of the local church.

2. Initial Curriculum

- a. The completion of an initial curriculum of two courses is required of candidates for lay minister's license. These courses shall be pursued in a class or, when necessary, through individual study. In the latter instance, an acceptable, original, 200-word essay summarizing each course must be submitted to the local pastor. Upon completion of the required curriculum, validation shall be made by the pastor to the official board for recommendation for a one-year lay minister's license. Upon the approval of the pastor, courses taken in previous years may be counted.

- b. The Courses in the Initial Curriculum:

The initial curriculum shall include (1) one in Bible study or practical resources and (2) one in doctrine and Christian living. The initial course in doctrine and Christian living shall be a course in evangelism. The pastor in consultation with the pastor's cabinet shall recommend the appropriate courses to be taken by the candidate.

(For a list of recommended resources, contact the Director of Adult Ministries, Department of Christian Education, P.O. Box 535002, Indianapolis, Indiana 46253-5002.)

3. Credentials

Following the selection of the lay minister candidate by the pastor in consultation with the pastor's cabinet, upon completion of the required curriculum, and on recommendation of the official board, the candidate shall respond to the following questions before the congregation:

- a. Do you know God in His forgiving grace?
- b. Do you believe yourself called of God to assist your pastor by exercising your spiritual gifts and graces?
- c. Do you desire nothing but the will of God?
- d. Do you believe in the doctrine of entire sanctification?
- e. Is it your intention to make special use of the designation of lay minister to fulfill the Great Commission?
- f. Are you able and willing to be involved in evangelism and discipleship as occasion arises?
- g. Will you assist your pastor in extending the ministry of the church under his consultation and direction?

Upon giving satisfactory answers to the above questions, the official board shall issue the license of lay minister to the candidate.

4. Privileges

- a. Licensed lay ministers shall be members of the official board in the society in which they are licensed.

- b. The names of the lay ministers shall be listed in the records of the annual conference in the *Yearbook*.

¶ A/601. Renewal of Lay Minister's License

1. Lay minister's licenses shall be renewed annually. Two additional specified courses must be completed for each of the first seven renewals. If, at the close of any year, a licensed lay minister has not properly completed both of the required courses, consideration for renewal of a license is to be postponed until both are completed. The pastor shall keep accurate record of the courses completed that shall accompany a letter of membership in case of a transfer.

2. For the first seven subsequent years renewal courses shall be taken in the areas of (1) Bible study, (2) doctrine and Christian living, and (3) practical resources. A course shall be taken from two of the areas during any given year with all three areas covered every two years. After the first seven renewals, renewal shall require the completion of one additional course per year. The denominational director of Adult Ministries shall prepare a brochure outlining the requirements and procedures related to licensed lay ministers and renewal requirements.

3. Each lay minister shall be reviewed annually by the pastor's cabinet with the renewal being granted by the official board. During this renewal process, the following should be considered:

- a. Attention shall be given to a review of the lay minister's performance in areas of assisting the pastor, general spiritual and moral conduct, and doctrinal and ecclesiastical integrity.
- b. Satisfactory evidence shall be provided indicating completion of studies required for renewal.
- c. The official board may revoke a lay minister's license for violation of its conditions.

¶ A/602. Each of the courses listed in Paragraph A/600.1, Section 2, and the curriculum requirements for the seven subsequent renewals may be substituted by a college, seminary, or Bible college course, provided such course is within one of the categories listed in Paragraph A/601, Section 2, and that all three categories are represented. Such replacement courses may be approved by the denominational Division of Adult Ministries.

¶ A/603. Annual conferences with non-English speaking constituencies shall be authorized through their conference boards of ministerial education and guidance to establish educational and other requirements for such constituents for the licensing of lay ministers in accordance

with their culture and the needs of the annual conference concerned, in consultation with the area bishop, the director of ministerial credentialing services, and the director of social, urban and ethnic ministries. Final approval rests with the Commission on Education. Evidence of continuing study and progress shall be apparent before renewals of such licenses are granted.

¶ A/605. 1. Local deacons and elders (persons holding ordination but not itinerating) shall have their names listed in the records of the annual conference and shall be accountable to the board of ministerial education and guidance with respect to their character, conduct, and doctrine. They shall be located to a particular society by the ministerial appointments committee, and shall function in ministry under the direction of that society (see Par. A/422).

2. A local deacon or elder may be transferred to an itinerating ministry within the conference upon the recommendation of the board of ministerial education and guidance, having given satisfactory answers to the questions of Paragraph A/531 of the *Book of Discipline* and having received the approving vote of the annual conference.

3. Local deacons or elders who relocate into the boundaries of another conference shall approach the board of ministerial education and guidance of that conference requesting that their membership be received. If and when a transfer is effected, it shall then be the responsibility of the ministerial appointments committee of said conference to locate the local deacon or elder.

4. Local deacons and elders shall function as exemplary members of the society where they are located. Neglect of duty, including persistent refusal to participate in the life of the Free Methodist Church when such participation is possible, shall subject them to the discipline of the conference board of ministerial education and guidance. This discipline may include the request for surrender of ordination credentials. However, no local deacon or local elder shall be deprived of ordination credentials without due process.

5. Under section 1 above, local deacons and elders shall be approved annually by the board of ministerial education and guidance, upon recommendation by the pastor and official board of the church where they are located.

¶ A/606. Schedules shall be arranged to give licensed lay ministers active, regular, and systematic duties.

¶ A/607. A lay minister considering the call of God to become an

ordained minister shall be encouraged to become a local ministerial candidate (formerly local preacher) as outlined in the *Book of Discipline*, Paragraph B/477ff.

¶ A/608. A licensed lay minister may be given charge of a society by the superintendent and/or ministerial appointments committee, in consultation with the pastor to whom the lay minister is accountable. In such a case, the lay minister will be under the supervision of the superintendent or a designee. The lay minister then has the right to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper and may solemnize marriages in that place if civil law permits.

¶ A/609. 1. A lay minister may be granted a license as a conference lay minister by the conference board of ministerial education and guidance for special service within the conference.

2. Recommendation for such licensing is made by the pastor or conference superintendent to the board of ministerial education and guidance who shall screen and interview the applicant (similar to Par. A/600.1, Sec.3) and grant the license.

3. Annual renewal of the license shall be subject to continuing renewal as a lay minister by the official board, recommendation by the pastor to the board of ministerial education and guidance, who shall review and grant the renewal.

4. A conference lay minister is not a member of the annual conference unless appointed to the pastoral staff of a local church, in which case the membership is honorary.

5. If appointed as a senior pastor of a church, a conference lay minister has the right to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and may solemnize marriages in that place if civil law permits.

6. The names of conference lay ministers shall be listed in the license section of the records of the annual conference in the *Yearbook*.

B. CRUSADE TEAMS

¶ A/610. 1. Superintendents, evangelists appointed by the general or annual conferences, general church executives, and pastors may organize teams of young people for evangelistic or charitable work.

2. The rules and regulations of crusade teams shall be subject to the approval of the conferences involved.

C. CHRISTIAN GROWTH GROUP (CLASS) LEADERS

¶ A/620. 1. Christian growth group (class) leaders shall be elected in the last quarter of the conference year. The pastor may nominate, and the group shall elect the leader by ballot. Any member of the society, whether or not the nominee of the pastor, shall be eligible to election as leader.

2. Each leader should carefully inquire individually how the members of the group prosper; not only as to keeping the outward rules, but their growth in the knowledge and love of God.

3. The leaders should consult with those who have the charge of their societies.

4. Let the pastor see that improper leaders are changed by a new election.

5. The leaders should frequently meet one another's groups.

¶ A/621. Course of Reading for Christian Growth Group (Class) Leaders*

The following course of reading for Christian growth group (class) leaders is recommended by the General Conference in the belief that it will meet a general need throughout the church, and that the few inexpensive volumes therein named will not only edify all group leaders who will carefully read them, but will also increase their efficiency in dealing with those under their care in this responsible office.

Book of Discipline of the Free Methodist Church

Christian Perfection — John Wesley

The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life — Hannah W. Smith

"By My Spirit" — Jonathan Goforth

Good News Is For Sharing — Leighton Ford

From Age to Age A Living Witness — Leslie R. Marston

The Holy Spirit in the Christian Life — W.C. Mavis

Christian Holiness in Scripture, History, and Life — George A. Turner

Discipline and Discovery (workbook edition) — Albert Edward Day

Additional reading:

Expanded Ministry to Adults — C.E. Ministries Series

* When any of the recommended books are not available write to the Department of Christian Education, P.O. Box 535002, Indianapolis, IN 46253-5002, for a current list.

CHAPTER VII

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Preamble

- A. Discipline and Restoration of a Minister
- B. Discipline and Restoration of Lay Members
- C. Church Trials
- D. Insolvencies and Settlement of Disputes

CHAPTER VII

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

PREAMBLE

¶ A/700. Church discipline seeks the awakening, renewal, and growth of erring members, and their reconciliation to the Christian fellowship. It seeks to preserve the integrity and witness of the church, and to protect those whom the church serves. It also serves as a warning to the vulnerable and careless.

Though all believers are called to live holy lives, the Scriptures give special attention to the example of leaders. Conference ministerial candidates, ordained deacons and elders, and any others under appointment shall come under the jurisdiction of the annual conference. Licensed conference ministerial candidates shall be accountable for their character and conduct to the local church.

A. DISCIPLINE AND RESTORATION OF A MINISTER

1. ACCOUNTABILITY TO COVENANT COMMITMENTS

¶ A/701. Ministers subscribe to the membership covenant. They also make commitments upon entry into conference membership and subscribe to vows of ordination. If these commitments are ignored or broken, both personal integrity and the trust of the church are violated. Therefore, ministers must be held accountable to these commitments.

2. PURPOSE AND GOAL

¶ A/702. The process for correction and discipline of ministers is designed to lead to repentance and forgiveness. The goals are a return to fellowship with God and the church, and a restoration to active ministry. Full restoration, however, may not be possible in every case.

3. CATEGORIES FOR CORRECTION AND DISCIPLINE

¶ A/703. The reasons for which a minister may receive discipline are as follows:

1. Teachings contrary to the Articles of Religion or the membership covenant.
2. Conduct which is immoral, criminal, or unbecoming to a minister.
3. Insubordination, such as intractability to leadership or unrea-

sonable refusal to accept an appointment.

4. GENERAL PROCEDURES

¶ A/705. Leaders administering discipline shall act firmly but in love. During the process of correction or discipline, ministers shall be held accountable for their relationships. This includes: (1) submitting to the counsel and discipline of those in authority; (2) maintaining fellowship with peers; (3) refraining from irresponsible talk; (4) demonstrating a consistent Christian life before family and community.

¶ A/706. Discipline is to be commensurate with the offense and in accordance with accepted principles of confidentiality.

¶ A/707. In addition to the provisions applying to a pastor under Chapter VII, Section A, the superintendent shall be responsible for caring for the three sets of persons affected by the misconduct: the pastor's family, the person or persons most immediately involved with the pastor in the misconduct, and the members of the congregation.

5. PRIVATE COUNSEL

¶ A/711. 1. When a person under appointment voluntarily confesses to an offense, the first step is the private counsel of the immediate superior: senior pastor, superintendent, or bishop.

2. When a person is accused of an offense and the person's integrity is found to be intact, the immediate supervisor, together with the person accused, shall develop a plan to deal jointly with the testimony, rumor or impressions which led to the accusation.

3. When a person is accused of an offense which is supported by verifiable testimony, the first response shall be the offer of the private counsel of the immediate supervisor.

4. When the person is repentant and the offense has not and shall not become the cause of public reproach to Christ and the church, confession shall be heard, remedial counsel planned, and ongoing accountability established with the overseer.

5. When the person is not responsive to remedial counsel or does not accept ongoing accountability, overseers hearing the complaint or confession shall take counsel immediately with their superiors and advise the minister of the action. Further, a more structured disclosure of this matter may be determined by these superiors who shall advise the minister of the action.

6. PUBLIC REPROOF AND FORGIVENESS

¶ A/712. 1. When a confessed offense is of a public nature but not serious enough to require suspension or trial, the offender may be called for reproof to a specific place and time, such as the pastor's cabinet or the board of ministerial education and guidance. The spirit of Christian restoration shall characterize the process.

2. By arrangement of the overseer, the offender shall make confession, request forgiveness, receive reproof and forgiveness, and submit to whatever discipline is required. The offender shall submit the statement of confession in advance to the overseer for approval.

3. The overseer shall counsel with the pastor's cabinet, the board of ministerial education and guidance, or the area bishop, as the case may require.

7. CORPORATE DISCIPLINE

¶ A/713. 1. If, in the judgment of the overseer and the immediate advisory body, an offense causes public reproach requiring discipline, and if the offender resists the prescribed discipline, the matter shall be brought immediately to the board of ministerial education and guidance. The board of ministerial education and guidance is empowered to provide remedial disciplinary action. Refusal to comply will be considered insubordination and subject the offender to possible loss of credentials.

2. In cases of immoral conduct, either confessed or indicated by verifiable written testimony, the superintendent, bishop, or the ministerial appointments committee shall have authority to suspend the offender immediately and take possession of the ordination credentials. No ministerial functions shall be performed until the case is decided.

3. As soon as possible, the board of ministerial education and guidance, or a subcommittee thereof of not fewer than six members, equally divided between laypersons and ministers, shall be convened to review the case. In accordance with due process, it shall have authority to take one of the following actions, which must be reported to the subsequent annual conference for final confirmation:

- a. Exonerate, return credentials, and restore to ministry;
- b. Confirm the suspension and establish a program of counseling, restitution, and restoration (see Par. A/721);
- c. Allow the accused to surrender credentials and approve the person for lay status;
- d. Allow the accused to surrender credentials and withdraw from the conference and denomination;
- e. Allow the accused to surrender credentials and withdraw from the conference and denomination under charges or complaints;

f. Expel from the conference and the denomination.

4. The published appointments of the annual conference will state the action taken by the conference.

8. SPECIAL CASES

¶ A/714. 1. Precautionary or disciplinary action may be taken immediately by a superintendent or bishop without due process when a conference appointee is arrested, indicted, or convicted of a felony.

2. When immoral or criminal conduct of spouse or dependent child may adversely affect ministry, conference appointees shall report the situation to their immediate supervisor.

9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

¶ A/715. 1. Where family or other close relationships exist between the accused and any member(s) of the advisory body, causing conflict of interest, such members shall be disqualified from hearing the case.

2. With counsel from the immediate overseer, the remaining members of the advisory body shall appoint temporary members to fill the resulting vacancies for the case in question.

10. CREDENTIALS

¶ A/717. If an ordained minister refuses to surrender credentials of ordination when lawfully requested to do so, the credentials shall be declared null and void by the subsequent session of the annual conference.

¶ A/718. Credentials may be restored only by the annual conference to which they were surrendered or which declared them void.

11. RIGHT OF TRIAL

¶ A/719. 1. None of the above-mentioned procedures shall preclude the accused's right to a trial. In all cases persons shall be considered innocent unless proven guilty.

2. Any ministerial appointee who has been suspended or expelled by an annual conference has the right of appeal. The complaint or appeal may be, and, if the defendant so requests in writing, must be referred to a committee of not less than four elders and four laymen. In the presence of the president of the conference or of an elder whom he may appoint with the consent of both parties, either during the session of the conference or after its adjournment, they shall try the case and decide upon its merit. Their decision shall have the same effect as that of the annual conference.

3. In all cases of trial and conviction of an annual conference appointee, an appeal to the ensuing General Conference or the court of appeals, as the appointee may choose, shall be allowed, if at the time of the verdict, or within thirty days after notice thereof, intention of appeal is made known in writing to the presiding officer.

4. All cases brought before the General Conference by appeal may, with the consent of both parties, be referred to a committee of not less than six ministerial and six lay delegates, which, in the presence of one of the bishops, shall hear the case and decide upon its merits. Its decisions shall have the same effect as that of the General Conference.

5. When an annual conference appointee is deprived of ordination credentials by suspension, expulsion, or otherwise, they shall be filed in the conference office. When the annual conference is satisfied that the restoration process is completed according to Paragraphs A/721 and A/722, the conference may, upon recommendation of the board of ministerial education and guidance, restore the credentials.

12. CITATION TO SHOW CAUSE

¶ A/720. 1. A bishop shall have the authority to cite a minister to appear before the board of ministerial education and guidance of the conference to which the minister belongs, to show cause, if any, why he or she should not be declared guilty of any of the offenses described in Par. A/703. The provisions of Paragraph A/719, Section 1 apply.

2. A minister so cited shall be furnished with a statement describing the offense and shall show the time and place where the accused is to appear. If the accused is found guilty, or pleads guilty, the board of ministerial education and guidance shall proceed according to Paragraphs A/705-713.

13. RESTORATION

¶ A/721. 1. Restoration to ministry requires the following:

- a. repentance and request for forgiveness;
- b. indication of contrition;
- c. public confession where advised;
- d. restitution where applicable;
- e. counseling where advised;
- f. personal accountability as assigned;
- g. healing of broken relationships where possible;
- h. reestablishment of credibility.

2. The board of ministerial education and guidance may deem it advisable to form a covenant of restoration which defines the expectations and responsibilities of all parties involved in the restoration process.

A model covenant is included in the *Board of Ministerial Education and Guidance Manual*, and in the *Superintendent's Manual*.

3. While the candidate for restoration is following the prescribed course, a designated supervisor shall assign and oversee such ministerial duties as may prepare the candidate for resumption of ministerial leadership.

¶ A/722. Restoration of credentials and reappointment shall proceed according to the following conditions:

1. The local Free Methodist church where the candidate has been worshipping and serving shall recommend through its official board that the board of ministerial education and guidance review the case.

2. The board of ministerial education and guidance shall assess the candidate's progress in spiritual maturity, trustworthiness, moral integrity, and ministerial effectiveness as attested to by references from the designated supervisor, the candidate's counselor(s), and other persons familiar with the case. The candidate shall be called for a personal interview by the board.

3. Upon recommendation of the board of ministerial education and guidance, the annual conference shall make final decision. Only in exceptional cases will credentials be restored sooner than two years after the initial disciplinary action and only after the process of restoration is completed according to Paragraph A/721. Restoration of credentials does not guarantee reappointment to itinerant ministry.

B. DISCIPLINE AND RESTORATION OF LAY MEMBERS

1. GENERAL DIRECTIONS

¶ A/740. 1. The correction and discipline of lay members is designed to lead to repentance and forgiveness. The goals are a return to fellowship with God and the church, and restoration to active participation in the life of the church.

2. A member against whom substantiated charges are brought for repeated unchristian conduct or violation of membership vows shall be cited to the membership care committee which shall have the options of giving private reproof, or recommending to the official board termination of membership.

3. The membership care committee shall have authority to take the following actions:

- a. Administer private reproof and counsel;

- b. Establish a program for counseling, restitution, and reconciliation with offended parties;
- c. Recommend to the official board that the member be suspended for not more than one year;
- d. If, after admonition and counsel, the requirements for restoration are not fulfilled, the committee shall recommend to the official board that:
 - (1) the member be allowed to withdraw from the church; or
 - (2) the member be cited to show cause why membership should not be terminated.

4. If a member is cited to show cause why membership should not be terminated, the membership care committee shall issue the citation, with specific charges attached, showing time and place of a final hearing. The citation must be delivered personally or by registered mail not less than ten days before the hearing.

If the official board sustains the recommendation from the membership care committee for termination of membership, or if the official board, on referral from the membership care committee, finds cause for termination of membership, or if the accused fails to appear at a hearing, the membership of the accused may be terminated at the expiration of thirty days.

If, however, within thirty days after the final action of the official board the accused requests a trial, it shall be granted.

5. In such cases membership may be terminated only by a ballot vote of the official board.

2. RESTRICTIONS UNDER SUSPENSION

¶ A/741. A lay member under suspension shall vacate offices held, except that of trustee in states or provinces where the civil law does not, for such a reason, permit the suspension from office of a trustee, until the suspension has been lifted.

3. RESTORATION OF LEADERSHIP

¶ A/741.1. A progressive lifting of the restrictions imposed under the suspension may be recommended by the membership care committee as part of the restoration process.

4. RESTORATION OF MEMBERSHIP

¶ A/742. 1. A person placed under suspension in accordance with Paragraph A/740, section 3(c), at the expiration of the suspension, may be restored to membership upon recommendation of the membership care committee, by a ballot vote of the official board.

2. Any member shown by subsequent evidence to have been falsely accused shall be exonerated and membership restored by the official board.

3. Any person whose membership has been terminated for any reason, who demonstrates contrition and amendment of life, may seek readmission in writing. Upon recommendation of the membership care committee, after review and due consideration, the official board may grant the request by a ballot vote and decide the category of membership.

C. CHURCH TRIALS

1. GENERAL DIRECTIONS

¶ A/743. 1. The accused is entitled to a speedy trial, once requested, unless the complaint is otherwise disposed of. Both accuser and accused shall be entitled to the assistance of counsel as they may select from the lay members or ministers of the church. The accusers shall be responsible for the expense of their own counsel, unless they also represent the local church or conference. The body to which the accused is amenable shall pay the costs of prosecution.

2. At the meeting where the committee to try the case is selected, either the accused or the accuser shall have the right to challenge for cause the selection of any individual on the trial committee, and the presiding officer appointed by the body to whom the accused is amenable shall rule on the validity of the challenge.

3. A case may be tried without committee whenever it is in the best interests of the church, convenient to the witnesses, and requested by the parties. In such cases, the membership care committee or the official board, whichever the accused is amenable to, may refer the case to a person appointed by the presiding officer (pastor, superintendent, or bishop) for trial without committee. When so referred the decision shall have the same effect as that of a trial committee and be subject to the same right of appeal.

4. Persons expelled after trial shall have no privileges of church or conference membership or sacraments in our church without contrition, confession, and reformation satisfactory to the society or conference from which they have been expelled.

a. Notification of Time and Place

¶ A/744. Any member, lay or ministerial, who is brought to trial shall be furnished with a copy of the charges and notification of time and place of the trial. These shall be provided by the persons bringing the

charges, or by the presiding officer of the tribunal to which the accused is judicially responsible, at least fourteen (14) days prior to the trial, unless an earlier trial is demanded. At least ten (10) days prior to the election of the trial committee, the accused shall be notified of the place of the election.

b. Election of Trial Committee

¶ A/745. 1. The minister (pastor, superintendent, or bishop) who is to preside at a church trial shall call a meeting of the body having jurisdiction over the case (official board, annual conference, or general conference) which shall select a committee of not less than five nor more than nine.

2. In the case of the trial of a lay member the committee shall be composed of lay members of the church within the bounds of the annual conference. No minister belonging to an annual conference, either as a ministerial candidate or in full membership, shall be eligible to act on this committee.

3. In the case of the trial of a minister the committee shall be composed of both ministers and lay persons in equal numbers so far as possible, from within the bounds of the annual conference.

¶ A/746. If the body having jurisdiction (official board or annual conference) refuses to appoint such a committee, the body immediately superior (annual conference or general conference) shall appoint a committee to try the case. If, after conviction, the member appeals, no member of this committee shall be eligible to sit as a juror in the second trial of the case.

c. Right of Appeal

¶ A/747. 1. In order for members (lay or ministerial) who have been tried and convicted by a committee (official board or annual conference) to be entitled to an appeal to the next level of jurisdiction (annual conference or general conference), they must not have been voluntarily absent from the trial, and they must have given notice of

intention to appeal within thirty days after determination of the case has been announced.

2. In the event of an appeal, no person shall be allowed to serve on the committee who has previously voted in the decision of the case.

3. In all appeal cases, the appellant shall present to the counsel for the church a statement in writing of the grounds of the appeal, at least five days before the trial of the appeal. The appellate court must

confine itself to the grounds of the appeal but is entitled to all relevant information that will throw light upon the appeal as presented.

4. If the appellate court grants a new trial, the case may either be remanded to the original court for a new trial or tried by the appellate court itself, at the discretion of the appellate court.

5. Penalty shall be deferred pending the hearing of an appeal. (See Par. A/713, sec. 3.)

2. FORM OF PROCEDURE

a. Form for a Bill of Charges

¶ A/760. 1. Charge. (Name the offense.)

2. Specifications. (Name the acts, times, and places.)

b. Order of Conducting Church Trials

¶ A/761. 1. Devotional exercises.

2. Reading of the action of the society meeting or conference by which the committee to try the case was appointed, and the names of the committee.

3. The appointment of a secretary.

4. Reading the charges and specifications by the secretary.

5. Answer by the accused in person or by counsel.

6. Statement of the case, and line of evidence by the prosecution.

7. Evidence of the prosecution, and cross-examination by the defense.

8. Statement of the case and line of defense, by the defense.

9. Evidence for the defense, and cross-examination by the prosecution.

10. Rebutting evidence for the prosecution.

11. Rebutting evidence for the defense.

12. Summing up the case by the prosecution.

13. Summing up the case by defense.

14. If it should be deemed proper to allow the prosecution to reply, the defense shall also be permitted to reply.

15. Instructions of the presiding officer upon the form of bringing the verdict.

16. The verdict.

17. The court shall announce the verdict and impose the penalty fixed by the trial committee.

3. CITATION OF A SOCIETY OR ANNUAL CONFERENCE TO SHOW CAUSE

¶ A/770. 1. The Board of Administration of the General Conference shall have the power to cite a society or an annual conference to appear before it to show cause why it should not be declared in a state of insubordination when reliable information reaches the board that the accused body is openly in a state of insubordination and disobedience. Notice of the order to show cause shall be given in a clear and definite statement of the facts constituting the state of insubordination so that the accused body may be properly informed of the grounds of the accusation. The order shall be served upon the secretary of the accused body. If the board should find it guilty or if it should admit guilt, the board shall have the power to suspend it of all rights and of recognition as a Free Methodist body until the ensuing General Conference, which shall have final disposition of the case.

2. If the convicted body should reform and pledge its loyalty to the church and the *Book of Discipline* and show contrition for its insubordination, the Board of Administration shall have the power to reinstate it.

D. INSOLVENCIES AND THE SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES

¶ A/780. In a dispute between two or more lay members concerning the payment of debts, or other matters not involving personal character, which cannot be settled by the persons concerned, the pastor of the society shall inquire into the circumstances and recommend a reference, consisting of one arbiter chosen by the plaintiff, another chosen by the defendant, and a third person chosen by the first two, the three arbiters being members of the church.

¶ A/781. A disputant, dissatisfied with the judgment given, may appeal to the ensuing annual conference, which may for sufficient reason grant a second arbitration, in which each party shall choose two arbiters, and the four arbiters shall choose a fifth, the judgment of the majority of whom shall be final; and any person refusing to abide by that judgment shall be excluded from the church.

¶ A/782. Any member of the church who shall refuse, in case of debt or other dispute, to refer the matter to arbitration, when recommended by the pastor, or shall enter into a lawsuit with another before such mea-

asures are taken, shall be expelled by a regular trial according to the *Book of Discipline*, unless the case be of such a nature as to require or justify a process of law.

¶ A/783. When a complaint is made against any member of the church for nonpayment of debt and when the accounts are adjusted and the amount is ascertained, the pastor of the society shall call the debtor before a committee of at least three, to show cause why payment has not been made. The committee shall determine what further time shall be granted for payment, and any debtor refusing to comply shall be expelled; but in that event appeal may be made to the annual conference, the decision of which shall be final. In case the creditor complains that justice is not done, grievance may be laid before the annual conference, and its decision shall be final. Any creditor refusing to comply shall be expelled. In case the debtor refuses or neglects to comply with the findings of the committee or of the annual conference, the creditor may have recourse to the civil courts without affecting his or her membership in the church.

¶ A/784. To prevent scandal, when any member of the church fails in business or contracts debts which cannot be paid, two or three judicious members of the church shall inspect the accounts, contracts, and circumstances of the supposed delinquent; and any member who has behaved dishonestly, or borrowed money without a probability of paying, shall be expelled. The official body to which the member is amenable shall appoint the committee of inspection.

CHAPTER VIII

TEMPORAL ECONOMY

- A. Support of Active Ministers
- B. Raising of Funds
- C. Church Property

CHAPTER VIII

TEMPORAL ECONOMY

A. SUPPORT OF ACTIVE MINISTERS*

1. SUPPORT OF BISHOPS

¶ A/800. The salaries of our bishops shall be raised by the United Ministries for Christ.

2. SUPPORT OF SUPERINTENDENTS

¶ A/801. The superintendent shall be supported by the conference to which appointed, as provided for in Paragraph A/583.

A home purchased for the superintendent can be rented to others only if the superintendent consents and receives the rental.

3. SUPPORT OF PASTORS

¶ A/802. 1. It shall be the duty of the finance committee recommended in Paragraph A/402.3, Section 6, to prepare, after consulting with the pastor, an estimate of the amount necessary for the support of the pastoral staff, and to present the estimate to the official board for action.

2. The finance committee shall report regularly to the official board.

3. The membership is requested to cooperate heartily by giving not less than one-tenth of their income for the Lord's work. (See Par. A/160, Sec. 6, Par. A/360, Question 7, and Par. A/804.)

4. If a pastor chooses not to occupy the parsonage, the official board may rent it out to others and shall pay the pastor a housing allowance not less than the rent received, less any additional taxes or insurance required.

4. SUPPORT OF EVANGELISTS

¶ A/803. Evangelists shall depend upon the fields in which they labor for their support. Evangelists employed by the Department of Evangelism and Church Growth shall be supported by collections in their fields of labor and appropriations by the department.

B. RAISING OF FUNDS

* For the support of retired ministers, see Plan for Conference Claimants, Paragraphs B/461-461.1 and Pension Plan, Paragraph B/461.7.

- ¶ **A/804.** 1. The support of the church is to come from the tithes, offerings, and gifts of its people.
2. Other methods for the raising of funds may be used by constituents of our churches providing that:
- a. they are not a substitute for the giving of tithes and offerings;
 - b. they are consistent with the ethics and practices of our faith; and
 - c. the church itself does not serve as a marketing agency for the commercial products of its constituency.
3. The church may support communitywide efforts to raise funds for worthwhile projects so long as the fund-raising effort does not benefit the Free Methodist Church, and is consistent with the ethics of our faith and membership covenant.
4. All fund appeals being made outside an annual conference by local churches must first be cleared by the board of administration of the conference into whose area the appeal is to be sent.

C. CHURCH PROPERTY

1. TRUSTEES — ELECTION AND DUTIES

¶ **A/850.** Any board of trustees in the Free Methodist Church, whether conference or local, shall consist of not less than three persons of whom two-thirds shall be full members of the Free Methodist Church. They shall be so organized as to properly discharge their duties, except that in the case of an incorporated conference, the maximum number of trustees shall be in accordance with the applicable civil laws, articles of incorporation, and bylaws under which the respective board operates. In no case shall the total of elected and *ex officio* members exceed fifteen.

- ¶ **A/851.** 1. Boards of trustees shall be elected by their respective bodies: conference trustees by the annual conference, pastoral charge trustees by the annual meeting (see Par. A/402), and local trustees by the society.
2. Trustees of property of an extinct, unincorporated society embraced within a pastoral charge shall be elected by the annual meeting.
3. The determination for the continuance, merger, or closing of a local church by an annual conference, when recommended by its conference board of administration, shall be based on the following considerations: recent growth patterns, proximity to other Free Methodist churches, the present and long-range priorities of the location, facilities, and financial

ability.

In the event that membership of a society declines below a minimum of ten supporting adult full members, the conference board of administration may authorize the conference board of trustees to supervise the property.

4. Trustees shall be elected only in a manner allowed by the civil laws and shall hold office for a term fixed by the body electing them and until their successors are elected.

¶ A/852. When for a period of one year a duly elected trustee refuses to attend legally called meetings of the board of trustees, the body electing him / her shall declare the place on the board vacant and at once elect a successor to fill the unexpired term; and whenever a member of the Free Methodist Church who holds the office of trustee is dismissed by letter, withdraws from the church, is expelled, or moves beyond the bounds of the body which elected him / her, that body may declare the place vacant and at once elect a successor to fill the unexpired term, except where either of such declarations is in conflict with the civil law.

¶ A/853. A board of trustees is subject at all times to the direction and control of the body which created it and to the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church. Local trustees are subject to the official board as well as to the society. When action of a board of trustees is required, it can be exercised only by official vote of the board in a regularly called meeting.

¶ A/854. 1. The office of trustee is a responsible one, and its duties are to be taken seriously. A board of trustees shall have and hold in trust any and all property committed to it. It shall see that titles are good; that deeds are drawn in harmony with the civil law; that they contain the trust clause given in Paragraph A / 856, Section 1; that they are immediately recorded; and that abstracts and other valuable papers are safely stored. The board of trustees shall be responsible to the electing body for the general oversight of the property committed to it, and, when so directed by the electing body, shall supervise expenditures for repairs, improvements, and alterations. A board of trustees may be appointed as the building committee for a new building.

2. Annually, and whenever else the chair of the electing body may require, the president of the board of trustees shall make to the electing body a report of all business transacted, including a statement of the financial and material condition of all property entrusted to it.

3. Prohibitive measures. A board of trustees shall not accept a deed

which contains a clause by which the land conveyed may revert to the original grantor, the heirs, or assigns. A board of trustees shall not permit church property to be sold, mortgaged, or otherwise encumbered for current expenses. No other denomination shall be permitted to hold stated appointments in any of our churches without the consent of both the pastor and a majority of the board of trustees.

2. INCORPORATION AND DEEDS

¶ A/855. Before an annual conference, a pastoral charge, or a society purchases real estate, let a reliable lawyer be consulted and provided with a copy of our *Book of Discipline* for reference. Wherever the civil laws will permit, proceed to incorporate. The articles of incorporation, wherever the law will permit, should provide that the corporation shall be subject to the rules, regulations, doctrines, and *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church, incorporated as “The Free Methodist Church of North America,” as from time to time adopted by the General Conference of that church insofar as they do not contravene the civil laws, and that the secular affairs of the corporation shall be managed by trustees elected according to the provisions of this chapter. When incorporation is complete, the deed shall be made out directly to the owning body in its corporate name and shall without exception contain the trust clause given in the following paragraph.

¶ A/856. 1. In states or provinces where the law requires church property to be held by trustees, and where incorporation cannot be secured as provided for in the preceding paragraph, let all deeds be made to trustees, naming them and their successors in office, and containing the following trust clause:

“In trust for the use and benefit of the Free Methodist Church of North America, incorporated under the name of ‘The Free Methodist Church of North America,’ subject to the Book of Discipline, usages, and ministerial appointments of said church, as from time to time authorized and declared; and, if sold, the proceeds shall be disposed of and used in accordance with the provisions of said *Book of Discipline*, and the civil law; and in further trust and confidence that in the houses of worship now erected or that may hereafter be erected on said premises hereby conveyed, the seats shall be forever free; and in further trust and confidence that the said trustees and their successors in office shall permit at all times the preachers who may be duly authorized according to the *Book of Discipline* of the said Free Methodist Church, to hold religious services in said houses of worship according to said *Book of Discipline*.”

2. All property, whether real, personal, or mixed, acquired by any

local society, pastoral charge, annual conference, or other body, whether incorporated or unincorporated, shall be held subject to the foregoing trust as set forth in Paragraph A / 856, Section 1, whether appearing in the evidence of title, or whether left out of such evidence of title, by mistake, inadvertence, willfully, or otherwise; and can only be released pursuant to the provisions of Paragraph A / 857 of the *Book of Discipline*.

¶ A/857. Whenever it becomes advisable and the electing body so authorizes, the trustees may sell or encumber or otherwise dispose of or convey church property by securing the consent of the superintendent of the conference in which the property lies and of the Board of Directors of the Free Methodist Church of North America; provided that in all cases the proceeds of such sale or encumbrance shall be used for the purchase or improvement of property for this same corporation or trustees, or held subject to the order of the annual conference in which the property lies. If within three years of the date of sale or encumbrance the proceeds have not been so used, the board of administration of the annual conference may name a committee to cooperate with the local church to lay plans for using such proceeds. If after two years of such cooperative effort satisfactory plans have not been developed, the annual conference may take control of the proceeds. In the case of annual conference property, the authority so given may either be limited to specific property or may be a general authorization pertaining to any or all of its property.

¶ A/858. Whenever any property is no longer used permanently for church purposes and it is so declared by the annual conference, the trustees, if any remain, shall sell it and turn over the proceeds of sale to the annual conference, or convey the same to the conference in its corporate name or to the conference board of trustees. If the local trustees should refuse to do so, their offices shall be declared vacant by the annual conference and shall be replaced by the conference board of trustees. If no such trustees remain, the trustees of the annual conference shall take possession of the property by due process of law. The annual conference may authorize the conference board of trustees to sell and convey such property, the proceeds of sale to be used as the conference may direct, in accordance with the civil law.

3. ERECTION OF CHURCHES

¶ A/859. 1. Our church buildings are a visual testimony to the surrounding community of our faith in God; therefore, architecture, interior arrangements, and landscaping shall convey honor and reverence for

God. All churches shall clearly identify themselves as Free Methodist. All structures shall be built in compliance with zoning laws and building codes, and shall be compatible with the prevailing architecture of the neighboring area. New buildings shall be easily accessible to the physically handicapped. All seats shall be free. Interior arrangements shall assist in making the preaching of the Word central in our services. Careful planning is necessary, including consideration of utility and maintenance costs, safety, acoustical features, and the long-term needs of the church.

2. No step shall be taken involving pecuniary liability in erecting houses of worship or parsonages, or in purchasing real property of any kind, until the financial plan be approved in writing by the proper conference boards as determined by the annual conference.

3. No houses of worship, parsonages, or other buildings shall be purchased or erected on leased ground, except on reservations or in other places where it is impossible to secure a deed in fee, or without the unanimous written consent of the church building and locations committee of the annual conference in whose territory the property is situated.

4. Each annual conference shall appoint a committee of not less than three on "Church Buildings and Locations," and no real property shall be purchased or building erected within the bounds of the conference without this committee's approval in writing both of the location and the plan of the building, and of the title of the property. When a church building is involved, this committee shall make sure that proper accommodations have been made for the Sunday school before giving its approval.

CHAPTER IX

THE RITUAL

- A. Baptism
- B. The Lord's Supper
- C. The Solemnization of Matrimony
- D. The Burial of the Dead
- E. Ordination Services
- F. Dedication of Churches

CHAPTER IX

THE RITUAL

A. BAPTISM

¶A/900. 1. Adult persons and the parents or guardians of every child to be baptized shall have the choice of immersion, sprinkling, or pouring.

2. We will on no account whatever make a charge for administering baptism.

1. OF INFANTS

SERVICE OF INFANT BAPTISM

[The minister coming to the font, which is to be filled with pure water, shall say:]

¶A/901.1. Dear friends in Christ: God, through Moses, made covenant with Israel, saying to the people, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."*

In the days of the New Covenant, Christ Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."** and on the day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter declared, regarding the salvation given through Christ, "The promise is to you and to your children."***

It is therefore our privilege to present our children to the Lord and our duty to raise them in His ways. These parents now bring *this child* to offer *him/her* in dedication and to pledge in the presence of this congregation to bring *him/her* up in the Lord's discipline and instruction.

Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, who has made saving

*Deuteronomy 6:6-7

**Matthew 19:14

***Acts 2:39

covenant with Your people and who, out of Your loving-kindness, has ordained that they should live before You in families; we thank You that it is our privilege to dedicate our children to You, in steadfast hope that they will cleave to Your covenant and live to Your glory. We entreat You for *this child* that *he/she* may be delivered from the power of sin and Satan and be set apart to You by the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray for these parents that they may be given divine aid, so that both by instruction and example they may lead *this child* in the way of everlasting life, and so all may come in unity together to Your eternal kingdom. We pray for this congregation, that we may faithfully discharge our duties to both parents and child, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Questions to parents]

1. Do you, in the presence of God and this church, solemnly dedicate *this child* to the Lord?

Answer: We/I do.

2. Do you, so far as you are able on *his/her* behalf, renounce the devil and his works, the lure of the world and the sinful desires of fallen humanity, so that in the training of *this child* you will not be led by them and so that so far as you are able, you will keep *this child* from following them?

Answer: We/I do.

3. Will you faithfully strive by word and example to lead *this child* to personal faith in Christ?

Answer: We/I will.

4. Do you accept the authority of the Old and New Testaments?

Answer: We/I do.

5. Out of them, will you diligently teach *this child* the commandments and promises of the Most High God, raising *him/her* in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?

Answer: We/I will.

The congregation will now stand. Let us acknowledge our duty to strengthen this family with prayers and encouragement, thus aiding both parents and child to fulfill all that has here been promised.

[The pastor shall here take the child, and say:]

Name this child.

_____, I baptize you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us pray: O God, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, grant that *this child* may increase in wisdom and stature, growing in divine and human favor. So guide and uphold these parents that they may lead *this child* into that life of faith in Jesus Christ whose mark in this world is righteousness and in the world to come, everlasting bliss. May *he/she* be brought early to affirm in faith all that has here been pledged on *his/her* behalf, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction: “Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of His glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” (Jude 24, 25).

[In the place of the second prayer, the minister may offer an extemporaneous prayer which will include the petitions set forth in the printed prayer.]

SERVICE OF INFANT DEDICATION

¶A/901.2. Dear friends in Christ: God, through Moses made covenant with Israel, saying to the people, “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”*

In the days of the New Covenant, Christ Jesus said “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”** and on the day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter declared, regarding the salvation given through Christ, “The promise is to you and to your children.”***

It is therefore our privilege to present our children to the Lord and our duty to raise them in His ways. These parents now bring *this child* to offer *him/her* in dedication and to pledge in the presence of this congregation to bring *him/her* up in the Lord’s discipline and instruction.

Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, who has made saving covenant with Your people and who, out of Your loving-kindness, has ordained that they should live before You in families; we thank You that it is our privilege to dedicate our children to You, in steadfast hope that

*Deuteronomy 6:6-7

**Matthew 19:14

***Acts 2:39

they will cleave to Your covenant and live to Your glory. We entreat You for *this child* that *he/she* may be delivered from the power of sin and Satan and be set apart to You by the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray for these parents that they may be given divine aid, so that both by instruction and example they may lead *this child* in the way of everlasting life, and so all may come in unity together to Your eternal kingdom. We pray for this congregation, that we may faithfully discharge our duties to both parents and child, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Questions to parents]

1. Do you, in the presence of God and this church, solemnly dedicate *this child* to the Lord?

Answer: We/I do.

2. Will you endeavor to live a life before *this child* which will give witness to your faith in Jesus Christ?

Answer: We/I will.

3. Do you accept the authority of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God?

Answer: We/I do.

4. Out of them, will you endeavor diligently to teach *this child* the commandments and promises of the Most High God, so that your child may early come to personal faith in Jesus Christ?

Answer: We/I will.

[Then shall the minister say:]

Let us acknowledge our duty to support this family with our prayers and encouragement, thereby aiding both parents and child to fulfill all that has here been promised. The congregation will affirm this by standing.

[The minister shall then take the child in his arms and say:]

Name this child. Even as Joseph and Mary brought Jesus in the time of His infancy to the temple to present Him to God, so now, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we present _____ in an

act of edication to God, with a prayer that at an early age in life *he/she* may experience His justifying and sanctifying grace. Amen.

[Here the minister shall pray an extemporaneous prayer on behalf of the parents and their child.]

2. OF CHILDREN UNDER TWELVE

¶ A/902. In lieu of the questions to parents or guardians in Paragraph 901.1, the following may be asked candidates for baptism who are under twelve years of age:

1. Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and do you desire to be baptized in His name?

Answer: I do.

2. Do you intend by this act to testify to all the world that you are a Christian and will be a loyal follower of Christ?

Answer: I do.

3. Do you believe in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?

Answer: I do.

4. Trusting God to help you, will you resist temptation always and keep from doing those things which you know to be sinful or displeasing to God?

Answer: I will.

5. Will you attend the church services and do those things you know a Christian should do?

Answer: I will.

3. THE AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISMAL VOWS FOR YOUTH MEMBERS

¶ A/903. Dearly beloved, in your infancy your parents presented you at the altar of the church for the Sacrament of Baptism. That service was one of both dedication and consecration. Your parents dedicated you to the Lord and took vows on your behalf. They promised to teach you from the Word of God and to train you in the way that you should go.

God in His goodness has brought you to years of responsibility, and you now desire to acknowledge before God and His church the covenant then made on your behalf, to profess your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to consecrate yourself to Him, and thereby to bind yourself anew to His service.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has said, "So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven."

Question: Do you confess your faith in God the Father Almighty,

maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, and do you promise with the aid of the Holy Spirit to be Christ's faithful disciple to your life's end?

Answer: I do.

Question: Have you read and considered the vows taken for you in baptism, and do you affirm them with a humble and contrite heart, putting your whole trust in the mercy of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Answer: I do.

Question: Do you promise to make diligent use of the means of grace, to share faithfully in the worship and service of the church, to give of your substance as the Lord may prosper you, and to give your whole heart to the service of Christ and His kingdom throughout the world?

Answer: I do.

NOTE: Adults having been baptized in infancy should reaffirm their baptismal vows according to Paragraph 360 of the *Book of Discipline*.

4. OF THOSE IN MATURE YEARS

[Use personal names wherever possible. In the case of several candidates, use these or their(s) as applicable.]

¶ **A/904.** Dear friends in Christ: our faith declares that by the sin of Adam, the offspring of Adam are corrupted in their very nature, so that from birth they are inclined to sin; and that new life and a right relationship with God are possible only through the redemptive acts of God in Christ Jesus. Believing these declarations to be true, and in obedience to the command of Christ, (Name)_____ has come to make public confession that *his/her* sins have been washed away, and by means of baptism with water, to give sign of that inward washing and new life in Christ which are now *his/hers* by faith. We therefore implore you to pray that through this means of grace *he/she* may be further moved to keep covenant with God and so may *he/she* ever experience the constant washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

[Then shall the minister say:]

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, whose covenant is firm and whose promises are always to be trusted, we call upon you for (Name)_____

that *he/she*, coming to *his/her* baptism, may be this act given clear witness that *he/she* has received Your inner washing through faith in the cleansing blood of your Son, Jesus Christ. May *he/she* ever rejoice in the forgiveness of sins, the indwelling of Your Spirit, the fellowship of the church and the assurance of resurrection to glory in the world to come.

[Then shall the people stand, and the minister shall say:]

Christ Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age."

You, who present yourself for water baptism, have heard this congregation's prayers that God will continue His loving favor toward you and bring you to His eternal kingdom. And God, who keeps covenant, has promised by His only Son, who offered himself up for our redemption, to grant you these gracious favors. You must now promise, in the presence of this congregation, to keep covenant with Him, renouncing the life of sin, believing His Holy Word and obediently keeping His commandments.

[The following is to be used by the minister as an introduction to the candidates' affirmation of their vows.]

Let us all reaffirm our faith by proclaiming together the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

[An optional version of the Apostles' Creed may be found in the Pastor's Handbook.]

[These questions are to be asked by the minister to the candidates for baptism in the presence of the congregation.]

1. Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?

2. Do you have the assurance that your sins are forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ?
3. Do you renounce Satan and his works?
4. Do you renounce the ungodliness of this world and all sinful desires?
5. Will you live in obedience to Christ?
6. Will you actively participate in the life and ministry of His church?
7. Do you accept the Old and New Testaments as the authority for your life?
8. Will you by this act of baptism testify to the world that you are a Christian?

[Then shall the minister baptize each candidate by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, as desired, saying:]

(Name _____), I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

[Then shall the minister use the following prayer, or substitute an extemporaneous one including the same petitions:]

God, our Father, who gives to all who repent and believe the gospel the right to be called children of God, may Your grace ever be effectual in this, Your child. And may *he/she* enjoy the greater baptism of the Holy Spirit so that all sinful inclinations may be conquered by Your power, and every Christian virtue may live and grow in *him/her*. Grant to *him/her* a place of service in the fellowship of Your church and may *his/her* witness in the world bring glory to Your holy name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Here may follow a benediction if the service is ending.)

B. HOLY COMMUNION: THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

*(The use of individual communion cups is recommended, wherever practicable. Sections marked with an * may be used when an abbreviated service is desired.)*

1. GENERAL DIRECTIONS

- ¶ **A/910.** 1. Let all our ministers exercise due care to see that no

person known to be living in immoral life, or to be guilty of any disreputable practice be admitted to the Lord's table among us until satisfactory evidence of repentance and amendment of life has been given.

2. All persons properly included in the general invitation may be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper among us.

3. The officiating pastor may select lay assistants in the distribution of the elements.

4. Alternate rituals printed in the *Pastor's Handbook* may be used.

2. ORDER FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

* *The Invitation*

¶ A/911. You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who live in love and peace with your neighbors, and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking in His holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort; and humbly kneeling, make your honest confession to Almighty God.

The General Confession

[The minister may pray:]

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, make of all things, judge of all men, we confess that we have sinned, and we are deeply grieved as we remember the wickedness of our past lives. We have sinned against You, Your holiness, and Your love, and we deserve only Your indignation and anger.

We sincerely repent, and we are genuinely sorry for all wrongdoing and every failure to do the things we should. Our hearts are grieved, and we acknowledge that we are hopeless without Your grace.

Have mercy upon us.

Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father, for the sake of Your son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, who died for us.

Forgive us.

Cleanse us.

Give us strength to serve and please You in newness of life and to honor and praise Your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Then may the minister say, "Let us continue our confession as we pray together the prayer Jesus taught His disciples."]

** The Lord's Prayer*

(In unison [taken from King James Version])

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

[The minister may continue the prayer.]

** The Affirmation of Faith*

O Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who with great mercy has promised forgiveness to all who turn to You with hearty repentance and true faith, have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from our sins, make us strong and faithful in all goodness, and bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Then may the minister say, "Let us pray for inner cleansing."]

** The Collect (To be prayed in unison)*

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love You, and worthily magnify Your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Sanctus

It is always right and proper, and our moral duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, holy Father, Almighty and Everlasting God.

Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the inhabitants of heaven, we honor and adore Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying,

(In unison)

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts!

Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

Glory be to thee, O Lord, most high. Amen.

[Then may be sung or recited:]

The Gloria Patri

**Glory be to the Father
And to the Son
And to the Holy Ghost:
As it was in the beginning,
Is now, and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen. Amen.**

[Then may the minister pray:]

The Prayer for Spiritual Communion

We do not come to this Your table, O merciful Lord, with self-confidence and pride, trusting in our own righteousness, but we trust in Your great and many mercies. We are not worthy to gather the crumbs from under Your table. But You, O Lord, are unchanging in Your mercy, and Your nature is love; grant us, therefore, God of mercy, God of grace, so to eat at this Your table that we may receive in spirit and in truth the body of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, and the merits of His shed blood, so that we may live and grow in His likeness, and, being washed and cleansed through His most precious blood, we may evermore live in Him and He in us. Amen.

** The Prayer of Consecration of the Elements*

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who gave in love Your only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who by His sacrifice, offered once for all, did provide a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world, we come now to Your table in obedience to Your Son, Jesus Christ, who in His holy gospel commanded us to continue a perpetual memory of His precious death until He comes again. Hear us, O merciful Father, we humbly ask, and grant that we, receiving this bread and this cup, as He commanded and in the memory of His passion and death, may partake of His most blessed body and blood.

In the night of His betrayal, Jesus took bread,

[Here the minister may take the bread in his/her hand.]

and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

In like manner, after supper He took the cup,

[Here the minister may lay hands upon the cups.]

and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of this, all of you, for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." Amen.

[Then may the minister first receive the communion, both the bread and the cup, and then give of the same to other ministers who may be present to assist in the service. After that the minister shall give to the people the communion, both the bread and the cup. When the bread is delivered, the minister may say:]

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed upon Him in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving.

[When serving the cup the minister may say:]

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

[If the consecrated bread or cup are used up before all have been served, the minister should consecrate more by repeating the prayer of consecration. When all have communed the minister shall return to the Lord's table and place upon it the consecrated elements which remain, covering the same with a white linen cloth. The minister may then offer extemporaneous prayer, or speak briefly of the significance of the service, and conclude with a blessing.]

The Benediction

May the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be yours now and forever. Amen.

C. THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MATRIMONY

¶A/920. Publication of banns shall be made by proclaiming the intended marriage openly, in an audible voice, during divine service, in some church, chapel, or place of public worship of the religious body to which the minister who is to solemnize the marriage belongs, situated within the local municipality parish, circuit, or pastoral charge where at least one of the parties to the intended marriage has resided for the period of eight days immediately preceding, at one or more services according to the requirements of the local jurisdiction. (Extracted from the British Columbia Marriage Acts.)

The minister shall declare during the church service:

I publish the banns of marriage between _____ of _____ (place) and _____ of _____ (place). If any of you know cause or just impediment why these two persons should not be joined together

in holy matrimony you are to declare it.

[At the time set, the man and woman to be married shall stand together facing the minister, the woman on the man's left, and the minister shall say:]

¶A/ 921. Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God and the presence of these witnesses to join together _____ and _____ in holy matrimony. Marriage is an honorable estate, instituted by God in the time of creation for the well-being of mankind. It is safeguarded by the laws of Moses, affirmed by the words of the prophets, and hallowed by the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Marriage is a union close and enduring, a relationship in which a man and a woman forsake all others to become one flesh. This abiding union illustrates the holy relationship between Christ and His church. Marriage is therefore not to be entered into by any lightly, but reverently, soberly, and in the fear of God.

[Addressing the man and woman, the minister shall say:]

_____ and _____, I charge you both as you stand in the presence of God to remember that covenant love alone will avail as the foundation of a happy and enduring home. Let Christ, who was loyal to His own unto death, be your example. Let the Apostle Paul be your teacher, who wrote: "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." If you keep this steadfast love ever before you and, remaining faithful to each other, resolutely endeavor to fulfill the vows you now will make, God's blessing will be upon you, and the home you establish will endure through life's every change.

[Then the minister shall say to the man, using his Christian name:]

_____, will you have _____ to be your wedded wife, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, keep yourself only for her, so long as you both shall live?

[The man shall answer:]

I will.

[Then the minister shall say to the woman, using her Christian name:]

_____, will you have _____ to be your wedded husband, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, keep yourself only for him, so long as you both shall live?

[The woman shall answer:]

I will.

[Then shall the minister say:]

Who gives _____ to be married to _____?

[The father of the woman, or whoever gives her in marriage, shall answer:]

I do.

[Then the minister, receiving the hand of the woman from her father or other sponsor, shall cause the man with his right hand to take the woman by her right hand, and say after him:]

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death us do part, and thereto I pledge you my faith.

[Then shall they loose their hands, and the woman, with her right hand, shall take the man by his right hand, and shall likewise say after the minister:]

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death us do part, and thereto I pledge you my faith.

[Then shall they again loose hands. The groomsman may give to the minister a ring, which the minister in turn will give to the groom, who will put it upon the third finger of the woman's left hand and, holding the ring, shall say after the minister:]

This ring I give you in token and pledge of our constant faith and steadfast love.

[In case of a double ring ceremony, the minister shall receive the other ring from the bridesmaid and shall deliver it to the woman to put upon the third finger of the man's left hand. The woman, holding the ring there, shall say after the minister :]

This ring I give you in token and pledge of our constant faith and steadfast love.

[Then the minister shall say:]

Let us pray.

O Eternal God, creator and preserver of all mankind, giver of all spiritual grace, the author of everlasting life: send Your blessing upon this man and this woman whom we bless in Your name; that they, living faithfully together, may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant between them made, and may ever remain in perfect love and peace together, and live according to Your laws through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Then the minister shall say:]

Forasmuch as _____ and _____ have consented together in holy wedlock and have witnessed the same before God and this company and have pledged their faith each to the other and have declared the same by joining hands (and by giving and receiving a ring), therefore, by the authority granted to me as a minister of Jesus Christ, I pronounce that they are husband and wife together, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together, let not man put asunder. Amen.

[The man and woman then kneel, and the minister shall pray over them an extemporaneous prayer, prepared especially for the two of them.]

[The man and woman shall stand, and the minister shall pronounce over them the following benediction:]

Go forth into the world in peace.

Be of good courage.

Hold fast to that which is good.

Render to no one evil for evil.

Strengthen the faint hearted,

Support the weak,

Help the afflicted,

Show honor to all.

Love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And the blessing of God Almighty,

The Father,

The Son,
And the Holy Spirit,
Be upon you and remain with you forever.
Amen.

D. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

¶A/930. We will not charge for funeral services.

THE FUNERAL SERVICE

[The minister may use the following order of worship at the church or chapel.]

Opening Sentences, such as:

“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.”

“For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

Invocation:

O Eternal God, our Father, from whom we come and to whom we go, grant us the favor of Your divine presence at this time in our earthly pilgrimage; assure us by Your Spirit that the one we serve, even Jesus,

has conquered death and is alive forevermore; enable us to view our temporal lives in the light of the eternal; and so may our spirits grow calm and our vision clear. Through Christ we pray. Amen.

Hymn (by the congregation, musicians, or organist) *(Optional)*

Obituary and/or Tributes *(Optional)*

Old Testament Scriptures, such as: Psalms 23, 90, 121

New Testament Scriptures, such as: John 14:1-6; 1 Corinthians 15:35-49;
2 Corinthians 5:1-5.

Hymn (by the congregation, musicians, or organist) *(Optional)*

Meditation

Prayer (for the family and community)

Benediction (not used if the service is to continue at the graveside)

[The minister shall at the appropriate time at the cemetery say:]

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25-26).

“For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand
upon the earth.

And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God,
I myself will see him,
with my own eyes ...” (Job 19:25-27).

“For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it” (1 Timothy 6:7).

“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised” (Job 1:21).

[The following may also be used at the cemetery.]

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.

Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?'

Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:1-6).

[Then shall the minister say:]

Inasmuch as Almighty God, in His wise providence, has taken out of this world our deceased brother (sister, or child), we therefore commit this mortal body to the ground, looking for the general resurrection in the last day and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose Second Coming in glorious majesty to judge the world, the earth and the sea shall give up their dead; and the corruptible bodies of those who sleep in Him shall be changed, and made like unto His own glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto himself.

[The minister may pray extemporaneously or use the following:]

The Collect

O merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, in whom whosoever believeth shall live though he die, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Him shall not die eternally, we meekly beseech You, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, that when we shall depart this life we may rest in Him, and at the general resurrection on the last day may be found acceptable in Your sight and receive that blessing which Your well-beloved Son shall then pronounce to all who love and fear You, saying, "Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world." Grant this, we beseech You, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.

Benediction

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

E. ORDINATION SERVICES

1. ORDINATION OF ELDERS

[The secretary shall present the ordinands to the president, saying: "I present to you these persons (reading their names aloud) to be ordained elder in the Free Methodist Church." Then the president shall say to the people:]

¶ **A/940.** Dear Friends in Christ: All persons who belong to Jesus Christ and his church are called to minister, but it has pleased the Lord throughout history to call particular believers from this number to minister the doctrines, sacraments, and discipline of Christ. Those so called are examined by the church and confirmed publicly by a service of ordination. These who stand before you we purpose this day to ordain elders. After due examination we find they are called by God to this ministry and are suited for the same. If, however, any of you knows anything to the contrary, come forward now in the name of God and make your objection known.

The Collect

Almighty God, the giver of all good gifts, who by Your divine providence appointed various orders in your church: Give Your grace we humbly pray, to these persons now called to the Order of Elders. So

replenish them with the truth of Your doctrine and endue them with holiness of life that they may faithfully serve before You to the glory of Your great name and to the benefit of Your holy church, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and ever. Amen.

The Old Testament — Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphims, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”

Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

The Epistle — 1 Timothy 4:11-16

Command and teach these things. Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

The Gospel — John 10:11-18

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So

when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock, one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life — only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.

Dear Friends in Christ,

[Here the ordinands may be called by name. And the president shall say to them as follows:]

Each of you has heard in the lessons taken from the Scriptures what dignity and importance belong to this office to which you are called. We have good hope that you have considered these things and that you have clearly determined, by God's grace, to give yourself completely to the fulfillment of your call. It is our hope that with all your strength you will apply yourself wholly to this one thing and direct all your concerns and studies in this direction. May you continually pray to God the Father, by the mediation of our only Saviour, Jesus Christ, for the aid of the Holy Spirit, that by daily reading and weighing of the Scriptures you may grow stronger and more mature in your ministry. May you endeavor repeatedly so to sanctify the lives of you and yours and to fashion them after the rule and doctrine of Christ so that you may be wholesome and godly examples for the people to follow.

And now, so that this congregation of Christ, here assembled, may also understand your mind and will in these things, and that your promise may all the more move you to fulfill your office, you shall answer plainly these questions which, in the name of God and His church, we ask.

Questions for Elders

1. Do you confidently believe that you are called, according to

the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, to serve His church as an elder?

Answer: I so believe.

2. Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain all doctrine necessary for eternal salvation; and out of these Scriptures are you determined to instruct the people committed to your care, teaching nothing as necessary to salvation except what can be concluded from or proved by the Scriptures?

Answer: I am.

3. Will you then faithfully give diligence always so to minister the doctrines and sacraments and discipline of Christ, as the Lord has commanded?

Answer: I will do so by the help of the Lord.

4. Will you be ready with faithful diligence, to banish all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word; and will you use both public and private warnings and exhortations both to the converted and unconverted as need shall require and occasion be given?

Answer: I will, the Lord being my helper.

5. Will you be diligent in prayers, the reading of the Holy Scriptures and whatever study shall enrich your knowledge of the same?

Answer: I will do so, the Lord being my helper.

6. Will you diligently regulate and pattern your life (and that of your family) according to the doctrine of Christ so as to make (both) yourself (and them), as far as you are able, wholesome example(s) and pattern(s) for the flock of Christ?

Answer: I will be diligent to do so, the Lord being my helper.

7. Will you practice and encourage, so far as you are able, quietness, peace, and love among all Christian people and especially among those who are committed to your care?

Answer: I will do so, the Lord being my helper.

8. As an elder of the Free Methodist Church, and in keeping with the Holy Scriptures, will you respect and be guided by those in authority over you?

Answer: I will do so, the Lord being my helper.

[The ordinands shall kneel, the elders shall be called forward for the laying on of hands, and the president shall say:]

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, of Your infinite love and goodness You have given us Your only and dearly beloved son, Jesus Christ, our redeemer and the author of everlasting life. To You we render most hearty thanks. We praise and worship You, and we humbly pray that we may continue always to be thankful for these and all Your other benefits to us. May we daily increase and go forward in the knowledge and faith of Him who died for us, who rose from death and even now lives to make intercession for us. May Your holy name be forever glorified and Your blessed kingdom enlarged, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

[The president and the elders present shall lay their hands upon the head of each of them and the president, addressing each by name shall say:]

The Lord pour upon you the Holy Spirit for the office and work of an elder in the Free Methodist Church now committed unto you by the laying on of our hands. Amen.

[They shall continue to kneel and the president shall deliver the Bible to each one of them in succession and shall say:]

Take authority to minister the Word of God. Faithfully proclaim His Word, declare His forgiveness, celebrate the sacraments, shepherd His people.

Closing Prayer

Most merciful Father, we beseech You to send upon these, Your servants, Your heavenly blessings, that they may be clothed with righteousness and that Your Word spoken by their mouths may have success. Grant us also that we may have grace to hear and receive what they shall deliver out of Your most Holy Word, or shall speak in agreement with the same, as the means of our salvation. May we, in all our words and deeds, seek Your glory and the increase of Your kingdom through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assist us, O Lord, in all our doings with Your most gracious favor and further us with Your continued help, that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in You, we may glorify Your name and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessings of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. Amen.

[Presentation of credentials and congratulations.]

2. ORDINATION OF DEACONS

[The secretary shall present to the president those who are to be ordained, saying: Mr. President, I present to you these persons (reading their names aloud) to be ordained deacon in the Free Methodist Church. Then the president shall say to the people:]

¶ **A/941.** Dear Friends in Christ: We purpose, God willing, to ordain to the order of deacon these persons who stand before you. We have examined them and we find them persons called by God to this ministry and suited for the same. If anyone knows any reason to the contrary, come forth now and make your objection known.

The Collect

Almighty God, who appointed various orders of ministers in Your church and inspired Your apostles to choose into the order of deacons Your first martyr, Stephen, with others; look with mercy upon these, Your servants, whom You have called to the same order and administration; may they be replenished with the truth of Your doctrine and adorned with blamelessness of life, so that both by word and good example, they may serve You faithfully in this office; so may Your name be glorified and Your church built up, through the merits of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

The Old Testament — Jeremiah 1:4-10

The word of the Lord came to me, saying,

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart;
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

“Ah, Sovereign Lord,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.” But the Lord said to me,

“Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’

You must go to everyone I send you to

and say whatever I command you.
 Do not be afraid of them,
 for I am with you and will rescue you,"
 declares the Lord.

Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me,

"Now, I have put my words in your mouth.
 See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms
 to uproot and tear down,
 to destroy and to overthrow,
 to build and to plant."

The Epistles — I Peter 4:10-11

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

The Gospel — Luke 4:14-19

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me;
 because he has anointed me to preach
 good news to the poor.
 He sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
 and recovery of sight for the blind,
 to release the oppressed,
 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Questions for Deacons

1. Do you believe you are inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit to take upon you the office of a deacon in the church of Christ, to serve God, promoting His glory and edifying His people?

Answer: I so believe.

2. Do you sincerely believe all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?

Answer: I believe them all.

3. Will you diligently read, teach and expound the same, as opportunity is given?

Answer: I will.

4. It belongs to the office of a deacon to search for the sick, the poor, and the helpless; to instruct the children in the ways of Christ; to minister to the elderly; and to do this under the guidance of an elder. Will you do this gladly and willingly?

Answer: I will do so, the Lord being my helper.

5. Will you apply all diligence to regulate and fashion your own life (and the lives of your family) according to the doctrine of Christ; and to make (both) yourself (and them), as far as you are able, wholesome example(s) of the flock of Christ?

Answer: I will do so, the Lord being my helper.

6. Will you reverently obey those to whom the charge and government over you is committed, following with glad mind and will their godly admonitions? 1 Thessalonians 5:12

Answer: I will.

[The ordinands shall kneel, and the president, laying hands upon the head of each of them in turn, shall say:]

Take authority to execute the office of a deacon in the church of God, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

[The president shall deliver the Bible to each of the new deacons in turn, saying:]

Take authority to read the Holy Scriptures in the church of God and to preach in the same.

[Then shall be said the collects following:]

Almighty God, giver of all good things, who by Your divine providences has guided these, Your servants, into the office of deacon of Your

church; make them, we pray, O Lord, modest, humble, and constant in their services. Grant to them a ready will to observe all spiritual discipline, that they may always have the testimony of a good conscience, and may continue ever stable and strong in Your Son, Christ Jesus. May they, behaving themselves well in this office, be found worthy to be called into the larger ministries in Your church. These petitions we offer in the name of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and honor, now and ever. Amen.

Assist us, O Lord, in all our doings with Your most gracious favor, and further us with Your continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in You, we may glorify Your holy name and finally, by Your mercy obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

[Presentation of credentials and congratulations.]

(If there is need to abbreviate the ritual for the ordination of deacons, the first Collect and Old Testament Scripture may be omitted.)

F. DEDICATION OF CHURCHES

[The congregation being assembled, let an appropriate hymn be sung. Afterward, let extemporary prayer be offered. Then shall the minister, or someone appointed, read:]

¶ A/950. The first lesson, Psalm 84:

How lovely is your dwelling place,
O Lord Almighty!
My soul years, even faints,
for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh cry out
for the living God.

Even the sparrow has found a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may have her young
a place near your altar,
O Lord Almighty, my King and my God.
Blessed are those who dwell in your house;
they are ever praising you. *Selah*

Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.
As they pass through the Valley of Baca,
they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.
They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.

Hear my prayer, O Lord God Almighty;
listen to me, O God of Jacob. *Selah*
Look upon our shield, O God;
look with favor on your anointed one.

Better is one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere;
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.
For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
the Lord bestows favor and honor;
no good thing does he withhold

from those whose walk is blameless.

O Lord Almighty,
blessed is the man who trusts in you.

The second lesson, Hebrews 10:19-25:

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

[Then let an appropriate hymn be sung, after which the minister shall deliver a sermon suitable to the occasion. Contribution may then be received from the people.]

[Then let the trustees stand before the altar, and one of them, or someone in their behalf, say unto the minister:]

We present unto you this building, to be dedicated as a church for the service and worship of Almighty God.

[Then shall the minister request the congregation to stand, while he/she repeats the following declaration:]

DECLARATION

Dearly beloved, it is meet and right, as we learn from the Holy Scriptures, that houses erected for the public worship of God should be specially set apart and dedicated to religious uses. For such a dedication we are now assembled. With gratitude, therefore, to Almighty God, who has signally blessed His servants in their holy enterprise of erecting this church, we dedicate it to His service, for the reading of the Holy Scriptures, the preaching of the Word of God, the administration of the holy sacraments, and for all other exercises of religious worship and service, according to the *Book of Discipline* and usages of the Free Methodist Church.

[Then let the dedicatory prayer be offered.]

BOOK OF DISCIPLINE, PART B

CHAPTER IV

OFFICIAL BODIES OF THE CHURCH

E. General Administration

CHAPTER X

APPENDIXES

A. Incorporation

B. Forms

C. Historical

CHAPTER IV

OFFICIAL BODIES OF THE CHURCH

- E. General Administration
 - 2. Board of Administration
 - 3. Commission on Administration
 - 4. Commission on Christian Education
 - 5. Commission on Evangelism
 - 6. Commission on Missions

2. BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION

¶ B/450. 1. The Board of Administration shall consist of the bishops, the General Conference secretary who is the secretary of the board, twenty-one traveling elders and twenty-one lay members elected in the manner prescribed in Paragraph A/444, Section 2. Termination of membership in the Free Methodist Church shall automatically terminate membership on the Board of Administration. No General Conference officer other than the bishops and the secretary shall be a member of the Board of Administration. The Board of Administration shall elect its president and vice president from among the members of its administrative districts who shall also serve as the president and vice president of its executive committee. It may request nominations from the special committee outlined in Section 3 of Paragraph B/451 if it so desires.

2. The board shall provide rules and regulations for the conduct of its business. *Robert's Rules of Order* in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure in the sessions of the Board of Administration.

¶ B/451. 1. The Board of Administration shall have general organizational, promotional, and supervisory powers over all the activities of the church during the interim between General Conference sessions. It shall meet at least annually and whenever the bishops or one-third of the members shall deem it necessary. A majority of the members elected shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

2. The Board of Administration shall have power to accept resignations and fill vacancies, to remove for cause any of its members or any denominational executive during the interim between General Conference sessions, subject to the provisions of the *Book of Discipline*. In the event of a vacancy in the Board of Bishops in any but the last year of the interim between General Conference sessions, each conference board of administration may submit a nomination to the general Board of Administration which shall elect by ballot.

3. The Board of Administration shall meet immediately at the close of the General Conference and shall have power to organize itself into commissions and assign its work to the commissions, notwithstanding anything hereinafter set forth.

A committee of not less than eight of equal number of ministers and laypersons, exclusive of the Board of Bishops, shall be elected by the Board of Administration to nominate the chair and other members of the respective commissions. The committee may consult the Board of Bishops if it deems it wise to do so. The bishops shall be *ex officio* members of all commissions but shall not serve as chair.

The members of the Board of Administration owe their primary duty to the board and their secondary duty to the commission to which they have been appointed as committee members. All the commissions are committees of the Board of Administration to which each commission is responsible for duties assigned.

4. The Board of Administration shall elect the Board of Directors of The Free Methodist Foundation. Directors shall be laypersons and ministers who are active in the life and work of the Free Methodist Church and who are qualified to administer the business of the Foundation. The Board of Directors of the Foundation may suggest names to the Executive Committee of the Board of Administration which shall act as the nominating committee. The number of members, directors, terms, and provisions for staggered terms shall be as provided for in the bylaws of the Foundation.

A written statement of philosophy of operations shall be prepared by The Free Methodist Foundation for periodic review and approval by the Board of Administration.

- a. The Foundation shall act as trustee for all trusts in which either the Free Methodist Church of North America, or any of its conferences, local churches, ministries, agencies, or departments are designated either as fiduciary or as a beneficiary, as assigned to it from time to time by the Board of Administration, and shall act as trustee of the Pooled Income Fund and all charitable remainder trusts where so designated by the trustor. With respect to all existing trust relationships, the Foundation shall act as the agent for the denomination, and in its place and stead, as trustee, to the extent authorized by the Board of Administration and the Board of Directors of the Free Methodist Church of North America.
- b. Subject to its approved philosophy of operations, the Foundation shall control, carry out, and manage all activities of the denomination relating to estate planning, wills, trusts, estates, and other types of deferred gifts. In this connection, and to the extent permitted by law, it shall have the power to issue charitable annuities.
- c. The Foundation directors shall be the successors of the Investment Committee and shall carry out the duties formerly assigned to the Investment Committee by the *Book of Discipline*, and, to the extent provided by the *Book of Discipline*, shall manage, control, and supervise all investments of the denomination, its departments, subsidiaries, and related agencies, all pension funds, and all other funds which are entrusted to

its control for investment and management. The functions of the former Investment Committee shall be carried out through the Foundation.

- d. The Foundation shall manage the Free Methodist Loan Fund. No treasurer of these church funds shall be a member of the Foundation Board of Directors. No member of the Board of Directors shall be eligible to borrow directly or indirectly or to participate in the benefits of any money borrowed from this loan fund. The Free Methodist Foundation shall not invest these funds in any investments except such as are lawful for the investment of trust funds in the state in which the Free Methodist Foundation may be incorporated.

The Foundation shall report annually to the Board of Administration.

5. The Board of Administration shall elect a secretary of the General Conference who shall serve as the secretary of the Board of Administration and its executive committee. The secretary may be nominated by a committee of the board, shall be the custodian of the General Conference records and journals, and shall keep a record of conscientious objectors reported by the annual conference secretaries. (See Par. A/332, Sec. 3.) It shall be the secretary's duty to make a full report of the proceedings of the Board of Administration to the General Conference.

When the Board of Administration deems it feasible, it shall employ a general church secretary as a denominational executive who shall then assume all the responsibilities and authority of the secretary of the General Conference and other duties as may be assigned by the board. The general church secretary shall be nominated by the executive committee of the board.

6.
 - a. The Central Area Bishop, as chair of the Operating Committee, shall be charged with the general oversight of the World Ministries Center, and other responsibilities as assigned by the Board of Administration, and shall be report to the Executive Committee of the Board of Administration.
 - b. The Board of Administration shall employ a director of administration and finance who shall serve as the general church treasurer to administer the finances of the church. The general church treasurer shall be bonded.
7.
 - a. The Board of Administration shall employ other suitable personnel in the leadership of the various church ministries pursuant to Paragraph A/444, Section 1. Those designated as denominational executives shall meet with the commissions to which their work is assigned.
 - b. All denominational executives employed by the Board of

Administration shall be responsible to the Board of Administration as to their official duties and shall work under the supervision of the Central Area bishop. The only exception to this is the editor of *Light and Life* magazine who is supervised by the publisher.

- c. All denominational executives may retire upon reaching age 60. Though normal retirement is at age 65, when mutually agreed employment may be extended on a year-by-year basis until age 70. In such cases, each yearly extension shall be considered on recommendation of the Central Area Bishop with approved by the Board of Administration.

8. The Board of Administration shall employ a certified public accountant firm to audit annually the accounts of the general church treasurer. The auditor will make an annual report in writing to the Board of Administration with recommendations, if any.

9. The Board of Administration shall form an executive committee composed as follows:

- the president, vice-president, and secretary of the Board of Administration;
- one lay member and one minister from each commission elected by the Board of Administration;
- all U.S. bishops;
- members at large to ensure equal lay and ministerial representation.

The duties and powers of the Executive Committee shall be defined by the Board of Administration. This committee shall be responsible for general coordination of the work of the commissions and the departments.

The acts of the Executive Committee shall be subject to the approval of the Board of Administration.

10. The Board of Administration at its first session following General Conference shall elect a Council on Ethnic Ministries composed of five members, to be nominated by the Commission on Evangelism, as representative as possible of the various ethnic churches. In addition one bishop and the director of evangelism and church growth shall be members. The council shall name one of its members to serve on the Commission on Evangelism.

The purpose of the Council on Ethnic Ministries will be to create an awareness of the presence and needs of ethnic groups and to encourage their full participation and representation in the life of the Free Methodist Church.

11. The Board of Administration shall appoint a Committee on Cooperative or Federated Ministries, Comity, and Merger Exploration.

The committee shall be responsible to and report to the Board of Administration. The committee shall be composed of not less than nine and not more than thirteen members. This committee shall serve as a liaison between the Free Methodist Church and other denominations or organizations of like spiritual concerns and doctrine.

12. The proper officers shall publish in the *Yearbook* annually full and detailed statements of the assets, liabilities, net worth, and financial standing of the various general church boards and corporations.

13. All of the commissions, the Women's Ministries International, and the Men's Ministries International shall make and file annually their financial statements with the secretary of the Board of Administration.

¶ **B/452.** Budget and Finance Committee.

1. The Board of Administration shall elect a Budget and Finance Committee of six members to serve four-year terms. This committee shall have five major responsibilities.

- a. To examine and review the sources available for expenditures and to recommend to the Board of Administration provisions for underwriting by the annual conferences.
- b. To review and to recommend to the Board of Administration for consideration and approval the expenditure budgets of the various departments and agencies of the Free Methodist Church of North America operating under the purview of the Board of Administration.
- c. To serve as an consultant to the operating committee in budget matters.
- d. To review annually the performance of each department and to recommend controls to maintain their operations within their income.
- e. To report to the Board of Administration following review by the Executive Committee.

2. There shall be one member from each of the four commissions, nominated by the Board of Administration Nominating Committee to serve for the quadrennium. Two shall be laypersons and two shall be ministers. One minister and one layperson shall be elected at large. The central area bishop and the general church treasurer shall be advisory members of the committee. The chair shall be the representative from the Commission on Administration.

3. Terms of service of the two members at large shall be staggered so that they are not elected the same year. If members must be replaced before their terms are completed, replacements shall be for the balance of the unexpired term. Members may succeed themselves.

4. In selecting persons to serve on the Budget and Finance Committee, representation by geographic area and from conferences of different sizes shall be sought. Persons selected to serve should have specific budget training and / or experience. They should also have demonstrated a vital interest in the total mission of the church.

¶ **B/453.** United Ministries for Christ Guidelines (effective January 1, 1987).

1. The United Ministries for Christ is the approved system for funding of all ministries of the general church.

2. That portion of the United Ministries for Christ that pertains to the Department of World Missions shall be funded by methods and programs devised by the Commission on Missions and approved by the Board of Administration.

All other departments and ministries, including their administrative costs, shall be funded by a fixed amount through goals suggested to each annual conference by the Board of Administration upon recommendation of the Budget and Finance Committee.

3. All departments shall be responsible to keep the details and results of general church ministries before the local church by a regular program of communication.

4. The Board of Administration may, in response to a request from a department, approve projects for promotion that are not included in the United Ministries for Christ budget. The Board of Administration shall develop guidelines for defining, approving, promoting, and administering such projects.

5. Approved projects outside the United Ministries for Christ shall be made available to individuals, groups, and organizations outside the Free Methodist Church.

6. Each department shall cooperate with the Free Methodist Foundation in the matter of annuities, wills, and estate planning.

7. All contributions received at the World Ministries Center except deferred gifts shall be applied to the fixed portion of the United Ministries for Christ budget unless otherwise specifically designated by the donor.

8. The proposed budget of each denominational department shall be prepared annually by the appropriate denominational executive, reviewed and approved by the operating committee, and presented to the Budget and Finance Committee. Upon approval it will be reviewed by the Executive Committee of the Board of Administration. The recommended budget shall be submitted by the Budget and Finance Committee to the Board of Administration for approval each year.

9. Provisions of this paragraph may be revised in the interim between General Conferences by a two-thirds vote of the Board of Administration

and a ratifying vote by two-thirds of the annual conferences.

3. COMMISSION ON ADMINISTRATION

a. Its Powers

¶ B/460. 1. The Board of Administration has authority over the Commission on Administration and its departments. The Commission on Administration shall consist of the number of persons as directed by the Board of Administration (see Par. B/451, Sec. 3).

2. The Commission on Administration shall be the Board of Directors of the Free Methodist Publishing House.

3. The Commission on Administration shall have advisory supervision of all church property.

4. The Commission on Administration shall constitute the Court of Appeals, whose decision shall be final. Should any member of this court be absent or disqualified to sit, the place shall be filled pro tem by the Board of Administration from its members, or, if they are disqualified, from a list of members of the church at large approved by counsel for both sides; so that no appeal shall be heard except before a full court. The Court of Appeals shall, if necessary, hold a session once a year, for the purpose of trying all appeals that may be taken thereto by any traveling minister from the decisions of an annual conference. The chair of the Commission on Administration shall ordinarily preside over the court; but if absent or disqualified, the Board of Administration shall elect one of its members to preside.

5. The Commission on Administration shall have the power to decide all questions of law referred to it in the interim of the General Conference. In case of any alleged legal irregularities in a trial court, wherein the court has delivered a verdict against the church, the prosecution may, upon a written recital of the irregularities, apply to the Commission on Administration or to the General Conference for a writ of review, and it shall be the province of that body receiving the application to review the proceedings of the lower court as recited, and if the reviewing body finds the alleged irregularities to exist, the case may be remanded, but only once, for a new trial.

6. The Commission on Administration shall have power to make such preliminary arrangements for the General Conference as it may deem necessary.

7. The Commission on Administration shall set the salaries of the bishops and the denominational executives, subject to the approval of the Board of Administration.

8. The Commission on Administration, together with two repre-

sentatives elected by the Association of Social Service Agencies, shall constitute the Board of Social Ministry of the church.

9. The Commission on Administration shall constitute a Board of Industrial Relations, the duty of which is to furnish information and render decisions upon all matters of industrial relations. To this board shall be committed all questions, communications, and papers relating to labor unions or membership in them. This board shall, wherever practicable, constitute a collective bargaining agency on behalf of the members of our church.

¶ **B/460.1.** The acts of the Commission on Administration shall be subject to the approval of the Board of Administration except when it sits as an appellate court.

b. Retirement Program

¶ **B/461.** Conference Claimants' Fund.

The Conference Claimants' Fund was the retirement program of the Free Methodist Church prior to June, 1955. It is still in effect for those retired ministers, missionaries, and others who were covered by the plan. It will be continued for those qualified persons now in the program until all obligations under the plan are fulfilled.

Information regarding the organization, administration, and rules of the plan as they may be amended from time to time by the Board of Administration may be secured by writing to the Director of Administration and Finance, Free Methodist Church of North America, P.O. Box 535002, Indianapolis, Indiana 46253-5002.

¶ **B/461.1.** Social Security.

1. The benefits available under the Federal Old Age and Survivors Insurance (hereinafter called Social Security) Program are a part of the church's plan for support of its retired ministers and retired licensed missionaries, or their widows and orphans, and widows and orphans of ordained ministers and licensed missionaries.

2. It is recommended that each society, pastoral charge, conference, or other organization responsible for a minister's or missionary's salary obligate itself to contribute to said minister or missionary, in addition to said salary, an amount equal to at least one-half of the annual contribution, or assessment, for Social Security as a "self-employed" minister.

¶ **B/461.7.** Pension Plan.

1. The Board of Administration by authorization of the 1964 Gen-

eral Conference has established a pension plan which became effective January 1, 1969, and covers ministers, general officers, and other persons as described in the pension plan.

2. The pension plan was created for the exclusive benefit of employees of the employer and their beneficiaries and shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with its being a qualified pension plan as defined in section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as the same may be amended from time to time.

3. The pension plan shall be administered by the Commission on Administration serving as the Pension Board, in accordance with the rules and regulations of the plan. The details of this administrative responsibility shall be delegated to the Pension Executive Committee which is appointed by the Commission on Administration.

4. The Pension Executive Committee shall make decisions concerning the administration of the plan, and shall regularly review the plan and its administration for needed clarification, procedural adjustments, or amendments. The Pension Executive Committee's work is subject to the approval of the Commission on Administration, and in turn shall be reported to the Board of Administration for ratification.

5. The pension plan may be amended by the General Conference, the Board of Administration, or the Pension Board (subject to ratification by the Board of Administration), and the text of such amendments will be communicated to the plan participants in a proper manner. Any amendment which, in the judgment of the Pension Board should be adopted before the next General Conference or before the next regular meeting of the Board of Administration, may be adopted ad interim by the Executive Committee of the Board of Administration. No amendment shall abridge or annul the rights of members in respect to their accumulations as of the date of the adoption of such amendment.

6. Each United States church of a participating conference shall contribute to the support of the pension plan even if its present pastor may not be eligible. The contribution paid by the church shall be in addition to the pastor's earnings, not a deduction from them.

7. Any qualifying person serving a Free Methodist church in another country shall be granted a leave of absence and shall not forfeit any pension benefits which have accrued.

8. No participant in the pension plan shall have any right to assign, alienate, anticipate, or commute any payments from the plan; and, except as otherwise prescribed by law, no payment shall be subject to the debts, contracts, or engagements of any payee, nor to any judicial process to levy upon or attach the same for the payment thereof.

9. The trustees of the pension plan shall be the Board of Directors

of the Free Methodist Church of North America, who shall be responsible for seeing that the plan is administered in accordance with the plan document.

c. Department of Social Ministry

¶ **B/463.** 1. It shall be the duty of the Commission on Administration to inspect the institutions of social ministry operating in and receiving support from the Free Methodist Church. No such institution shall be approved until it has been officially recommended by its local conference.

2. The commission shall determine the financial standing of these institutions, their plan of operation, and the character and amount of work done, and shall determine whether or not they qualify for accreditation by the Free Methodist Church.

3. The commission shall have power to regulate the establishment of new institutions of social ministry so as to avoid the jeopardizing of those already operating as accredited institutions, and to this end the commission shall assign each approved institution its supporting territory.

4. The commission shall receive and examine the annual reports of these accredited institutions upon their financial status, their work, and the general plan and scope of their activities.

5. The accredited institutions of the Free Methodist Church are:

Olive Branch Mission, 6310 S. Claremont, Chicago, Illinois 60636. Founded in 1875.

Heritage Village (The Gerry Homes), Gerry, New York 14740. Founded in 1880.

Deaconess Hospital and Deaconess Home (The Home of Redeeming Love), 5501 N. Portland Avenue, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73112. Founded in 1900.

Woodstock Christian Care, Inc., 318 Mansfield Ave., Woodstock, Illinois 60098. Founded in 1903.

The Life Line Homes, Inc., P.O. Box 12366, Kansas City, Kansas 66112. Founded in 1907. Permanent endowment fund for youth ministries.

Warm Beach Senior Community, 20420 Marine Drive NW, Stanwood, Washington 98292. Founded in 1967.

Clawson Manor, New Life, Inc., 255 W. 14th Mile Road, Clawson, Michigan 48017. Founded in 1970.

Lighthouse Community Outreach Center, 1218 Tower Grove, St. Louis, Missouri 63110.

The Retirement Village at Copper Lake, 1225 Lakeshore Drive, Edmond, Oklahoma 73013. Founded in 1990.

ANVIL Time, Inc., 106 Apt. C, Chatham Gardens, Rochester, New

York 14605. Founded in 1994.

The Birth Connection, 4325 A St., Sacramento, California 95819.

And any others accredited by the commission.

6. We recommend that each pastor preach a sermon at least once a year on the subject of practical charity and present an opportunity for charity offerings, to be used for the relief of the poor on the pastoral charge where the offering is received or sent to an accredited institution of social ministry in whose patronizing territory the society lies.

7. The pastor shall cooperate with the Sunday school in the Easter offering for institutions of social ministry.

8. Each annual conference shall appoint among its regular committees a committee on social issues and ministries.

d. The Publishing House

¶ **B/464.** 1. The Free Methodist Publishing House is a corporation established by the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America for the purpose of producing and circulating wholesome literature. It is incorporated under the laws of the state of Illinois, with headquarters at Indianapolis, Indiana.

2. The Free Methodist Publishing House is the denomination's official publishing agency.

3. The Board of Administration constitutes the corporate membership. The site of the Publishing House can be changed only with the consent of three-fourths of all the members of the Board of Administration present and voting at a regular or specially called meeting.

4. The Commission on Administration shall be the Board of Directors of the Free Methodist Publishing House and have general supervision of the publishing interests of the church during the interim between General Conferences.

5. The executive of the Publishing House shall have authority to direct its functions according to policies set by the Publishing House Board and under the supervision of the Consulting and Review Committee.

c. Health Insurance Plan

¶ **B/465.** 1. The Board of Administration by authorization of the 1989 General Conference established a partially self-insured health insurance plan which became effective January 1, 1991. The plan is available to ordained ministers, ministerial candidates, persons appointed to a pastoral charge, and other persons as described in the Summary Plan Description.

2. The health insurance plan was created for the exclusive benefit of employees of the employer and their families. This plan includes group term life insurance, accidental death and dismemberment insurance, and long-term disability insurance. In addition optional dental and vision coverage are available.

3. The health insurance plan shall be administered by the Commission on Administration serving as the Insurance Board, with administrative details delegated to the Insurance Executive Committee which is appointed by the Commission on Administration.

4. The Insurance Executive Committee shall make decisions concerning the administration of the plan, and shall establish premiums and plan policies. The premiums and policies shall be subject to the approval of the Commission on Administration, and in turn shall be reported to the Board of Administration for ratification.

5. Amendments to the health insurance plan may be proposed by the Insurance Board and approved by the general conference or the board of administration. The text of such amendments shall be communicated to the plan participants in a proper manner.

4. COMMISSION ON EDUCATION

a. General Organization and Personnel

¶ B/470. 1. The Board of Administration shall constitute the Board of Education, which has authority over the Commission on Education and its departments. The Commission on Education shall consist of the number of persons as directed by the Board of Administration (see Par. B/451, Sec. 3) and two elected by the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions (see Par. B/474, Sec. 1:a:6).

2. The members of this commission shall continue in office until the close of the session of the General Conference next after their election and until others are elected in their places.

3. The commission shall meet annually. Notices of meetings shall be sent to members at least one month in advance. The chair shall have authority to call a special meeting of the commission in an emergency or upon the written request of three other members of the commission.

4. The acts of the commission shall be subject to the approval of the Board of Administration.

5. The officers of the commission shall be chair, elected by the Board of Administration; secretary, to be elected by the commission from its own membership; and general church treasurer as *ex officio* treasurer.

6. The commission shall be responsible for the general direction of the program of the church dealing with (a) the Christian education

and training of childhood and youth, (b) the guidance and control of organized youth activities, (c) the education and training of young people in church-related high schools and colleges, (d) the education and training of ministers for the church through church-related Bible schools and theological seminaries, (e) provision in local churches and elsewhere for the training of lay leaders in Christian education and evangelism, (f) bringing under the influence of these activities children, young people, and adults from outside the church membership.

7. The commission, in consultation with the Board of Bishops, shall see that graded materials are prepared or chosen dealing with the biblical view of human sexuality, preparation for marriage, and marriage. These materials shall be periodically reviewed.

8. The commission shall function through two departments, as follows:

a. The Department of Christian Education.

Responsible for all church Christian education ministries, including Sunday school; training for Christian education personnel for the local church; instruction in church membership; studies related to evangelism, missions, stewardship, doctrine, moral issues, and biblical knowledge; vacation Bible school; family life ministries; and camping.

(1) Division of Children's Ministries.

Includes all ministries and group activities for children, including Sunday school, worship, and weekday programs for preschool, primary, and junior ages.

(2) Division of Youth Ministries.

Includes all ministries and group activities for youth, including Sunday school, worship, and weekday activities for young teen and senior teen ages.

(3) Division of Adult Ministries.

Includes all ministries and group activities for adults, including Sunday school, worship, and weekday activities for early adults, young adults, middle adults, and older adults.

b. The Department of Higher Education and the Ministry.

(1) Division of Educational Institutions.

Responsible for promoting and helping to maintain adequate opportunity for college and graduate training of the young people of the Free Methodist Church. In order to discharge its basic responsibilities, the Division of Educational Institutions shall recognize the following areas of educational service:

- Denominational institutions - Full
- Denominational institutions - Approved/Related
- Cooperating institutions
- Educational foundations
- Aldersgate fellowships

(2) Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services

(a) Ministerial education and Guidance.

Responsible for setting up or approving and supervising the various programs in the church for the education and training of ministers.

(b) John Wesley Seminary.

The Free Methodist Church shall maintain a theological seminary for the post-college training of candidates for the ministry and other types of Christian service known as John Wesley Seminary.

9. A denominational executive shall have authority to direct each of these departments according to policies set by the Board of Education and under the supervision of the chair of the operating committee.

b. Department of Christian Education

¶ **B/471.** General Organization

The Department of Christian Education shall function under the direction of the Commission on Education.

1. The Division of Children's Ministries functioning under the Department of Christian Education shall have the following objectives:

- a. to lead children into a genuine experience of salvation from sin and a basic understanding of the ministry of the Holy Spirit;
- b. to nurture the mental, physical, spiritual, and social development of the children involved;
- c. to afford opportunities for children to receive training and experience in verbally expressing their faith in Christ.
- d. to provide a wholesome outlet for the interests and activities of children under the direction of Christian leaders;
- e. to acquaint children with the history, teaching, and ministries of their church;
- f. to strengthen the Christian commitment of adult leaders through leadership and service opportunities;
- g. to teach children to worship a personal Heavenly Father through singing, praying, sharing, and other means of expression; and

- h. to enhance the quality of education for children in private preschool, day care, elementary, and secondary programs.

Christian Elementary and Preschools.

The Commission on Education shall encourage and promote the establishing of Christian day schools.

- (1) It is recommended that such schools be designated Light and Life Christian Schools.
- (2) The commission shall make available to local churches and annual conferences information concerning existing Christian elementary and preschools.
- (3) Light and Life Christian Schools are expected to meet or exceed state educational standards.
- (4) Each annual conference is authorized to establish a conference board of Light and Life Christian Schools which shall oversee the work of all Light and Life Christian Schools within the conference in accord with guidelines established by the Commission on Education and the annual conference. The president of the conference shall instruct the nominating committee to exercise care in naming to this board persons competent to serve.
- (5) Responsibility for the operation of Light and Life Christian Schools shall rest with the local board of directors, two-thirds of whom shall be members of the Free Methodist Church, which shall cooperate with the conference board in accord with the guidelines established by the commission and the annual conference.
- (6) A person shall be employed by a local church to be principal of its school only after meeting the following criteria:
 - (a) the official board has determined that the candidate's educational and spiritual leadership is appropriate;
 - (b) the conference board of ministerial education and guidance, upon examination of the candidate's qualifications, has given employment approval to the local society;
 - (c) the official board approves the candidate for employment;
 - (d) the candidate is, or upon employment will become, a member of the Free Methodist Church.
- (7) The commission is authorized to develop a plan for assisting Free Methodist young people attending Free Methodist colleges in preparation for teaching in Light and Life Christian Schools.
- (8) It is the responsibility of each conference having Christian schools and of the local officials controlling such schools

to see that the appropriate trust clause is a part of each deed pertaining to such school property, the same as other church property (see Pars. A /850-859).

- (9) The “Guiding Principles” of Paragraph B/473 shall apply to Light and Life Christian Schools. Any complaint of violation of any of these principles shall be directed to the board of Light and Life Christian Schools of the conference in which the school is located. Should the complaint be found to be valid, the board shall apply such penalty to the school found guilty as it deems appropriate. Such school, however, shall have the privilege of appeal, with full hearing, to the board of administration of the conference.

The Division of Children’s Ministries functions under a charter in the official handbook.

2. The Division of Youth Ministries functioning under the Department of Christian Education shall have the following objectives:

a. Young Teen Ministries

Purpose

- (1) to lead young teens into a genuine experience of salvation from sin and a knowledge of the Holy Spirit and an understanding of the Scriptures;
- (2) to nurture the mental, physical, spiritual, and social development of young teens;
- (3) to offer opportunity for young teens to receive training and experience in winning others to Christ.
- (4) to provide wholesome relationships with Christian models of all ages through innovative activities;
- (5) to acquaint young teens with the history, teachings, and ministries of the Free Methodist Church; and
- (6) to guide young teens in worship in the company of other Christians through prayer, singing, silence, and other means of communication.

Organization

The organization functions under a charter for young teen ministries found in the official handbook.

b. Senior Teens Ministries

Preamble

To promote the spiritual welfare of youth connected with the Free Methodist Church, to provide Christ-honoring activities, and to help them in their contribution to the church, their community, and the world, there shall be a ministry provided

for senior teens, under the Division of Youth Ministries, the Department of Christian Education of the Free Methodist Church of North America.

Purpose

The purpose of this ministry shall be:

- (1) to seek and maintain among its members the highest level of Christian experience through salvation and the filling of the Holy Spirit;
- (2) to inspire, enlist, and train members to be effective witnesses of Jesus Christ by providing for the needs of people;
- (3) to guide youth that they may more effectively fulfill the will of Christ for their lives;
- (4) to help youth in understanding relationships with parents and family and to guide youth in their future plans for marriage and family living;
- (5) to bring youth into full membership in the Free Methodist Church;
- (6) to study the needs of mankind and become intelligent supporters of the United Ministries for Christ; and
- (7) to provide opportunities and training for senior teens to worship God through sharing, praying, singing, silence, and other means.

Organization

The organization functions under a charter for senior teen ministries found in the official handbook.

3. The Division of Adult Ministries functioning under the Department of Christian Education has the following objectives:
 - a. to promote the teaching ministry of the Great Commission;
 - b. to promote the knowledge of the Bible through systematic reading, study, and memorization;
 - c. to bring as many persons as possible to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.
 - d. to build numerically and strengthen spiritually the Free Methodist Church;
 - e. to cooperate in bringing about a spiritual revival through the Sunday schools;
 - f. to provide training for Christian service;
 - g. to provide Christian fellowship, through organized classes, outings, and other social activities;
 - h. to provide a channel through which the community may be

- reached with Christian teaching;
- i. to provide materials to pastors for premarital and marriage counseling;
- j. to be a channel for nurturing children, guiding youth, and developing adults to a life of wholeness; and
- k. to provide training and experiences in worshiping God and in leading others to worship God “in spirit and in truth.”
- l. Early Adult Ministries.

Preamble

To promote the spiritual welfare of early adults attending the Free Methodist Church, to provide Christ-honoring activities, and to help them make their contribution to the church, their community, and their world, there shall be a ministry for early adults, under the Division of Adult Ministries, the Department of Christian Education of the Free Methodist Church of North America.

Purpose

The purpose of this ministry shall be:

- (1) to seek and maintain among its members the highest level of Christian experience through salvation and the filling of the Holy Spirit;
- (2) to inspire, to enlist, and to train members to win the lost to Jesus Christ, even as they have been won.
- (3) to help participants to know and apply more effectively the will of Christ for their lives;
- (4) to create a warm and nurturing fellowship within the local body of believers;
- (5) to study the needs of mankind and become intelligent supporters of God and His church through proper principles of stewardship and giving to the United Ministries for Christ;
- (6) to establish and strengthen membership ties in the Free Methodist Church; and
- (7) to provide opportunities and training for its members to worship God through sharing, praying, singing, silence, and other means.

Organization

The organization functions under a charter for early adult ministries found in the official handbook.

The adult ministry program functions under a charter provided in the official handbook.

- c. Department of Higher Education and the Ministry

(1) Division of Educational Institutions

¶ B/472. Powers and Responsibilities.

The Division of Educational Institutions shall have the following powers and responsibilities:

1. Provide guidance and assistance to the church-related colleges, secondary schools, elementary and preschools, and their supporting conferences, looking toward an efficient educational program for Free Methodist youth, under the auspices of the church.,

2. Set standards, academic and otherwise, which Free Methodist schools are expected to maintain. This shall include an emphasis upon achievement of full accreditation as an immediate objective.

3. Adopt procedures for assigning and, when need arises, for changing the boundaries of the supporting areas of any educational institution when it is believed to be for the best interests of the church, the areas, the schools, and the students concerned. Such action may be subject to appeal.

4. Take initiative, in cooperation with the various trustee boards, faculties, and administrative officers of the Free Methodist schools, in preserving such policies and objectives as will relate those institutions closely to the church.

5. Assist in fostering in these institutions such an atmosphere of Christian dedication, devotion, and service as will encourage both faculty and students to live constantly under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit and stimulate students through positive personal Christian experience, as well as through academic and biblical studies to give continuing witness to the power of the gospel.

6. Encourage in every department of these institutions the highest educational standards and foster in students the understanding that true Christian education centers in Christ.

7. Review the financial methods of all educational institutions and recommend improvements which seem to be needed for sound business practice and standard fiscal procedures for institutions of learning.

8. Devise ways and means to provide supplementary financial aid to our church schools.

9. Establish fellowships on college, university, and other school campuses which are not affiliated with the Free Methodist Church. These fellowships shall be operated in accordance with the constitution approved by the Commission on Education of the Free Methodist Church. Wherever practical, Free Methodists shall be encouraged to cooperate with other evangelicals in establishing and operating such fellowships.

The general secretary of higher education shall maintain a program

including visits by the secretary and others for the guidance, fellowship, and encouragement of Free Methodists who are in such other schools not affiliated with the Free Methodist Church where Free Methodist fellowships have not been established.

10. Publish annually in the *Yearbook* the following: (a) a list of all approved educational institutions of the Free Methodist Church under the Division of Educational Institutions, (b) the type, or classification, of each school (c) the highest academic accreditation of each school, including the name of the accrediting agency, (d) a list of the conferences assigned to each school. Each annual conference shall publish in its section of the *Yearbook* a list of all Light and Life elementary schools and preschools designating the levels of instruction offered and the respective enrollments.

11. Assist conference boards of Christian education in carrying out their responsibilities with respect to Free Methodist educational institutions within their own conference and assigned geographic area.

12. Provide and administer a program of scholarships for students in Free Methodist collegiate, graduate, and theological institutions. This shall include responsibility for setting up the conditions necessary for a student to qualify for a scholarship, for determining methods for distributing scholarships to the various schools, and for selection of recipients.

13. Solicit bequests, money, property, and other securities to be used in providing financial assistance to the various educational institutions, to provide funds for the operation of the department, and to build up the endowment, the scholarship, and the student aid funds consistent with United Ministries for Christ guidelines.

14. Make surveys, call and hold conferences, and conduct workshops and seminars having to do with any phase of the schools, their problems and their programs, or related to the church's responsibility in the field of education.

15. Prepare and distribute promotional leaflets and other literature throughout the church to interest both youth and adults in attending and supporting our schools.

16. Maintain a file of all ministerial students, undergraduate and graduate, who are under the guidance of any Free Methodist conference, and, for those attending a Free Methodist school, maintain a record of earned academic and professional credits as reported by the institution attended.

17. Engage such personnel, appoint such committees, and adopt such regulations as are necessary for the discharge of its responsibilities.

18. Recommend to institutions of higher education that they provide courses on the biblical perspective of human sexuality.

¶ B/473. Guiding Principles.

The educational institutions of the Free Methodist Church are expected to comply with the following standards and to seek to achieve the objectives proposed below:

1. In broad yet meaningful concepts it may be said that the educational objectives in a positively Christian institution are: Christian culture, intellectual growth, spiritual maturation, physical development, and vocational preparation. To varying degrees these goals, in an overall effort to help students toward self-realization and the maturing of their relationship to God and society, are valid on all levels of study.

2. Two further objectives of every Free Methodist educational institution are the development in each Free Methodist student of:

- a. an understanding of and a permanent loyalty to the Free Methodist Church; and
- b. a sense of call from God either as a full-time Christian worker in the Free Methodist Church or as a Spirit-guided Christian layman dedicated to the growth and spiritual progress of the church. Free Methodist schools are open to young people of all faiths who are in harmony with the required standards of conduct. It is the responsibility of each Free Methodist school to maintain such an atmosphere and to provide such guidance and Christian fellowship that all students in attendance will come to a new appreciation of the Free Methodist Church — its mission, its message, its doctrines, and its standards — and will find their lives becoming increasingly aglow with spiritual vision and victory.

3. All Free Methodist educational institutions shall maintain scriptural standards in modesty of person and attire, in the types of amusement permitted, and in the use of dramatics.

4. The intercollegiate athletic program is a visible, integral part of the total college. One of the major purposes of athletics in Free Methodist colleges is to challenge athletes toward Christian commitment and maturity. Through discipline, training, and a variety of experiences the college will provide a quality competitive program. God's Word is the authority for the coach as he disciplines his team in the Christian life. This well-developed program will provide the process for the athlete who strives to become a whole person.

The Free Methodist Church disapproves of the scheduling of intercollegiate sports on Sundays by AFMEI schools.

5. The use of tobacco or alcoholic beverages shall be prohibited. Membership in social fraternities shall not be permitted.

6. The board of trustees of each school shall have the primary responsibility, with the cooperation of the president and faculty, for insuring that the school's objectives, instruction, standards, program, and activities, both curricular and extracurricular, are in harmony with the "guiding principles" as herein set forth.

7. Any complaint that an educational institution is in violation of any of these principles shall be directed to the Commission on Christian Education. Should the complaint be found to be valid, the commission shall apply such penalty to the school found guilty as it deems appropriate. Such school, however, shall have the privilege of appeal, with full hearing, to the Board of Administration of the church.

¶ B/474. Organization and Administration.

PROLOGUE

From its inception, the Free Methodist denomination evidenced keen interest in Christian higher education. The first school founded was Chili Seminary (now Roberts Wesleyan College) by Benjamin Titus Roberts in 1866, just six years after the denomination was organized.

The formal relationship between the Free Methodist Church of North America and its colleges / universities began after the schools were founded. As stated by Leslie R. Marston, "the general church has not established schools but has left that enterprise to groups of individuals and to conferences" (*From Age to Age, A Living Witness*, p.513).

The church recognizes three classifications of affiliation with its colleges, universities, and secondary schools:

1. Denominational institutions - full;
2. Denominational institutions - approved / related;
3. Cooperating institutions.

If an institution seeks a different affiliation, a written request authorized by its board of trustees, signed by its chair and the president of the institution, shall be presented to the Commission on Education of the Board of Administration. The Free Methodist Church and each of its affiliated institutions shall undertake a review of their affiliation every second year.

1. Denominational Institutions - Full
 - a. Three-fifths of the members of the board of trustees of the institution shall be members of the Free Methodist Church. Free Methodist trustees may be elected directly by the supporting conferences, or from nominees presented by such conferences, or upon selection by the institution on its own initiative. In cases where trustees are elected by the conferences, if approved by the Commission on Education, the above proportion may

- be reduced to fifty percent plus one.
- b. The chief executive officer shall be a member of the Free Methodist Church. It is recommended that the area bishop, or designee, be a part of the presidential search process.
 - c. Whenever possible, two-thirds of the full-time faculty members shall be members of the Free Methodist Church, and in no case less than a majority. Where this minimum (a majority) is not achieved, a plan shall be submitted to the Commission on Education outlining plans to move toward this standard.
 - d. All instruction in the several departments shall be in harmony with and in conformity to the teachings of the Scriptures and the standards of the Free Methodist Church as set forth in the Articles of Religion in the *Book of Discipline*.
 - e.
 - (1) The board of trustees of each presently existing educational institution is requested to give serious consideration to placing the following statement, or its legal equivalent, in its Articles of Incorporation: "This corporation shall be subject to the rules, regulations, and *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America as from time to time adopted by the General Conference of the church, insofar as the same do not contravene the laws of the state or province of incorporation. In the event of dissolution of this corporation, the property of the same, if any remains after all prior obligations have been discharged, shall become the property of the Free Methodist Church, and the proceeds therefrom shall be used for educational purposes for the benefit of the conferences of the school's assigned area."
 - (2) No school shall hereafter be established which does not contain the above provision in its Articles of Incorporation.
 - (3) No institution shall be closed, disposed of, or merged with another institution or institutions without the approval of the Commission on Education and the Board of Administration.
 - f. The president of the institution and the chair of the board of trustees of each Free Methodist school meeting the above conditions, shall be members of the "Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions." The association shall elect two of its members to serve on the Commission on Education. One representative shall be a president and the other a trustee,

each representing a different school. (See Par.B/470, Sec.1.)

2. Denominational Institutions — Approved/Related
 - a. Three-fifths of the members of the board of trustees of the institution shall be members of the Free Methodist Church. Free Methodist trustees may be elected directly by the supporting conferences, or from nominees presented by such conferences, or upon selection by the institution on its own initiative. In cases where trustees are elected by the conferences, if approved by the Commission on Education, the above proportion may be reduced to fifty percent plus one.
 - b. The chief executive officer shall be a member of the Free Methodist Church. It is recommended that the area bishop, or designee, be a part of the presidential search process.
 - c. At least ten percent (10%) of the full-time faculty members shall be members of the Free Methodist Church. The faculty of the school or department of religion shall be at least two-thirds members of the Free Methodist Church (with a phase-in plan to accomplish this if needed).
 - d. All instruction in the several departments shall be in harmony with and in conformity to the teachings of the Scriptures and the standards of the Free Methodist Church as set forth in the Articles of Religion in the *Book of Discipline*.
 - e.
 - (1) The board of trustees of each presently existing educational institution is requested to give serious consideration to placing the following statement, or its legal equivalent, in its Articles of Incorporation: "This corporation shall be subject to the rules, regulations, and *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America as from time to time adopted by the General Conference of the church, insofar as the same do not contravene the laws of the state of incorporation. In the event of dissolution of this corporation, the property of the same, if any remains after all prior obligations have been discharged, shall become the property of the Free Methodist Church, and the proceeds therefrom shall be used for educational purposes for the benefit of the conferences of the school's assigned area."
 - (2) No school shall hereafter be established which does not contain the above provision in its Articles of Incorporation.

- (3) No institution shall be closed, disposed of, or merged with another institution or institutions without the approval of the Commission on and the Board of Administration.
 - f. The president of the institution and the chair of the board of trustees of each Free Methodist school meeting the above conditions, shall be members of the "Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions." The association shall elect two of its members to serve on the Commission on Education. One representative shall be president and the other a trustee, each representing a different school. (See Par.B/470, Sec.1.)
3. Cooperating Institutions.
- (1) The Free Methodist Church may affiliate with one or more other evangelical denominations in the operation of cooperating educational institutions. Cooperative arrangements shall be based on the following guidelines subject to the approval of the on Education:
 - (a) The number of members of the Free Methodist Church on the board of trustees shall be at least in equitable proportion to the number of other cooperating denominations.
 - (b) The number of members of the Free Methodist Church on the faculty and administration shall be at least in equitable proportion to other cooperating denominations.
 - (c) Provision shall be made for instruction in Free Methodist history and doctrine.
 - (d) Provision shall be made for official representatives of the Free Methodist Church to have opportunity for contact and conferences with students in the interest of the church.
 - (e) Provision shall be made for the organization of an Aldersgate Student Fellowship on campus.
 - (f) All instruction in the several departments shall be in harmony with and conformity to the teachings of the Scriptures and the standards of the Free Methodist Church as set forth in the Articles of Religion in the *Book of Discipline*.
 - (g) A cooperating institution shall include in its Articles of Incorporation a statement which would conform to the following principles: (i) in case of dissolution any

residue will be used for educational purposes; and (ii) any such residue shall be distributed equitably to the cooperating denominations.

- (2) Cooperative arrangements with other institutions or groups that are not denominationally affiliated, for the purpose of establishing a new institution, may be considered on approval of the Commission on Education with the understanding that the Free Methodist Church is appropriately represented in the governance of the institution, that the doctrine and standards of the church are respected, that Free Methodist youth are given the opportunity to receive instruction and counsel regarding the history and mission of the Free Methodist Church, and that adequate provision be made for the equitable distribution of the residue in the event of its dissolution. The specific terms of such agreement shall be approved by the Board of Administration.
- (3) Provision shall be made for the president of a cooperating institution and an official representative of the board of trustees who is a member of the Free Methodist Church to participate in the meetings of the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions. Educational institutions thus represented shall be recognized as associate members having one vote in the association.

4. Educational Foundations. Foundations incorporated under the auspices of the Free Methodist Church which are established for the specific purpose of serving the education needs of Free Methodist youth shall be recognized as approved institutions on the condition that the charters of the foundations are approved by the Commission on Education and the Board of Administration. The executive officer and the chair of the governing board of such foundation shall be members of the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions.

5. Aldersgate Fellowships. Organized chapters of Free Methodist and other interested students on secular or other church-related campuses shall be recognized as official units of Free Methodist educational institutions upon qualifying for a charter as an Aldersgate Fellowship and on approval by the Commission on Education and the Board of Administration. The president of the national organization of Aldersgate Fellowships and a representative of the governing board shall be members of the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions.

¶ **B/475. Education Funds.**

1. Educational Endowment Fund.

All educational endowment funds, including the permanent endowment fund, allotted by the general church to educational institutions (including John Wesley Seminary Foundation) and such moneys as may be raised or otherwise received for the Educational Endowment Fund, shall be held for safe and proper investment by the Free Methodist Foundation. The income only from the fund shall be distributed annually to Free Methodist schools in the United States and Canada according to action taken each year by the Commission on Education. It is understood that the commission is not required to follow a fixed formula year after year, but when determining allotments it may take into account the provisions which appear in Section 7 of this paragraph.

2. Free Methodist Scholars Fund.

This fund was established on January 1, 1975, to assist qualified Free Methodist scholars to pursue their graduate education to equip them to teach more effectively in Free Methodist institutions of higher education. The Commission on Education has been authorized by the Board of Administration to make this fund and the following two funds available to prospective donors who wish to designate their contributions for this purpose.

3. Free Methodist Student Scholarship Fund.

This fund was established on October 27, 1977, to assist qualified Free Methodist students to pursue their undergraduate or graduate education in Free Methodist or affiliated institutions of higher education.

4. Free Methodist Graduate Ministerial Student Scholarship Fund.

This fund was established on June 1, 1978, to assist qualified Free Methodist ministerial students to pursue graduate theological educational programs in approved seminaries and graduate schools not presently affiliated with John Wesley Seminary.

5. Other Funds.

These shall be administered by the Commission on Education.

6. Allocation of Funds.

When funds are available for direct financial assistance to educational institutions for their operating budget or for capital outlay, or both, the Commission on Education shall, when determining the appropriation for each school, give due consideration to the following:

- a. actual current needs of the school as shown in carefully prepared reports. These shall set forth total institutional assets, current and fixed liabilities, operating costs, faculty salaries, student enrollment, enrollment of Free Methodist students, etc. This information shall be presented on forms provided by the Department of Higher Education and the Ministry;

- b. effectiveness of the ministry of the school as an agency of the church in advancing God's kingdom, both locally and beyond, outside as well as within the Free Methodist Church;
- c. level of accreditation attained by the school and the emphasis being placed upon qualifying for further recognition;
- d. extent of financial support given in recent years to the school by its supporting conferences;
- e. response by the supporting conferences to suggestions for cooperation with the Department of Higher Education and the Ministry in improving the work and good name of the school; and
- f. response by the school itself to suggestion from the Department of Higher Education and the Ministry for cooperative effort looking toward increasing the school's effectiveness.

(2) Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services

a. Organization and Administration

¶ B/476.

1. Ministerial Credentialing Services

Statement of policy:

God's call to the ministry is a call to adequate preparation for the ministry, for self-improvement is an important element in self-dedication. Spiritual qualifications are indispensable to the gospel ministry and can never be replaced by any professional training, but the two are not incompatible.

Today training beyond high school is considered necessary in most vocations. A college education, therefore, is important for the person who is looking toward the ministry of the Free Methodist Church. The Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services urges that a Free Methodist college be given first choice in the planning of undergraduate training. Advantages of such choice will be found in an early acquaintance with the organization and doctrines of the church, personal friendships within the framework of the church, and the development of loyalty to the church through a growing understanding and sharing of its responsibilities.

We urge all Free Methodist conference ministerial candidates to continue their studies, following graduation from college, under the guidance of John Wesley Seminary Foundation.

We believe that students receive unique and outstanding values when they take their studies under denominational guidance in an institution in the Wesleyan tradition. In such situations students are confirmed in the great doctrinal principles of their faith. They learn the methods that

are most relevant to their future work. They prepare themselves for their greatest possible contribution to the church and the kingdom of God.

- a. The division director shall work under the supervision of the director of higher education on a day-to-day basis. Policy decisions shall be made by the Board of Bishops. The director shall work with the various schools and colleges in their ministerial training programs, cooperate with the annual conferences in their ministerial guidance activities, and be responsible for keeping the central file of credits and the duplicate copies of ordination parchments of all ministers in conference relationship who are amenable to the respective boards of ministerial education and guidance.
 - b. The specific responsibilities of the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services shall be to:
 - (1) approve, in cooperation with the Division of Educational Institutions, the various schools which offer theological and collegiate training for prospective Free Methodist ministers;
 - (2) approve correspondence courses for candidates who fail to get required courses while in regular college attendance;
 - (3) define standards for uniform procedures for reporting the work done at, under the supervision of, or evaluated by approved schools and agencies, and to keep a complete file of such reports;
 - (4) specify activities and set up standards for their evaluation having to do with itinerant credit which may be earned through supervised practical service.
2. John Wesley Seminary
- a. Authorization:

The Free Methodist Church shall maintain a theological seminary for the post-college training of candidates for the ministry and other types of Christian service. This institution shall be known as John Wesley Seminary and shall be incorporated to secure the rights and privileges belonging to such educational institutions.
 - b. Control:

The Board of Administration shall constitute the John Wesley Seminary Board of Control with the Commission on Education serving as the Executive Board.
 - c. Support:

John Wesley Seminary shall be supported by general funds,

special appropriations, and solicitations consistent with the United Ministries for Christ and approved by the Board of Administration.

d. Affiliation:

The Board of Control may affiliate the institution with such other seminary organizations as it may deem desirable or necessary, provided such institutions are evangelical and Wesleyan in doctrine as interpreted by the Free Methodist Church.

b. The Training of Ordained Ministers

¶ **B/477.** Steps to Ordination

The steps to ordained ministry in conference relationship are as follows:

1. The person who is seriously considering a call to full-time ministry is licensed as a local ministerial candidate by the official board (see Par. A / 520). The call is tested by service in the local church where initial training begins.

2. The annual conference accepts the person as a conference ministerial candidate upon recommendation of the official board to the conference board of ministerial education and guidance.

3. Ordination as deacon and admission to membership in the annual conference follows upon further course work and itinerant service.

4. Ordination as elder is the final step contingent upon further course work and itinerant service.

¶ **B/477.1.** Qualifications for becoming a local ministerial candidate:

1. is an adult member of the Free Methodist Church;

2. is considering a call to the ordained ministry and has so declared to the official board;

3. has completed a course of study designed by the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services;

4. has been interviewed and licensed by the official board (see Par. A / 520, Sec. 2);

5. has appeared before the local congregation and given satisfactory answers to questions (see Par. A / 520, Sec. 2);

6. has received a certificate from the pastor, which is to be renewed annually by the official board;

7. has been reported to the conference board of ministerial education and guidance and to the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services. The local ministerial candidate retains membership in the local church; and

8. is counseled by the pastor and / or pastor's cabinet on a continuing

basis.

¶ **B/477.2.** Qualifications for becoming a conference ministerial candidate:

1. is a local ministerial candidate;
2. is a high school graduate;
3. has earned a minimum of 30 semester credits in liberal arts courses in an approved accredited college, preferably Free Methodist;
4. has completed three specified courses in college or by correspondence:
 - a. History and Polity of the Free Methodist Church;
 - b. Introduction to Christian Doctrine;
 - c. an inductive Bible study;
5. has been academically certified by the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services;
6. has been interviewed and recommended by the board of ministerial education and guidance;
7. is approved by the annual conference and is admitted as a non-voting member;
8. is under the guidance of the conference superintendent;
9. retains membership in a local Free Methodist church; and
10. maintains relationship as a conference ministerial candidate by annual recommendation of the board of ministerial education and guidance (see Par. A/530, Sec. 4).

¶ **B/477.3.** Qualifications for deacon's orders:

A. TRACK I — Seminary Course

1. is a conference ministerial candidate;
2. is a graduate of an approved accredited college, preferably Free Methodist, with a bachelor's degree;
3. has completed specified courses in college or in seminary:

(Biblical Studies, 6 semester credits; Systematic and Wesleyan Theology, 6 credits; Pastoral Theology and Practical Studies, 6 credits in three areas);
4. has had two years of full-time pastoral experience under conference appointment subsequent to ministerial candidacy, one of which may be an approved internship; (seminary students may substitute one year of equivalency service);
5. is certified by the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services;
6. is recommended by the board of ministerial education and guidance for full membership in the conference and election to deacon's orders;

7. is a member of the annual conference;
8. is ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee; and
9. shall file annually a continuing education program with the board of ministerial education and guidance which shall monitor the program.

B. TRACK II — College Course

1. is a conference ministerial candidate;
2. is a graduate of an approved accredited college, preferably Free Methodist, with a bachelor's degree;
3. has completed specified courses in college or in seminary:
(Biblical Studies, 6 semester credits; Systematic and Wesleyan Theology, 6 credits; Pastoral Theology and Practical Studies, 6 credits in three areas);
4. has had two years of full-time pastoral experience under conference appointment subsequent to ministerial candidacy, one of which may be an approved internship;
5. is certified by the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services;
6. is recommended by the board of ministerial education and guidance for full membership in the conference and election to deacon's orders;
7. is a member of the annual conference;
8. is ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee; and
9. shall file annually a continuing education program with the board of ministerial education and guidance which shall monitor the program.

C. TRACK III — Correspondence Course

1. is a conference ministerial candidate;
2. has completed approved courses in college or by correspondence:
(Biblical Studies, 4 semester credits; Wesleyan Theology, 3 credits; Church History Survey, 3 credits; Homiletics, 3 credits; Church Administration, 2 credits; Evangelism and Church Growth, 2 credits; Pastoral Care, 2 credits);
3. has completed three years of full-time pastoral experience under conference appointment subsequent to ministerial candidacy;
4. is certified by the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services;
5. is recommended by the board of ministerial education and guidance for full membership in the conference and election to deacon's orders;
6. is a member of the annual conference;
7. is ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee; and

8. shall file annually a continuing education program with the board of ministerial education and guidance which shall monitor the program.

¶ **B/477.4.** Qualifications for elder's orders:

A. TRACK I — Seminary Course

1. is an ordained deacon;
2. is a graduate of an approved accredited seminary with an M.Div. or equivalent degree; those graduating from a nonaffiliated seminary may be required to take additional courses including a four-semester-credit course in Wesleyan theology;
3. has completed two years of full-time pastoral experience under conference appointment subsequent to deacon's ordination;
4. is certified by the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services;
5. is recommended by the board of ministerial education and guidance to elder's orders;
6. is a member of an annual conference;
7. is ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee; and
8. shall file annually a continuing education program with the board of ministerial education and guidance which shall monitor the program.

B. TRACK II — College Course

1. is an ordained deacon;
2. is a graduate of an approved accredited college, preferably Free Methodist, with a bachelor's degree and a major in religion. Those without a major in religion and those graduating from non-AFMEI* schools must have completed a minimum of 30 semester credits in approved religion courses in college, in seminary, or by correspondence. The credits are to be distributed equally among the three areas: Biblical Studies, Systematic and Wesleyan Theology, and Pastoral Studies.

Those graduating from a non-AFMEI* school with a major in religion must earn at least four semester credits in Wesleyan Theology.

3. has completed three years of full-time pastoral experience under conference appointment subsequent to deacon's ordination;
4. is certified by the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services;
5. is recommended by the board of ministerial education and guidance to elder's orders;
6. is a member of an annual conference;
7. is ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee; and
8. shall file annually a continuing education program with the board of ministerial education and guidance which shall monitor the program.

C. TRACK III — Correspondence Course (for those persons for whom obtaining a college degree is impractical, as determined by the conference MEG board):

1. is an ordained deacon;
2. has completed twelve additional semester hours of approved courses in college or by correspondence;
3. has completed four years of full-time pastoral experience under conference appointment subsequent to deacon's ordination;
4. is certified by the Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services;
5. is recommended by the board of ministerial education and guidance to elder's orders;
6. is a member of the annual conference;
7. is ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee; and
8. shall file annually a continuing education program with the board of ministerial education and guidance which shall monitor the program.

¶ **B/477.5.** Itinerant credit for conference ministerial candidates

1. One of the standard requirements for ordination as deacon by the Free Methodist Church throughout its history has been the completion of two years' service as an appointed pastor. This requirement of itinerant service is in addition to the academic requirements and satisfying an annual conference that the candidate is in agreement with the church in doctrine, discipline, government, and usages, and also possesses the needed gifts, graces, and promise of usefulness.

At least two years of pastoral experience are required of a deacon before ordination as elder. Because of the postponement of entering the active pastorate for several years on the part of a ministerial student to attend college and seminary, the church has made provision whereby students in approved seminaries under certain conditions may meet a considerable portion of the requirement of itinerant service by earning what is called "Itinerant Credit" while in school.

An individual may earn itinerant credit in an approved college, providing the curriculum followed is one designed for pastoral ministry following the baccalaureate degree and providing the individual also meets the other itinerant credit requirements in this paragraph, B/477.5.

2. Practical service under supervision during a regular seminary program shall be applied toward the itinerant credit requirement for ordination as deacon under the following conditions. The candidate:

* Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions

- a. must have been received as a conference ministerial candidate in an annual conference;
- b. must be under church supervision and report regularly to the board of ministerial education and guidance, which shall carefully examine the candidate regarding call, doctrine, and other qualifications;
- c. must have favorable recommendations from the superintendent and the board of ministerial education and guidance; and
- d. may not earn more than one year of itinerant credit by supervised practical service during seminary training.

The Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services shall define activities in which practical service may be rendered for itinerant credit, and set up standards for judging accomplishments therein. Credits must be earned in accordance with these standards.

¶ **B/478.** The board of ministerial education and guidance in conferences with non-English-speaking constituencies shall be authorized to establish educational and other requirements for the ordination of pastors of such churches, taking into account the cultural and educational background of the churches being served. Such provisions are to be developed in consultation with the area bishop, the director of ministerial credentialing services, and the director of social, urban and ethnic ministries. Final approval rests with the Commission on Education.

¶ **B/479.** Continuing Education.

The Division of Ministerial Credentialing Services establishes and administers criteria for the continuing education of Free Methodist ministers. Every appointed pastor and active minister is required to earn a minimum of two (2) continuing education units (CEU's) per year, or the equivalent.

5. COMMISSION ON EVANGELISM

a. General Provisions

¶ **B/480.** 1. The Board of Administration shall constitute the Board of Evangelism with authority over the Commission on Evangelism and its departments. The Commission on Evangelism shall consist of a number of persons as directed by the Board of Administration (see Par. B/451, Sec. 3), and one representative from each of the following: Men's Ministries International, Women's Ministries International, Council on Ethnic Ministries, and Free Methodist Urban Fellowship. A member shall be

chosen by the commission to represent the Association of Free Methodist Evangelists. The executive director of Men's Ministries International shall be an ex officio member without vote. The acts of this commission shall be subject to the approval of the Board of Administration.

2. The Commission on Evangelism shall have as its objective the evangelization of the North American continent (with the exception of Mexico and Canada) and such English-speaking areas as shall be assigned to it by the General Conference or the Board of Administration.

3. The commission shall meet at least once each year to plan for the evangelistic work of the church and to do such other business as may be necessary to carry out its responsibilities.

4. The commission shall have authority, within the guidelines of the United Ministries for Christ, to raise funds, to employ evangelists and field representatives, to appoint superintendents and pastors in church extension areas as authorized by the General Conference or the Board of Administration, to determine the manner of their support, and to carry on evangelistic efforts throughout the church.

5. In order to function more effectively, the work of the commission shall be done through departments as determined by the commission.

6. The general director of evangelism and church growth shall have authority to direct the department according to policies set by the Board of Evangelism and under the supervision of the chair of the operating committee, with the following duties:

- a. travel throughout the church, inspire the work of evangelism, and plan for and supervise the extension of the work of the commission into new and old fields;
- b. discover and use available evangelistic talent in our schools, conferences, Free Methodist Youth, Men's Ministries International, and elsewhere;
- c. promote in cooperation with conference boards of evangelism and superintendents an effective general program;
- d. raise money for evangelistic outreach under the guidelines established by the United Ministries for Christ.

b. The Department of Evangelism and Church Growth

¶ **B/481.** 1. The Department of Evangelism and Church Growth shall function through the divisions of Evangelism, Church Growth, Church Planting, and Social, Urban, and Ethnic Ministries.

2. The Division of Evangelism shall:

- a. work in conjunction with the annual conference boards of evangelism in holding evangelism conventions, employing evangelists, organizing evangelism campaigns, publishing literature, and otherwise endeavoring to coordinate and promote evangelism throughout the church;
 - b. organize and promote visitation evangelism, community canvass, small group evangelism, and other methods of neighborhood evangelism which shall better enable our churches to evangelize their communities;
 - c. supervise the work of general evangelists who shall be approved according to Paragraph A/415 and the Commission on Evangelism; it shall assist in preparing a prospectus for publicity for evangelists and standard forms for evaluating both the work of evangelists by local churches and the evangelist's perspective of the evangelistic outreach of the local church; and
 - d. promote the second Wednesday in January as a day of fasting and prayer for evangelism.
3. The Division of Church Growth shall:
- a. aid in the planning, developing, and building of new churches in the areas assigned to it by the Board of Administration;
 - b. work with the conferences in building up their churches through evangelism and church growth services such as church growth seminars, area demographic studies and local church and conference consultations, assisting pastors in evangelism internships in growing churches, and providing a variety of written materials to assist in church growth and church planting;
 - c. provide financial aid through grants and loans to churches which qualify under conditions set up by the commission; if a church which has received aid from the funds of the Division of Church Growth should become extinct and the buildings be sold, the conference agrees to return the original grant or use it for a new church project at the option of the Department of Evangelism and Church Growth;
 - d. provide architectural consultation, including church building services, to assist our societies in erecting functional buildings in harmony with disciplinary standards (see Par. A/859); and
 - e. provide a service known as "Church Member Relocation Service" by contacting each church in order to maintain a file of Free Methodists who are relocating.
4. The Division of Church Planting shall:

- a. establish or assist in establishing new churches;
 - b. identify those areas of the English-speaking world in which favorable conditions exist for the planting of new churches;
 - c. work with the conferences deemed to have unusual growth opportunities by providing research services intended to locate the most favorable communities for the establishment of new churches;
 - d. assist in developing strategies promising the most productive effort;
 - e. identify church planters through an assessment process;
 - f. assist the conference financially in the support of church planters whenever the resources of the conference are deemed inadequate and to the extent of available means;
 - g. assist the conference in the preparation of the job description of persons appointed as church planters and participate with the superintendent in the supervision of those receiving assistance from the department; and
 - h. appoint and supervise church planters in those places where no conference exists or where favorable opportunities exist within conference boundaries but lie beyond the abilities of the conference to develop.
5. The Division of Social, Urban, and Ethnic Ministries shall:
- a. be responsible for promotion and coordination of all social, urban, and ethnic ministries;
 - b. provide liaison support to the Social Action Council, Free Methodist Urban Fellowship, and the Council on Ethnic Ministries;
 - c. provide oversight and management of ethnic extension districts and conferences;
 - d. assist in establishing churches, fellowships, and other ministries to poor, oppressed, or alienated people most often concentrated in urban areas;
 - e. provide communication among urban and ethnic pastors;
 - f. coordinate the establishment of urban training centers, ethnic pastoral training, and social ministry seminars;
 - g. give leadership to developing strategies and action plans to plant urban churches and to revitalize existing urban churches; and
 - h. use such means as annual Brotherhood Sunday in highlighting these ministries to assist in raising funds for approved United Ministries for Christ projects.

c. Church Extension Districts

¶ B/482. 1. It shall be the responsibility of the Department of Evangelism and Church Growth to: establish and evangelize church extension districts; aid and give guidance in the work of the area; organize societies and establish churches in accordance with the *Book of Discipline*; assist in organizing and supervising their building projects.

2. Development and Administration

a. Church extension districts may be formed by the Commission on Evangelism in the following ways:

- (1) assignment by the Board of Administration of an area outside the bounds of organized conferences;
- (2) recommendation by the general director and the chair of the Commission on Evangelism for extension of the church among ethnic peoples; such extension districts may include all or part of the territory of one or more conferences and shall relate to the Commission on Evangelism in the same manner as do extension districts organized outside the boundaries of existing conferences.

b. Superintendents (or pastors) of church extension districts shall be appointed by the ministerial appointments committee of the conference, in consultation with the general director of evangelism and church growth. The superintendent shall be given guidance in the work by the general director, and shall report to the area bishop and the commission through the general director.

c. Reception of members and organization of societies shall be as prescribed in the *Book of Discipline*. Church extension societies shall have the same rights and privileges as do those of any other society.

d. Pastoral appointments to societies in church extension districts shall be made by the ministerial appointments committee of the conference upon recommendation of the general director of evangelism and church growth.

e. Pastoral appointments to societies in church extension districts assigned by the Board of Administration and unaffiliated with any conference shall be made by the area bishop in consultation with the general director of evangelism and church growth. In those church extension districts where there are ten or more pastoral appointments and where a full-time superintendent is functioning, the superintendent may recommend pastoral

appointments to the general director. All appointments are to be made for one year by the bishop upon recommendation of the general director. The superintendent, to be appointed by the commission, shall be given guidance in the work by the general director and shall report to the area bishop and to the commission through the general director.

- f. A church extension district within the continental United States, having reached sufficient size and maturity, shall be assigned to a conference by the Board of Administration upon recommendation of the Commission on Evangelism. The commission, in consultation with the district and conference involved, may recommend this assignment.
- g. Overseas church extension districts may be assigned to the commission by the Board of Administration.

d. Extension Conferences

¶ **B/482.1.1.** Extension conferences may be assigned to the Department of Evangelism and Church Growth by the Board of Administration under the following conditions:

- a. when the conference, after assessing its resources and its field of labor, concludes the work of God will be better served by extension conference relationship;
 - b. when in the opinion of the presiding bishop the conference lacks sufficient material and personnel resources to adequately serve the area assigned.
2. When the Board of Administration approves extension conference status for any conference, the following conditions shall prevail:
- a. the conference may maintain all boards and committees usually found in annual conferences, and General Conference representation;
 - b. the budget of the extension conference shall be developed jointly between the conference and the Department of Evangelism and Church Growth with the director of the department serving as advisor and voting member of the conference board of finance; subsidies to the conference budget may be granted by the department as the need may arise and in harmony with the resources available to the department;
 - c. the director of the Department of Evangelism and Church Growth shall be a voting member of the ministerial appointments committee; the conference may elect an additional lay representative to balance the lay-clergy representation;

- d. the superintendent shall be employed by the Commission on Evangelism on recommendation of the director of the Department of Evangelism and Church Growth; nominations may be submitted to the director by the conference board of administration; terms of employment for the superintendent, including salary, travel expense, housing, and tenure in office shall be determined by the Commission on Evangelism;
- e. in an extension conference where a full-time superintendent is functioning, the appointments shall be made by the extension conference ministerial appointments committee; and
- f. an extension conference may be returned to full annual conference status by the Board of Administration at any time upon request of the conference or the recommendation of the area bishop with the concurrence of the Commission on Evangelism.

e. Finance

¶ **B/483.** 1. The Department of Evangelism and Church Growth shall receive its financial support from, or as approved by, the United Ministries for Christ.

2. It shall assist the United Ministries for Christ in raising funds through approved methods.

f. Men's Ministries International

¶ **B/484.** The Men's Ministries International of the Free Methodist Church is recognized as an auxiliary of the Board of Evangelism, operating through the Commission on Evangelism, and is governed by its own constitution and bylaws. The executive secretary of Men's Ministries International shall be an honorary member of the executive committee of the Commission on Evangelism.

6. COMMISSION ON MISSIONS

a. Objects, Membership, Officers, Duties

¶ **B/490.** The Free Methodist Church by the Board of Administration and through the Commission on Missions accepts responsibility to obey the Great Commission of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). Missionaries are sent into all the world to evangelize and make disciples for the Lord, to build them together in His church (1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:20-22), and to engage in ministries of compassion and human development in the

name of Christ.

1. The Board of Administration shall constitute the General Missionary Board which has authority over world mission functions through the Commission on Missions and its departments. The Commission on Missions shall consist of the number of persons as directed by the Board of Administration (see Par. B/451, Sec. 3), two members elected the Women's Ministries International, and one member elected by the Men's Ministries International.

The area directors of world missions shall meet with the commission for consultation, without vote, at least once each year .

2. The members of the commission shall continue in office until the close of the next session of the General Conference and until others have been selected to take their places. The Commission on Missions shall meet at least once each year to plan its work. The Commission on Missions may elect an executive committee whose acts shall be subject to the confirmation of the commission.

3. The general church treasurer shall be the treasurer of the Commission on Missions.

4. The commission shall be responsible for all missionary work originating in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom and directed toward peoples outside of those countries, except for areas which the Board of Administration may assign to another conference or department.

5. The Commission on Missions shall have as its objectives the following:

- a. to carry the gospel into areas where there is no ministry of the Free Methodist Church; and
- b. to serve in partnership with the national church in evangelization and church planting.

¶ **B/491.** The Commission on Missions shall have the following powers and duties:

1. Finance
 - a. devise methods and programs for funding that portion of the United Ministries for Christ that pertains to the Department of World Missions;
 - b. be responsible for receiving and appropriating all moneys allocated for foreign missions to the purpose for which they have been contributed or budgeted;
 - c. review and approve the annual budget;
 - d. review and approve a call for funds for special projects; and
 - e. review and approve loan applications from overseas churches

- to the Free Methodist Loan Fund. The Commission will co-sign the loans assuring repayment and be responsible for collecting payments from the churches with outstanding loans.
2. Personnel
 - a. recruit, appoint, license, and commission candidates for missionary service;
 - b. appoint all short-term VISA personnel;
 - c. decide the status of missionaries not on their field of assignment for other than a normal furlough.
 3. Overseas Church Planting
 - a. The commission shall have the responsibility to encourage and aid church planting outside Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States among all population groups. They shall do this in cooperation with a national church whenever possible.
 - b. In an area not presently served by the Free Methodist Church, the work shall first be a mission district under the jurisdiction of the Commission on Missions or of another General Conference before being established as a provisional or full conference.
 4. Mission and Provisional Conferences of Mission Origin
 - a. The Commission on Missions shall approve all candidates for ordination in mission districts under its jurisdiction.
 - b. A mission conference may be approved as a provisional conference by the Commission on Missions by adopting in principle the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America together with a constitution adopted to its local situation and needs.
 - c. Membership in a provisional conference does not cancel membership in a full conference. Members of full conferences serving in a provisional conference shall, within two years, become members of that provisional conference.
 5. Full Conferences of Mission Origin
 - a. When a provisional conference has made marked advancement in national leadership, evangelistic outreach, self-government, and self-support, and has reached the stage where it is able to operate satisfactorily under the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America, and has a constitution that has been approved by the Commission on Missions and the General Conference, or the Board of Administration, of the Free Methodist Church of North America, it shall be recommended to the area bishop or the president of the conference

to be organized into a full conference as outlined in Paragraph A/591, Section 10:b-c.

- b. Any changes in constitutions of full conferences of mission origin shall be considered by the Commission on Missions for recommendation to the Board of Administration or General Conference for approval.
 - c. Full conferences of mission origin are related to the Commission on Missions through the Area Directors of World Missions.
 - d. A full conference of mission origin may submit requests for personnel and finances through the Area Director of World Missions.
6. General or Provisional General Conference of Mission Origin
- a. The relationship between a general or provisional general conference and the Commission on Missions is maintained through a mutually approved Memorandum of Agreement covering such items as: (1) ownership of properties; (2) appointment of missionaries; and (3) ownership and use of personal or mission equipment related to the work of the missionary in that country.
 - b. A general or provisional general conference may request the appointment of missionary personnel and/or financial assistance for specific ministries which request shall be directed through the Area Director of World Missions.
7. Department of World Missions Staff

Upon recommendation of the director of world missions, the commission is empowered to approve the appointment of overseas area directors.

Job descriptions for all departmental executives, including the area directors, shall be approved by the Commission on Missions, and be on file and available in the Department of World Missions office.

8. Other Responsibilities of the Commission on Missions

The Commission on Missions shall carry out all other responsibilities that may be assigned by the Board of Administration in the interim between sessions of the General Conference.

9. Actions of the Commission on Missions

The actions of the Commission on Missions are subject to the approval of the Board of Administration.

b. General Missionary Board

¶ B/492. 1. The Board of Administration shall constitute the General

Missionary Board of the Free Methodist Church of North America. The General Missionary Board is incorporated and is used for special financial transactions for the Commission on Missions.

2. The objects for which this corporation is formed are:
 - a. to receive, hold, pay out, or dispose of any property, of whatever nature and wherever situation as allowed by law, that may be obtained in aid of the general missionary work of the Free Methodist Church;
 - b. to acquire real estate or personal property and to hold or sell or convey the same as in its judgment may be necessary in the prosecution of its missionary work.

c. The Directors of the Commission

¶ **B/493.** 1. The Board of Administration, at its first meeting after the session of the General Conference, shall elect by ballot, from the membership of the commission, seven persons who shall constitute a Board of Directors. At least one of these directors shall be a member of the Women's Ministries International.

d. The Director of World Missions

¶ **B/494.** The director of world missions shall be employed, pursuant to the authority in Paragraph A/444, Section 1, with such duties as approved by the Board of Administration.

e. Title to Land Purchased for Free Methodist World Missions

¶ **B/495.** Titles to land purchased for missions and institutions under the direction of the Department of World Missions shall be in the name of the General Missionary Board of the Free Methodist Church of North America or deeded to trustees elected or approved by the General Missionary Board. Trustees may be missionaries, nationals, or both.

Such trustees shall hold the property for the benefit and use of the General Missionary Board of the Free Methodist Church of North America. Where property cannot be titled or held in trust for the General Missionary Board, it shall be held for the benefit and use of the Free Methodist Church and its institutions in those countries.

Any sale or disposal of property or use of funds from the sale of such property shall be with the approval and consent of the General Missionary Board of the Free Methodist Church.

Whenever possible the tenure of the office of the trustees shall be subject to the board and in all cases to the laws and regulations of the country where the property is located.

f. Responsibilities of Pastors and Local Societies

¶ **B/496.** 1. It shall be the responsibility of every pastor in charge of a local church to promote Free Methodist missions through a year-round program of missionary emphasis and to direct the establishment of a financial program for the support of the missionary outreach of the church through the United Ministries for Christ.

2. A missions Dime-a-Day director shall be elected by the society. The name and address of the Dime-a-Day director shall be sent to the Department of World Missions.

3. A local missions coordinator shall be elected by the society at its annual meeting to assist in coordinating missionary promotional and educational activities in the church. The missions coordinator may serve as chair of the local board of missions. The name and address of the missions coordinator shall be sent to the Department of World Missions.

4. The local society shall have a board of missions consisting of the pastor, the missions coordinator, the director of Christian education, representatives of WMI, Division of Youth Ministries, MMI, and Division of Children's Ministries, the local Dime-a-Day director, and wherever practicable, two or more members elected at large by the society. (See Pars. A/402.1, Sec. 10; and A/404.1.)

g. Women's Ministries International

¶ **B/497.** The Women's Ministries International of the Free Methodist Church is recognized as an auxiliary arm of the Free Methodist World Missions, operating through the Commission on Missions and is governed by its own constitution and bylaws.

h. Missions and Conferences

¶ **B/498.** All provisional conferences of mission origin shall be under the jurisdiction of the Commission on Missions except where provisional conferences have been organized from an existing annual conference, in which case they shall be administered by the bishop of the originating conference. Copies of their constitutions and bylaws may, when adopted by the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America, be secured from the director of world missions.

The conferences so recognized are:

Annual Conferences — Brazil-Brazilian, Brazil-Nikkei, Dominican Republic, Haiti Inland, Hong Kong, Mexico, Taiwan, Zimbabwe; Burundi: Burundi East, Burundi West; India, India Central, India Southern, India Western; Mozambique Central, Mozambique Southern; Philippines: Philippines Northern, Eastern Mindanao, Northern Mindanao, Southern Mindanao; Southern Africa: Goldfields, Southern KwaZulu-Natal.

Provisional Conferences — Chile, Korea, Malawi, Northwest Mexico, Paraguay; Southern Africa: Eastern Cape, East-North Transvaal, Northern KwaZulu-Natal.

i. Missionaries' Relationship to Home Conferences

¶ B/499. **North American conferences may grant honorary conference membership to those missionaries who are employed by the general church and who were previously full members of a North American conference and are now members of conferences of mission origin.**

CHAPTER X

APPENDIXES

- A. Incorporation
- B. Forms
- C. Historical

CHAPTER X

APPENDIXES

A. INCORPORATION

1. ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA

Under the Laws of California*
Office of the
Secretary of State

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

¶**B/1000.** That we, the undersigned, a majority of whom are citizens and residents of the State of California, have this day voluntarily associated ourselves together for the purpose of forming a corporation under Title XII, Article I of the Civil Code of the State of California.

AND WE HEREBY CERTIFY:

FIRST: That the name of the corporation shall be THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA.

SECOND: That the purposes for which it is formed are religious, and charitable, and especially:

To conduct religious services; to cultivate social intercourse among its members and assist in improving and ameliorating the moral and social conditions of humanity; to purchase, own, sell, mortgage, and

**Editor's Historical Note (1943). Originally the church was incorporated under the laws of the state of New York, April 30, 1873, as "The Free Methodist General Conference of North America." The General Conference of 1916 authorized the board of trustees of the General Conference to incorporate in the state of Illinois. Pursuant to this order, a charter was granted by the state of Illinois, December 2, 1915, under the title "The Board of Trustees of the Free Methodist Church of North America." This incorporation was approved by the General Conference of 1919 and was duly authorized to assume all the duties and exercise the prerogatives of the original incorporation. The General Conference of 1931 ordered a consolidation of the several boards into a Board of Administration. The General Conference of 1935 authorized the Board of Administration to form a new incorporation. Pursuant to this order, a corporation known as "The Free Methodist*

Church of North America" was formed in 1937, whose articles of incorporation are set forth above.

lease real estate and other property as may be necessary for the purposes of this corporation; to receive donations, to receive, manage, take, and hold real and personal property by gift, grant, devise, or bequest, and to sell or dispose of the same; and to do every thing necessary, suitable, or proper for the accomplishment of any of the purposes herein enumerated, or which shall at any time appear conducive or expedient for the protection or benefit of this corporation.

To take and hold by donation, gift, grant, devise, or otherwise any property, real, personal, or mixed, in any state in the United States, or in any other country in behalf of and for the benefit of The Free Methodist Church of North America or any of its subsidiary interests, and the same to manage, grant and convey, lease or otherwise dispose of, and to execute such trust or trusts as may be confided to said corporation, the whole to be under the supervision of and amenable to the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America.

To carry on a general publishing and printing business including that of stationers, printers, lithographers, stereotypers, electrotypers, photographic printers, photolithographers, engravers, diesinkers, book printers, account book manufacturers, dealers in parchments, dealers in stamps, advertising agents, designers, draftsmen, ink manufacturers, booksellers, publishers, paper manufacturers, and dealers in the materials used in the manufacture of paper, and dealers in or manufacturers of any other articles or things of a character similar or analogous to the foregoing, or any of them, or connected therewith for the furtherance of the general objectives of this corporation.

To receive property by devise or bequest, subject to the laws regulating the transfer of property by will, and to otherwise acquire and hold all property, real or personal, including shares of stock, bonds, and securities of other corporations.

To act as trustee under any trust incidental to the principal objects of the corporation or for the benefit of any of its members, or members of their families, and to receive, hold and administer and expend funds and property subject to such trusts.

To convey, exchange, lease, mortgage and encumber, transfer upon trust, or otherwise dispose of all property, real or personal.

To borrow money, contract debts, and issue bonds notes, and debentures, and to secure the same.

To do all other acts necessary or expedient for the administration of the affairs and attainment of the purposes of the corporation including the conduct of any business for profit, providing said profits are used

for the objects of said corporation and not distributed to the members thereof.

THIRD: That the principal office for the transaction of business of said corporation is to be located in the County of Los Angeles, State of California.

FOURTH: That the term for which said corporation is to exist is perpetual.

FIFTH: That it is a corporation which does not contemplate pecuniary gain or profit to the members thereof, and therefore there shall be no capital stock.

SIXTH: That this corporation shall be successor to and take the property of the following corporations which are hereafter to be dissolved:

The Board of Trustees of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation.

The Board of Conference Claimants of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation.

The Board of Education of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation.

The Board of Church Extension of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation.*

This corporation shall also become the successor of the Free Methodist Publishing House, an Illinois Corporation, and the General Missionary Board of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation, whenever the same shall be dissolved and ordered this corporation by an order of the Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church of North America.

Editor's Note (1943). On October 28, 1943, the Board of Administration of the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America in session at Winona Lake, Indiana, took the following action: That the respective officers of the Board of Trustees of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation, the Board of Conference Claimants of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation, the Board of Church Extension of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation; the Board of Education of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation, take any necessary steps or execute any necessary papers for the dissolution of these corporations and to transfer any and all of the assets of said corporations to the Free Methodist Church of North America, a California Corporation, their successor.

SEVENTH: That said corporation shall be subject to the rules, regulations, and BOOK OF DISCIPLINE of The Free Methodist Church of North America as from time to time adopted by the General Conference of The Free Methodist Church of North America insofar as the same do not contravene or conflict with the laws of the State of California or the several states of the United States.

The BOOK OF DISCIPLINE, rules and regulations of The Free Methodist Church as from time to time adopted by the General Conference of The Free Methodist Church of North America shall at all times be a part of the bylaws of this corporation.

EIGHTH: That the names and addresses of the persons who are to act in the capacity of directors until the selection of their successors, and who shall be known as trustees, are:

NAMES	ADDRESSES
CLAUDE A. WATSON	Los Angeles, California
B. E. ILER	Santa Monica, California
A. G. BALL	Los Angeles, California

That the number of trustees may be changed by a bylaw duly adopted or amended by the members, authority for which is hereby expressly conferred.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, for the purpose of forming this corporation under the laws of the State of California, we, the undersigned, constituting the incorporators of this corporation including the persons named hereinabove as the first directors of this corporation, have executed these Articles of Incorporation this fifteenth day of January, 1937.

CLAUDE A. WATSON
 B. E. ILER
 A. G. BALL

2. BYLAWS OF

THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH
OF NORTH AMERICA

Article I

Members

¶B/1001. Section 1: The several members of the Board of Administration of The Free Methodist Church of North America, elected by the General Conference of The Free Methodist Church of North America, shall constitute the members of this corporation.

Section 2: All meetings of members except as herein otherwise provided shall be held as directed by the corporation or by the Board of Directors of said corporation.

Section 3: The regular annual meeting of the members shall be held at a time and place to be fixed by the Board of Administration or a committee designated by them.

The annual meeting of the members and of the Board of Directors may be held either in or out of the state of incorporation, as fixed by the Board of Administration or by the Board of Directors.

Section 4: Notice of the annual meeting of members shall be given by publication of such notice in *Light and Life Magazine* published at Indianapolis, Indiana, for at least two (2) weeks before said meeting.

Section 5: Special meetings of the members may be called at any time for any purpose or purposes whatsoever, by the president, or by the Board of Directors, or by any three or more members thereof.

Section 6: Notice of special meetings of the members, stating the time and in general terms the purpose or purposes thereof, shall be mailed by the secretary to each member entitled to vote, at his address as the same appears on the records of the corporation, or as supplied by the member for the purpose of notice, at least one week prior to the date of the special meeting.

Section 7: Should the address of any member not appear on the records of the corporation, then notices of any meetings of the members shall be mailed, addressed to such member at Indianapolis, county of Marion, state of Indiana.

Section 8: An entry of the service of notice of a meeting of the members, given in the manner above provided, shall be made in the minutes of the proceedings of the members, and such entry, if read and approved at a subsequent meeting of the members, shall be conclusive on the question of such service.

Section 9: When all the members are present at any meeting, how-

ever called or notified, and sign a written consent thereto, or when the members present, and the members not present at such meeting, give their written consent thereto, and such written consent is made a part of the records of such meeting the proceedings had at such meeting are valid, irrespective of the manner in which the meeting is called, or the place where it is held.

Any member of the Board of Directors of this corporation may be removed from office according to the Free Methodist *Book of Discipline* and any amendments thereto, duly adopted by the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America.

Section 10: At any meeting of the members, a majority of the members shall constitute a quorum to transact business.

Section 11: Any regular or called meeting of the members may adjourn from day to day, or from time to time, without further notice, until its business is completed; and any regular or called meeting of the members may adjourn from day to day, or from time to time, without further notice, if for any reason there be not present a quorum to transact business, in person or by proxy, such adjournment and the reasons therefor being recorded in the journal of the proceedings of the members; and when a quorum shall attend, any business may be transacted which might have been transacted at any meeting had the same been held on the day on which the same was originally appointed or called.

Section 12: The president, or, in his absence, the vice president, or; in the absence of the president and vice president, a chairman elected by the members present shall call the meetings of the members to order and shall act as the presiding officer thereof.

Section 13: The secretary of the corporation shall act as secretary at all meetings of the members, and in his absence the presiding officer may appoint any person to act as secretary.

Section 14: At the regular annual meeting of the members subsequent to the meeting of the General Conference of The Free Methodist Church of North America the members entitled to vote shall elect by ballot a Board of Directors as constituted by these bylaws, and the articles of incorporation of this corporation.

Section 15: All proxies must be in writing, executed by the members themselves, or by their duly authorized attorneys, and must be filed with the secretary of the corporation at or before the meeting of the members.

Article II

Directors

Section 1: The corporate powers, business, and affairs of the corporation shall be exercised, conducted, and controlled by a board of five directors.

Section 2: No person shall be elected or appointed a director unless he is a member in good standing of The Free Methodist Church of North America. If a director shall cease at any time to be a member in good standing of The Free Methodist Church of North America, he shall thereby cease to be a director, but no act of the corporation, its officers or directors shall be invalidated by reason thereof. Directors shall be members of the Board of Administration of The Free Methodist Church of North America.

Section 3: Each director shall hold office for eight years or for such shorter period as he may have been appointed, and until his successor shall have been elected.

Section 4: Any vacancy occurring in the office of director by reason of death, resignation, or otherwise, except vacancies caused by the removal of the Board of Directors pursuant to the provisions of Section 310 of the Civil Code of the State of California, shall be filled by an appointee of the majority of the remaining directors, though less than a quorum. Such director, so appointed, shall hold office until his successor is elected at the next annual meeting of the members, or at any special meeting duly called for that purpose prior thereto.

When one or more of the directors shall give notice of his or their resignation to the board, effective at a future date, the board shall have the power to fill such vacancy or vacancies to take effect when such resignations shall become effective. Each director so appointed shall hold office during the remainder of the term of office of the resigning director or directors, or until their successors are appointed and qualified.

Section 5: Immediately after the election of directors at the annual meeting of the members subsequent to the meeting of the General Conference of The Free Methodist Church of North America, the directors shall meet for the purpose of organization, the election of officers, and the transaction of other business.

Section 6: All meetings of the Board of Directors shall be held as directed from time to time.

Section 7: The annual meeting of the Board of Directors shall be determined by the Board of Directors and the date to be fixed by them in connection with the annual meeting of the corporation.

Section 8: Special meetings of the Board of Directors shall be called at any time on the order of the president or on the order of two (2) or more directors.

Section 9: Notices of special meetings of the Board of Directors, stating the time, and in general terms the purpose or purposes thereof, shall be mailed or telegraphed or personally delivered to each director, not later than five days before the day appointed for the meeting, or published in *Light and Life* for not less than two weeks prior to such meeting. An entry of the service of notice, given in the manner above provided, shall be made in the minutes of the proceedings of the Board of Directors, and such entry, if read and approved at a subsequent meeting of the Board of Directors, shall be conclusive on the question of service. If all the directors shall be present at any directors' meeting, however called or noticed, and sign a written consent thereto which is entered on the record of such meeting, or if the majority of the directors are present, and those not present sign a written waiver of notice of such meeting, whether prior to or after the holding of such meeting which said waiver shall be filed with the secretary of the corporation, and entered on the record of such meeting, any business may be transacted at such meeting, and the transactions of such meeting shall be as valid as if had at a meeting regularly called and noticed.

Section 10: Each director shall register his address with the secretary, and notices of meetings mailed or telegraphed to such address shall be valid notices thereof.

Section 11: A majority of the whole number of directors shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, and every act or decision of a majority of the directors present at a meeting at which a quorum is present, made or done when duly assembled, shall be valid as the act of the Board of Directors; but a majority of those present at the time and place of any stated or special meeting, although less than a quorum, may adjourn the same from time to time, or from day to day, without further notice, until a quorum shall attend, and when a quorum shall attend, any business may be transacted which might have been transacted at the meeting had the same been held on the day on which the same was originally appointed or called.

Section 12: The Board of Directors shall have full power and authority to borrow money on behalf of the corporation, including the power and authority to borrow money from any of the members, directors, or officers of the corporation, and otherwise to incur indebtedness on behalf of the corporation, and to authorize the execution of promissory notes, or other evidences of indebtedness of the corporation, and to agree to pay interest thereon; to sell, convey, alienate, transfer, assign exchange, lease, and otherwise dispose of; mortgage, pledge, hypothecate, and otherwise encumber the property, real and personal, and the franchises

of the corporation; to purchase, lease, and otherwise acquire property, real and personal, on behalf of the corporation; and generally to do and perform, or cause to be done and performed, any and every act which the corporation may lawfully do and perform.

Section 13: The directors of this corporation shall serve without compensation except for their actual expenses.

Section 14: The Board of Directors may appoint an executive committee of such board and may delegate to such committee any of the powers and authority of the Board of Directors, except the power to adopt, amend, or repeal the bylaws. Such executive committee shall be composed of members of the Board of Directors and shall act only in the intervals between meetings of the Board of Directors, and shall be subject at all times to the control of the Board of Directors.

Section 15: The business of the Board of Directors may be conducted by mail. Any matter submitted by the secretary to the members of the board shall, when approved by a majority of the board and recorded in the minutes of the board by the secretary, be a legally approved act of the board.

Article III

Officers

Section 1: The executive officers of the corporation shall be a president, a vice president, a secretary, and a treasurer.

Section 2: All of the officers of the corporation shall be elected by ballot by the Board of Directors except the treasurer. The general church treasurer shall be the treasurer of the corporation.

Article IV

President

Section 1: The president shall be the chief executive officer of the corporation. He shall preside at all meetings of the members and of the Board of Directors. He shall have general charge of the business of the corporation, shall execute, with the secretary, in the name of the corporation, all deeds, bonds, contracts, and other obligations and instruments authorized by the Board of Directors to be executed.

Section 2: The president shall also have such other powers and shall perform such other duties as may be assigned to him by the Board of Directors.

Article V

Vice President

Section 1: The vice president shall be vested with all the powers and shall perform all the duties of the president, in case of the absence or disability of the president.

Section 2: The vice president shall also have such other powers and shall perform such other duties as may be assigned to him by the Board of Directors.

Article VI

Secretary

Section 1: The secretary shall keep the minutes of all proceedings of the members and of the Board of Directors in books provided for that purpose. He shall attend to the giving and serving of notices of all meetings of the members and of the Board of Directors and otherwise. He shall execute, with the president, in the name of the corporation, all deeds, bonds, contracts, and other obligations and instruments authorized by the Board of Directors to be executed, and, with the president, shall sign all certificates of membership of the corporation. He shall be the custodian of the corporate seal of the corporation, and when so ordered by the Board of Directors shall affix the seal to deeds, bonds, contracts, and other obligations and instruments. He shall keep and have charge of the journal of the meetings of the Board of Directors and of the members, the book of bylaws, and such other books and papers as the Board of Directors may direct. He shall, in general, perform all the duties incident to the office of secretary, subject to the control of the Board of Directors. (He shall perform the duties of the treasurer in case of the absence or disability of the treasurer.)

Section 2: In case of the absence or disability of the secretary, or his refusal or neglect to act, notices may be given and served by the president, or by the vice president, or by any person thereunto authorized by the president, or by the vice president, or by the Board of Directors.

Article VII

Treasurer

Section 1: The treasurer shall keep, or cause to be kept, full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements in books to be kept

for that purpose. He shall receive and deposit, or cause to be received and deposited, all moneys and other valuables of the corporation in the name and to the credit of the corporation, in such depositories as may be designated by the Board of Directors. He shall disburse, or cause to be disbursed, the funds of the corporation only as directed by the Board of Directors of the corporation and shall take proper vouchers for such disbursements. He shall render to the president of the Board of Directors and to the members, whenever they may require, accounts of all his transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the corporation. He shall, in general, perform all the duties incident to the office of treasurer, subject to the control of the Board of Directors.

Article VIII

Indemnification of Directors and Officers

Section 1. Every person who now is or hereafter shall be a director or officer of the corporation, or a member of its Investment Committee or Pension Board, shall be indemnified by the corporation against all costs and expenses (including counsel fees) actually and necessarily incurred by or imposed upon him in connection with or resulting from any action, suit, or proceeding of whatever nature to which he is or shall be made a party by reason of his being or having been a director or officer of the corporation or member of such committee or board (whether or not he is a director or officer of the corporation or member of such committee or board at the time he is made a party to such action, suit, or proceeding, or at the time such costs or expenses are incurred by or imposed upon him), except in relation to matters as to which he shall be adjudged in such action, suit, or proceeding to be liable for negligence or misconduct in the performance of his duties as such director or officer or committee or board member; provided, however, that in the case of an action or proceeding which is settled or compromised, such right of indemnification shall be applicable only (a) if such a settlement or compromise is approved by the court having jurisdiction of such action, suit, or proceeding; and (b) to the extent provided in the terms of such compromise or settlement so approved. Every person shall be entitled, without demand by him upon the corporation, or any action of the corporation, to enforce his right to such indemnity in an action at law against the corporation.

Section 2. The right of indemnification hereinabove provided shall not be deemed exclusive of any other rights to which any such person may now or hereafter be otherwise entitled and specifically, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, shall not be deemed exclusive

of any rights, pursuant to statute or otherwise, of any such person in any such action, suit, or proceeding to have assessed or allowed in his favor, against the corporation or otherwise, his costs and expenses incurred therein or in connection therewith or any part thereof.

Article IX

Seal

Section 1: The Board of Directors shall provide a suitable seal for the corporation, which shall be in circular form, which will contain the following inscription: The Free Methodist Church of North America, Incorporated Jan. 15, 1937, Los Angeles, California.

Article X

Section 1: The *Book of Discipline*, rules and regulations of The Free Methodist Church as from time to time adopted by the General Conference of The Free Methodist Church of North America shall at all times be a part of the bylaws of this corporation.

Article XI

Section 1: The bylaws of this corporation may be amended at any annual meeting of the members of the corporation by a majority vote of those present and voting.

B. FORMS

Property

¶B/1020. 1. Application for Permission to Sell or Mortgage Church Property of the Free Methodist Church

Name of: Society _____

Pastoral Charge _____
 District _____
 Conference _____
 Other _____
 Date _____

(1) Has the body owning the property given authority to SELL* MORT- GAGE* the property? _____

(2) In what book of record is the action recorded? _____

 page _____ date _____

(3) What will be the disposition of the proceeds of SALE* MORT- GAGE*? _____

(4) Has the Conference Building and Location Committee approved your plan? _____

(5) Is the title to the property to be SOLD* MORTGAGED* a warranty deed? _____

_____ If not, what is the character of the title? _____

(6) Is the property deeded to the organization in its corporate name, or to the individual trustees? (See Pars. A/855 and 856.) _____

(7) If the organization is incorporated, give corporate name. _____

(8) Does the deed to the property to be mortgaged contain the following trust clause: "In trust for the use and benefit of the membership of

The Free Methodist Church of North America ...," etc? (See Par. A/856.) _____

(9) If property is being purchased with proceeds of SALE* MORT- GAGE*, will the title thereto include the trust clause referred to in "8" above? _____

(10) Is there a reverting clause in the title to the property being MORT- GAGED* or PURCHASED*? _____

(11) Describe the property to be SOLD* MORTGAGED*: Number of lots or acres _____
 type of building _____
 (frame, stone, brick other) _____
 dimensions of building _____

*strike out the term that does not apply

condition of building (good, fair, poor) _____
other comments, if any _____

(12) Appraised value of property to be SOLD* MORTGAGED*

What amount is expected from SALE* MORTGAGE*? _____
(13) Give legal description of property to be SOLD* MORTGAGED*,
enclosing a copy of the deed or copying therefrom. _____

(14) List names and addresses of the trustees, if the property to be SOLD*
MORTGAGED* is held in the name of the trustees: _____

(15) Signatures approving the SALE* MORTGAGE*:
Pastor in charge: _____
Address: _____
Superintendent: _____
Address: _____

Secretary of
Official Board: _____
Address: _____
Other: _____

Board of Directors
The Free Methodist Church of North America
Free Methodist World Ministries Center, PO Box 535002
Indianapolis, Indiana 46253-5002

2. Consent of the Superintendent Having Jurisdiction of Property
to Be Sold Under Provisions of Paragraph A/857 of the *Book of Discipline*
I, _____, being the superintendent of the territory in which
the hereinafter described real property is located, hereby give my consent
to the sale of the same for not less than the sum of \$ _____, to _____.
The hereinbefore described real property as the hereinafter described
real property is more particularly described as:

(Here insert description of real property)

Date

Signature of superintendent

3. Declaration of Trust (Suggested)

(Whenever a piece of property does not have the trust clause set forth in its deed,

the local society may adopt the following trust clause and have it duly recorded at the county recorder's office, thus conforming to the provisions of Paragraphs 855 and 856 of the Book of Discipline)

WHEREAS, the _____ Free Methodist Church of _____, a _____ corporation or society, is the owner of the hereinafter described real property and

WHEREAS, said Free Methodist Church is a subsidiary of the Free Methodist Church of North America, a California corporation, subject to the rules, regulations, and *Book of Discipline* thereof, and,

WHEREAS, the *Book of Discipline* of said church provides that all real property held by said corporation shall include the following trust clause:

"In trust for the use and benefit of the membership of the Free Methodist Church of North America, incorporated under the name of 'The Free Methodist Church of North America,' subject to the *Book of Discipline*, usages, and ministerial appointment of said church as from time to time authorized and declared; and, if sold, the proceeds shall be disposed of and used in accordance with the provisions of said *Book of Discipline*, and of the civil law; and in further trust and confidence that in the houses of worship now erected or that may hereafter be erected on said premises hereby conveyed, the seats shall be forever free; and in further trust and confidence that the said trustees and their successors in office shall permit at all times the ministers who may be duly authorized according to the *Book of Discipline* of the said Free Methodist Church, to hold religious services in said houses of worship according to said *Book of Discipline*." And,

WHEREAS, the deed to the hereinafter described real property from _____, as grantor, to _____ Free Methodist Church of _____, a _____ corporation, as grantee, dated on the day of _____, 19____, and recorded as Document No. _____, Book _____, Page _____, of deeds records of _____ County, State of _____, failed to include the foregoing trust,

NOW, THEREFORE, it is declared by the _____ Free Methodist Church of _____, _____, a _____ corporation or society, on the _____ day of _____, 19____, that the said corporation or society holds the hereinafter described real property subject to the provisions of said trust.

The hereinbefore described real property as the hereinafter described real property is more particularly described as:

(insert legal description)

Done at a duly and regularly called meeting of the corporation or

society on the _____ day of _____, 19____.

We, the undersigned, _____ president, and _____, secretary of the _____ Free Methodist Church of _____, _____ a _____ religious society or corporation, hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly adopted at the foregoing meeting and that we were instructed and directed to execute this instrument as a declaration of trust and cause the same to be recorded upon the records of the county recorder of the County of _____, State or Province of _____.

President
Secretary

STATE OR PROVINCE OF _____

SS

COUNTY OF _____

Before me _____, a notary public on this day personally appeared _____ and _____, known to me to be the persons whose names are subscribed to the foregoing instrument and known to me to be the president and secretary respectively of the _____ Free Methodist Church of _____, _____ a _____ religious society or corporation and acknowledged to me that they executed said instrument for the purposes therein expressed and as the act of said corporation or society.

GIVEN under my hand and seal this _____ day of _____, 19____.

Notary Public in and for the above
County and State or Province

4. Articles of Incorporation (Suggested)

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
OF
_____ FREE METHODIST CHURCH

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That we, the undersigned, residents of the State or Province of _____, have this day voluntarily associated ourselves together for the purpose of forming a corporation under the laws of the State or Province of _____.

AND WE HEREBY CERTIFY:

FIRST

The name of the corporation shall be:

_____ FREE METHODIST CHURCH.

SECOND

That the primary purposes for which it is formed are religious, charitable, and educational, and especially:

To conduct religious services, to cultivate social intercourse among its members, and to assist in improving and ameliorating the moral and social conditions of humanity; to purchase, own, sell, or dispose of the same, mortgage and lease real estate and other property as may be necessary for the purposes of this corporation; to receive donations, to receive, manage, take, and hold real and personal property by gift, grant, devise, or bequest, and to sell or dispose of the same, and to do every thing necessary, suitable, or proper for the accomplishment of any of the purposes herein enumerated, or which shall at any time appear conducive or expedient for the protection or benefit of this corporation.

THIRD

That the principal office for the transaction of business of said corporation is to be located in the County _____, State or Province of _____.

FOURTH

That the term for which said corporation is to exist is perpetual.

FIFTH

That it is a corporation which does not contemplate pecuniary gain or profit to the members thereof, and therefore there shall be no capital stock.

The property is irrevocably dedicated to religious, charitable, or scientific purposes and upon liquidations dissolution or abandonment of the corporation, ownership will not inure to the benefit of any private person except a fund, foundation, or corporation organized and operated for religious, scientific, or charitable purposes. The directors shall not be personally liable for the debts, liabilities, or obligations of the corporation.

SIXTH

The ecclesiastical affairs of the corporation shall be subject to the

rules, regulation, and *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America, as from time to time adopted by the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America, insofar as the same do not contravene or conflict with the laws of the state or province of incorporation.

SEVENTH

That the number of directors of said corporation shall be three and that the names and addresses of the persons who are to act in the capacity of directors until the selection of their successors, and who shall be known as trustees, are

NAMES	ADDRESSES
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

That the number of directors may be changed by a bylaw duly adopted or amended by the members, authority for which is hereby expressly conferred.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Do not try to use this form without the aid of an attorney of your state or province. If you desire to form a corporation, take this form to an attorney for his information.*

Following the above will have to be the regular certification either by individual, incorporators, or by the president and secretary of the unincorporated society being incorporated. They must follow the requirements of the local civil law. (JURAT)

5. Bylaws (Suggested)

BYLAWS
of

(Corporate name of church)
ARTICLE I

SECTION I:

The members of the _____ shall constitute the members of this corporation.

SECTION II:

The annual meeting of this corporation shall be held at any time within three months prior to the convening of the _____ of the Free Methodist

 (name of the annual conference)

Church of North America, and may be called by the pastor or the president of said corporation by giving notice as provided in the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America.

SECTION III:

Special meetings may be called at any time for any purpose or purposes whatsoever by the president of the corporation or the pastor, pursuant to the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America.

SECTION IV:

Notice of special meeting may be given as provided in the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America.

SECTION V:

The entry in the minutes of the notice of any annual or special meeting, if read and approved at such meeting or subsequent meeting, shall be conclusive proof on the question of such notice.

SECTION VI:

When all the members are present at any meeting, however called or notified, and signify their consent thereto by the roll call showing their presence, and those not present consent in writing at the time of such meeting or subsequent thereto, and such consent is made a part of the records of such meeting, the proceedings had at such meeting are valid, irrespective of the manner in which the meeting was called or the place where it was held.

SECTION VII:

At any meeting of the members, those present shall constitute a quorum to transact business.

SECTION VIII:

The pastor of the church, or in his absence his appointee, or the president of the corporation shall preside at all meetings.

SECTION IX:

Any regular or called meeting may adjourn from day to day or from time to time, without further notice until its business is completed.

SECTION X:

The *Book of Discipline*, rules and regulations of the Free Methodist Church of North America, shall at all times constitute the rules for ad-

mission, expulsion, withdrawal, and the disciplining of members of this corporation.

ARTICLE II

Directors or Trustees

SECTION I:

The secular affairs of this corporation shall be exercised and conducted by a board of directors or trustees as directed by the society of the _____

SECTION II:

The qualifications of all such directors or trustees shall be as provided in the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America, and the Articles of Incorporation.

SECTION III:

Their term of office shall be for one year or until their successors are elected and qualified.

SECTION IV:

Any vacancy occurring in the office of director or trustee shall be filled by an election at a meeting of the membership or society, and any director or trustee so elected shall hold office for the unexpired term.

SECTION V:

Immediately after the annual meeting, the board of directors or trustees shall meet and organize by electing a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, or secretary-treasurer.

SECTION VI:

All meetings of the directors or trustees shall be held as directed from time to time or at the call of the president or pastor.

SECTION VII:

The duties of the several officers shall be as provided in the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America, or as prescribed by the society of the _____

ARTICLE III

Amendments

SECTION I:

The bylaws of this corporation may be amended at any annual meeting

of the members by a majority vote of those present except as to Article I, Section X. Adopted by resolution of the members of the corporation this _____ day of _____, 19____

6. Form of Bequest

Form of bequest of money or other personal property:

“I give and bequeath to the Free Methodist Church of North America the sum of _____ dollars, to be used and appropriated by that body to religious, charitable, missionary, or educational purposes.”

Real estate:

“I grant and devise (full description of the land).”

LICENSES

P B/1021. 1. Local Ministerial Candidate’s License

This certifies that _____ is authorized to officiate as a LOCAL MINISTERIAL CANDIDATE in the FREE METHODIST CHURCH for one year, provided h____spirit and practice are such as become the gospel of Christ, and h____teachings correspond with the established doctrines of the Holy Scriptures as held by the Free Methodist Church.

Done by order of the Official Board of the _____ Society, _____Conference.

Done at _____ this _____ day of _____, 19____
_____ President
_____ Secretary

2. Renewal of Local Ministerial Candidate’s License

The license of _____ as a LOCAL MINISTERIAL CANDIDATE is hereby renewed for one year, subject to the requirements of the *Book of Discipline*.

Signed by order of the Official Board of the _____ Society, _____Conference, this _____ day of _____, 19____

_____ President
_____ Secretary

3. Lay Minister’s License

This certifies that _____ is authorized to officiate as a LAY MINISTER in the FREE METHODIST CHURCH for one year provided h____ spirit and practice are such as become the gospel of Christ, and h____ teachings correspond with the established doctrines of the Holy Scriptures as held by the Free Methodist Church.

Done by order of the Official Board of the _____ Society, _____Conference.

Done at _____ this _____ day of _____, 19____
_____ President
_____ Secretary

4. Renewal of Lay Minister's License

This certifies that the license of _____ as a LAY MINISTER in the FREE METHODIST CHURCH is hereby renewed for one year, subject to the requirements of the *Book of Discipline*.

Done by order of the Official Board of the _____ Society, _____ Conference.

Done at _____ this _____ day of _____, 19____

_____ President

_____ Secretary

5. Annual Conference Evangelist's License

This certifies that _____ is authorized to officiate as an EVANGELIST in the FREE METHODIST CHURCH, so long as h____ spirit and practice are such as become the gospel of Christ, and h____ teachings correspond with the established doctrines of the Holy Scriptures as held by the Free Methodist Church.

By order of the _____ Annual Conference of the Free Methodist Church.

Done at _____, this _____ day of _____, 19 ____

_____ President

_____ Secretary

RECOMMENDATIONS

¶ B/1022. Recommendation for Status of Conference Ministerial Candidate

This certifies that _____, a local ministerial candidate and member of the _____ Society of the _____ Conference, is hereby recommended as a suitable person to be admitted as a conference ministerial candidate of the FREE METHODIST CHURCH.

Done by order of the Board of Ministerial Education and Guidance of the _____ Conference in session at _____ this _____ day _____, 19____

_____ President
_____ Secretary

RESTORATION OF PARCHMENTS

¶ B/1023. Recommendation for the Restoration of Parchments

To the president and members of the _____ Annual Conference, to be held at _____ commencing on the _____ day of _____, 19____

We, the members of the (district or annual) conference, hereby recommend the restoration of the parchments of _____, who has been received as a local ministerial candidate on the _____ Society (or admitted as a conference ministerial candidate in the _____ Annual Conference).

Done in regular session at _____, this _____ day of _____, 19____, and signed by order and in behalf of the _____ Conference.

_____ President
_____ Secretary

(The foregoing recommendation should be presented to the conference having the custody of the forfeited parchments, or to which the candidate belonged when the parchments were forfeited.)

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

¶ B/1024. 1. Ministerial Candidate — Annual Conference Certificate

This is to certify that _____, the bearer, a regularly licensed local ministerial candidate, has this day been received by the _____ Annual Conference of the FREE METHODIST CHURCH as a conference ministerial candidate, and is hereby authorized to act in that capacity, according to the *Book of Discipline* of said church, provided his spirit and practice are such as become the gospel of Christ, and his teachings correspond with the established doctrines of the Holy Scriptures as held by said church.

Done at _____, the _____ day of _____, 19____

_____ President

_____ Secretary

2. Certificate of Standing (Conference)

This certifies that _____, a _____, is in good standing and of general (deacon, elder) acceptability in the _____ Conference of the FREE METHODIST CHURCH and is granted this certificate with a view to being transferred to the _____ Conference.

Done by _____ at _____, on _____ 19____

_____ President

_____ Secretary

This certifies that _____ was received by transfer as a _____ by vote (deacon, elder) of the _____ Conference on _____, 19____

_____ President

(A certificate granted by an annual or district conference or board of ministerial education and guidance is valid until the ensuing annual conference to which

the certificate is given.)

3. Certificate of Standing (Denomination)

This certifies that _____ has been an ordained _____ in good standing and of general acceptability in the _____ Conference of the FREE METHODIST CHURCH, and is granted this certificate with a view of joining another evangelical denomination. Membership in this conference and church is terminated upon the issuance of this certificate.

Done by the _____ Conference at _____, on _____, 19 _____

_____ President

_____ Secretary

(This certificate can be delivered only upon the surrender of the minister's parchments, for which the secretary must issue a receipt [see Par. A/532, Sec. 2]).

4. Certificate of Location

This certifies that _____, an _____ in good standing in the _____ Annual Conference of the FREE METHODIST CHURCH, is given this Certificate of Location for the reason checked below:

_____ At h__ own request

_____ Under Paragraph A/420, having been left without appointment two years in succession

_____ Under Paragraph A/421, having been on leave of absence two or more years in succession.

Done in annual session at _____ this _____ day of _____, 19 _____

_____ President

_____ Secretary

DELEGATES

¶ B/1025. Annual Conference Credentials

This certifies that _____ was duly elected to represent the _____ Pastoral Charge at the _____ Annual Conference to be held at _____ commencing the _____ day of _____, A.D., _____

Lay Delegate _____

Reserve Delegate _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(Circle one to indicate order of election.)

Done at the Society Meeting held at _____ on the _____ day of _____, A.D., _____.

_____ Chair

_____ Secretary

TRANSFERS

¶ B/1026. 1. Full Membership Transfer

This is to certify that _____, a full member in good standing of the _____ Free Methodist Church, is cordially commended to the Free Methodist Church in _____ or in any other place. When he or she is admitted to another society, membership in this society shall cease. This certificate must be deposited with another Free Methodist Church within one year, unless renewed.

Member's date of birth _____ and of baptism _____

Check where appropriate:

Member is ___ local ministerial candidate, ___ lay minister, ___ local deacon, ___ local elder.

Dated _____

Pastor's signature _____

2. Acknowledgment of Transfer

You are hereby notified that _____ has been duly enrolled as a member of this society upon a certificate issued by the society of which you are the pastor.

Dated _____

Pastor's signature _____

3. Transfer of Membership to Another Denomination

This is to certify that _____, who wishes to become a member of another evangelical church, is a member in good standing of the Free Methodist Church in _____ and is cordially commended to the fellowship of _____ or any other such church with which ___ may desire to unite. H___ membership in the Free Methodist Church ceases when this certificate is given.

Member's date of birth _____
and of baptism _____

Dated _____

Pastor's signature _____

4. Youth Membership Transfer

This is to certify that _____, a youth member in good standing of the _____ Free Methodist Church, is cordially commended to the Free Methodist Church in _____ or in any other place. When he or she is admitted to another society, membership in this society shall cease. This certificate must be deposited with another Free Methodist Church within one year, unless renewed.

Member's date of birth _____, and of baptism _____.

Date received to youth membership _____.

Member has ___ has not ___ been baptized; has completed instruction classes ___.

Dated _____

Pastor's signature _____

C. HISTORICAL

(The material found in the historical appendix includes sections which have been replaced by actions of the 1969 and 1974 General Conferences.)

¶B/1030.

The Free Methodist Church

A. ORIGIN AND CHARACTER

¶1. Dearly Beloved: We think it expedient to give you a brief account of the origin and character of Free Methodism.

The Reverend John Wesley, founder of Methodism, says: "In 1729 two young men in England, reading the Bible, saw they could not be saved without holiness, followed after it, and incited others so to do. In 1737 they saw, likewise, that men are justified before they are sanctified; but still holiness was their object. God then thrust them out to raise up a holy people."

¶2. Methodism spread through England and America, and in other countries. From time to time different bodies arose bearing the Methodist name. As they became popular there was more or less departure from the original principles and practice of Methodism.

¶3. In the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, about the year 1858, several preachers and many members were excluded from the church on various charges and allegations, but really for their adherence to the principles of Methodism; especially to the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification.

¶4. Appeals were made to the General Conference which were denied. Those excluded could not join any other Methodist body, for there was none that agreed with them on the issues on which they were thrust out. Therefore they felt compelled to form a new organization.

¶5. The Free Methodist Church was organized by a convention of lay members and ministers, which met at Pekin, Niagara County, New York, on the twenty-third day of August, 1860. The first General Conference met on the second Wednesday of October, 1862, at St. Charles, Illinois.

¶6. The Free Methodists are a body of Christians who profess to be in earnest to get to heaven, by conforming to all the will of God, as made

known in His Word. They do not believe that either God or the Bible has changed to accommodate the fashionable tendencies of the age. They solemnly protest against the union of the church and the world. The conditions of salvation, as they teach, are the same now as they were in the days of the apostles. He who would be a Christian in reality, as well as in name, must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Jesus. He must come out from the world and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing.

¶7. In doctrine they are Methodists. They believe in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, in a general atonement, in the necessity of the new birth, in the witness of the Spirit, and in future rewards and punishments. They insist that it is the duty and privilege of every believer to be sanctified wholly, and to be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every one who is received into full connection either professes to enjoy that perfect love which casts out fear or promises diligently to seek until he obtains it.

¶8. Free Methodists look upon practical godliness as the never-failing results of a genuine religious experience. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Hence they insist that those who profess to be the disciples of Christ should come out from unbelievers and be separate, abstaining from connection with all secret societies, renouncing all vain pomp and glory, adorning themselves with modest apparel, and not with gold, or pearls, or costly array. We have no right to abolish any of the requirements made by Christ and the apostles; or to make obedience to them a matter of small consequence. The golden rule, they hold, applies equally to all mankind.

¶9. The government is democratic with lay members having an equal voice with the ministers in all the councils of the church. The annual conferences are composed of lay delegates and ministers in full relation. Each annual conference delegation to the General Conference is equally divided between lay and ministerial delegates, who have equal voice and vote in all the proceedings. The stationing committee, by which the appointments are made, is composed of the district superintendents and an equal number of lay members chosen for that purpose. The official boards are selected by the members of circuits, and not appointed by the preachers. The district superintendents are elected by the annual conference and may be appointed to circuits the same as the rest of the preachers. The bishops are elected at each regular session of the General Conference; it is their duty to preside at the annual conferences and travel

through the connection at large. The rights of the members are carefully guarded.

¶10. Free Methodists endeavor to promote spirituality and simplicity in worship. Congregational singing is universal (see Par. 93). They believe in the Holy Ghost. If men are really converted and sanctified, it is through the Spirit of God. When He works there is a stir. As President Edwards said, "Eternal things are so great, and of such vast concern that there is great absurdity in men being but moderately moved and affected by them." "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The Free Methodists, while they do not believe in any mere formal noise, yet, when the Spirit comes, like "a rushing mighty wind," as on the day of Pentecost, do not dare to oppose the manifestations of His presence. As Edwards says, "Whenever there is any considerable degree of the Spirit's influence upon a mixed multitude, it will produce, in some way, a great visible commotion." To resist His operations is to hinder the work of God.

¶11. Free Methodists do not believe in resorting to worldly policy to sustain the gospel. Christ has said that whosoever giveth a cup of cold water in His name shall in no wise lose his reward. But it is the motive, and not the amount done, that secures the divine approbation. There is not more virtue in giving to the cause of God for carnal pleasure than there is in any other purely selfish action. Hence they give no countenance to modern expedients for promoting Christianity, such as renting pews, promoting lotteries, fairs, sales, or other like expedients for raising money. To say that the church cannot be sustained without these contrivances to beguile the world into its support is to confess that professing Christians are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." It is to pronounce Christianity a failure. The gospel possesses an inherent power that will not only sustain itself but make its way through all opposition, wherever its advocates live up to its requirements and rely upon its promises.

¶12. Free Methodists believe the church of Christ is a soul-saving institution of divine origin for holy purposes; therefore they prohibit festivals and donation parties, such as include anything in the line of entertainments contrary to the spirit and letter of our DISCIPLINE, and all other forms of worldly amusements in their church buildings or by their church organizations.

¶13. All their churches are required to be as free as the grace they preach. They believe that their mission is two-fold--to maintain the Bible standard of Christianity, and to preach the gospel to the poor. Hence they

require that all seats in their houses of worship shall be free. No pews can be rented or sold among them. The world will never be converted to Christianity when the churches are conducted upon the exclusive system. It has always been contrary to the economy of the Christian church to build houses of worship with pews to rent. Such renting of pews is a corruption of Christianity. Free churches are essential to reach the masses. The provisions of the gospel are for all. The "glad tidings" must be proclaimed to every individual of the human race. God sends the true light to illuminate and melt every heart. To savage and civilized, bond and free, black and white, the ignorant and the learned is freely offered the great salvation.

¶14. But for whose benefit are special efforts to be put forth? Who must be particularly cared for? Jesus settles this question. "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up," and, as if all this would be insufficient to satisfy John of the validity of His claims, He adds, "and the poor have the gospel preached to them." This was the crowning proof that He was the One that should come. In this respect the church must follow in the footsteps of Jesus. She must see to it that the gospel is preached to the poor. Thus this duty is enjoined by the plainest precepts and examples. If the gospel is to be preached to all, then it follows, as a necessary consequence, that all the arrangements for preaching the gospel should be so made as to secure this object. If it be said that seats would be freely given to those who are unable to pay for them, they answer that this does not meet the case. Few are willing, so long as they are able to appear at church, to be publicly treated as paupers.

¶15. You will find in this book the doctrines and form of government of the Free Methodist Church. We do not wish any to subscribe to it unless they believe it will be for the glory of God and the good of their souls. We have no desire to build up simply a large church; but we do hope that our societies will be composed, exclusively, of those who are in earnest to gain heaven and who are determined, by the grace of God, to live up to the requirements of the Bible. It is of the greatest importance that those who come into this organization shall be of one heart and one mind.

B. THE PURPOSE OF FREE METHODISM

¶16. To the founders of Free Methodism in 1860, the purpose of the

church was to spread scriptural holiness over these lands, and in their generation “scriptural holiness” included such major sectors of truth as: In doctrine, the standard beliefs of evangelical, Arminian Protestantism, with distinctive emphasis on the scriptural teaching of entire sanctification as held by John Wesley,

In experience, the reality of an inner cleansing and power that attests the doctrine of entire sanctification, both in the inward consciousness of the believer and in his outward life,

In worship, the simplicity and freedom of the Spirit, untrammelled by elaborate ritual,

In piety, a life of daily devotion that springs from inward holiness and separates the Christian from the world, even in the world,

In stewardship and service, a complete consecration of every power and possession to the service of God and man.

These distinctives of the Free Methodist Church from its origin are still living issues. In every era and every land they are the witnesses of the church, needing utterance clear and strong that they may be heard and heeded amidst the world’s confusing and misleading voices.

C. WORLD FREE METHODISM

¶16.5 The Free Methodist Church of North America, by 1964, had extended its borders to include many countries on other continents than North America. In some of these countries, Free Methodism had developed to general conference stature,* and in other countries was approaching thereto. It seemed that the time had come to provide for the more speedy evangelization of the world and the extension of scriptural holiness and its fruits through the Free Methodist Church by the firm establishment of general conferences other than the North America General Conference on a basis preserving in each the essentials of Free Methodism.

Accordingly, the 1964 General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America adopted the resolution stated below and revised its constitution to provide for the organization of general conferences in other areas of the world. In order to conserve the essential features of Free Methodism, the resolution provided that in all general conferences a portion of the constitution should be identical and that the remainder should be formulated by each conference to suit local conditions. Following is the statement of resolution adopted:

*The General Conference of 1960, in connection with plans for a World Fellowship of Free Methodist Churches, defined two national areas outside North America as general conferences, namely, Egypt and Japan.

The Free Methodist Church of North America does hereby extend to its regional and national subdivisions the privilege to develop general conferences of like powers to its own within various geographic areas, at such time as each may meet the qualifications for the same, and adopt as a part of its discipline or manual of law, Paragraphs 1-16 as herein and heretofore stated, and further adopts as a section of its constitution a declaration of the principles of Free Methodism and methods of protecting the same according to Paragraphs 20-73 following, which Sections, namely 1-16 and 20-73, shall be identical in all general conference constitutions.

¶B/1031

**The Constitution of the Free Methodist Church
of North America**

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF FREE METHODISM

PREAMBLE

¶20. In order that we may wisely preserve and pass on to posterity the heritage of doctrine and principles of Christian living transmitted to us as evangelicals in the Arminian-Wesleyan tradition, insure church order by sound principles and ecclesiastical polity, and prepare the way for evangelization of the world and the more effective cooperation with other branches of the church of Christ in the advancement of Christ's kingdom among men, we, the ministers and lay members of the Free Methodist Church of North America, in accordance with constitutional procedure, do hereby ordain, establish, and set forth as the fundamental law or constitution of the Free Methodist Church of North America the Articles of Religion, the Conditions and Rules of Membership, and the Articles of General Organization and Government here following, to wit:

CHAPTER I

ARTICLES OF RELIGION

I. Of Faith in the Holy Trinity

¶21. There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons of one substance, power, and eternity — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

II. Of the Word, or Son of God, Who Was Made Very Man

¶22. The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed virgin so that the two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to be the one mediator between God and man, by the sacrifice of himself both for original sin and for the actual transgressions of men.

III. Of the Resurrection of Christ

¶23. Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature,

wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he returns to judge all men at the last day.

IV. Of the Holy Ghost

¶24. The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

V. The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

¶25. The Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. By the term Holy Scriptures we understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testaments of whose authority there was never any doubt in the church.

The names of the canonical books are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, I and II Peter, I, II, and III John, Jude, Revelation.

VI. Of the Old Testament

¶26. The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for in both the Old and New Testaments everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only mediator between God and man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God to Moses, as touching ceremonies and rites, doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof, of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet, notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from obedience to the commandments which are called moral.

VII. Of Original or Birth Sin

¶27. Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, as the

Pelagians do vainly talk, but it is the corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness and of his own nature inclined to evil and that continually.

VIII. Of Free Will

¶28. The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and works to faith and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasing and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ enabling us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

IX. Of the Justification and Regeneration of Man

¶29. We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings; wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort. Concurrently with justification we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, who imparts spiritual life and renews us after the image of him who created us.

X. Of Good Works

¶30. Although good works, which are the fruits of faith and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins and endure the severity of God's judgments, yet they are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

XI. Of Works of Supererogation

¶31. Voluntary works—besides, over and above God's commandments—which are called works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required; whereas Christ saith plainly, "When ye have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants."

XII. Of Sin After Justification

¶32. Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given,

and fall into sin, and by the grace of God rise again and amend our lives. Therefore, they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here, or who deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

XIII. Of Entire Sanctification

¶33. Entire sanctification is that work of the Holy Spirit, subsequent to regeneration, by which the fully consecrated believer, upon exercise of faith in the atoning blood of Christ, is cleansed in that moment from all inward sin and empowered for service. The resulting relationship is attested by the witness of the Holy Spirit and is maintained by obedience and faith. Entire sanctification enables the believer to love God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind, and his neighbor as himself, and prepares him for greater growth in grace.

XIV. Future Reward and Punishment

¶34. God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, according to the gospel. The righteous shall have in, heaven an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

XV. Of Speaking in the Congregation in Such a Tongue as the People Understand

¶35. It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God and the custom of the primitive church to have public prayer in the church or to minister the sacrament in a tongue not understood by the people.

XVI. Of the Church

¶36. The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments are duly administered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

XVII. Of the Sacraments

¶37. Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but they are also certain signs of grace, and of God's good will toward us, by the which He doth work invisibly in us and doth not only quicken but also strengthen and confirm our faith in Him.

XVIII. Of Baptism

¶38. Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christians are distinguished from others who are not baptized, but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The baptism of young children is to be retained in the church.

XIX. Of the Lord's Supper

¶39. The Supper of the Lord is not merely a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death, insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of our Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but it is repugnant to the plain word of the Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner; and the means whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper, is faith. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.

XX. Of the One Oblation of Christ, Finished upon the Cross

¶40. The offering of Christ, once made, is a perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of the masses, in the which it is said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous and dangerous deceit.

XX. Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches

¶41. It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike; for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly

break the rites and ceremonies of the church to which he belongs, which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, that others may fear to do the like, as one that offendeth against the common order of the church, and woundeth the conscience of the weak brethren. We recognize the right of every denomination to ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies so that all things may be done to edification.

XXII. Of Christian Men's Goods

¶42. The riches and goods of Christians are not common, as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor according to his ability.

XXIII. Of a Christian Man's Oath *

¶43. As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ, and James the apostle, so we hold that the Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may take oath when the magistrate requireth in a case of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching**, in justice, judgment, and truth.

¶B/1032.

GENERAL RULES

(Comment: The General Rules are embodied in a historic document originally prepared by John Wesley under the title, "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of Our United Societies." The text printed here is that adopted by the organizing convention of the Free Methodist Church and published by it in

* This article shall not deprive of membership in our church those who have conscientious scruples against taking an oath.

** Jeremiah 4:1-2.

1860. Although the General Rules properly are covered only in Paragraphs 53 to 56 inclusive, the entire document is here printed for historic completeness.)

(1) *Nature and Design*

¶50. In the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to Mr. Wesley in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did two or three more the next day) that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That he might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday, in the evening. For these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), he gave those advices from time to time which he judged most needful for them; and they always concluded their meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.

¶51. This was the rise of the UNITED SOCIETY, first in Europe, and then in America. Such a society is no other than “a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.”

¶52. That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called classes, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in a class, one of whom is styled the leader. It is his duty,

1. To see each person in his class once a week at least; in order
 - a. To inquire how their souls prosper.
 - b. To advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require.
 - c. To receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preacher, church, and poor.
2. To meet the minister and the stewards of the society once a week; in order,
 - a. To inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly, and will not be reproved.
 - b. To pay the stewards what they have received of their several

*Paragraph heading authorized by General Conference of 1964 to show where General Rules actually begin.

classes in the week preceding.

(2) *General Rules**

¶53. There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies, "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." But wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

FIRST, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced; such as,

The taking of the name of God in vain.

The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein, or by buying or selling.

Drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity.

The buying, selling, or holding of a human being as a slave.

Fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil; or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling.

The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty.

The giving or taking things on usury, i.e., unlawful interest.

Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation; particularly speaking evil of magistrates or ministers.

Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us.

Doing what we know is not for the glory of God; as The putting on of gold or costly apparel.

The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God.

Softness and needless self-indulgence. Laying up treasure upon earth.

Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

¶54. It is expected of all who continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

SECONDLY, by doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power, as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as possible, to all men.

To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping

them that are sick or in prison.

To their souls, by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine, that “we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to do it.

By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in business; and so much the more because the world will love its own, and them only.

By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.

By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them falsely for the Lord’s sake.

¶55. It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

THIRDLY, by attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are:

The public worship of God.

The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded.

The Supper of the Lord.

Family and private prayer.

Searching the Scriptures.

Fasting or abstinence.

¶56. These are the general rules of our societies, all of which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written Word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul, as they who must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But if then he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.

SPECIAL RULES

The Special Rules have been adopted at various times subsequent to 1860.

¶57. 1. Members shall conform to the scriptural standards of attire, adorning themselves in a meek and quiet spirit, not with gold, pearls, or costly array.

2. The church forbids its members the using, growing, processing, buying, or selling of tobacco; the habitual use of opiates; and the processing, buying, selling, or using of intoxicating liquors unless for mechanical, chemical, or medicinal purposes, or in any way intentionally and knowingly aiding others so to do.

3. The church condemns secret societies on scriptural grounds and as contrary to the glory of God, and forbids membership in them.

4. The church recognizes no other ground for divorce than that permitted by the Word of God (Matthew 5:32; Mark 10:11, 12).

¶1033.

The Ministry

QUALIFICATIONS AND WORK

THE CALL TO PREACH

¶300. Examination of Those Who Think They Are Moved by the Holy Ghost to Preach.

1. The following questions shall be asked the candidates, namely: Do you know God as a pardoning God? Have you the love of God abiding in you? Do you desire nothing but what is the will of God? Do you believe that entire sanctification is the work of God wrought instantaneously upon the heart of the consecrated, believing soul subsequent to justification? Do you believe you are called of God to preach the gospel? Are you called to serve in the itinerant ministry or to serve in a local capacity?

2. The following questions shall be considered by the district conference: Have they gifts as well as grace for the work? Have they in some tolerable degree a clear, sound understanding, a right judgment in the things of God, and a just conception of salvation by faith? Has God given them any degree of utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly? Have they fruit? Are they truly convinced of sin, and converted to God by their preaching? And are they holy in all manner of conversation?

As long as these marks concur in any one, we believe he is called of God to preach. These we receive as sufficient proof that he is moved by the Holy Ghost.

RULES FOR A PREACHER'S CONDUCT

¶301. Be diligent. Never be unemployed; never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away time; neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary.

Be serious. Let your motto be, Holiness to the Lord. Avoid all lightness, jesting, and foolish talking.

Converse sparingly and conduct yourself prudently with women (1 Timothy 5:2). Take no step toward marriage without first consulting your brethren.

Believe evil of no one without good evidence; unless you see it done, take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction on everything. You know the judge is always supposed to be on the prisoner's side.

Speak evil of no one, because your word, especially, would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your own breast, till you come to the person concerned.

Tell every one under your care what you think wrong in his conduct or temper, and that lovingly and plainly as soon as may be; else it will fester in your heart. Make all haste to cast the fire out of your bosom.

Avoid all affectation. A preacher of the gospel is the servant of all. Be ashamed of nothing but sin.

Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And do not mend our rules, but keep them, not for wrath, but for conscience' sake.

You have nothing to do but to save souls; therefore, spend and be spent in this work; and go always not only to those who need you, but to those who need you most.

Observe, it is not only your business to preach so many times and to take care of this or that society, but to save as many as you can; to bring as many sinners as you can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord. And remember that a Free Methodist preacher is to mind every point, great and small, in the Free Methodist DISCIPLINE! Therefore, you will need to exercise all the sense and grace you have.

Act in all things, not according to your own will, but as a son in the gospel. As such it is your duty to employ your time in the manner in which we direct; in preaching and visiting from house to house; in reading, meditation, and prayer. Above all, if you labor with us in the Lord's vineyard, it is needful that you should do that part of the work which we advise, at those times and places which we judge most for his glory.

¶302. The following smaller advices may be of use:

Be sure never to disappoint a congregation.

Begin at the time appointed.

Always suit your subject to your audience.

Choose the plainest texts you can.

Take care not to ramble, but keep to the text, and make out what you take in hand.

Avoid everything awkward or affected, in your gesture, phrase, or pronunciation.

Do not usually pray more than eight or ten minutes, at most, without intermission.

Frequently read and enlarge upon a portion of Scripture; and young preachers should often exhort without taking a text.

Always avail yourself of the great festivals by preaching on the occasion.

Let your deportment be serious, weighty, and solemn.

SPIRITUAL QUALIFICATIONS

¶303. A preacher is to be qualified for his charge by walking closely

with God, and having his work greatly at heart, and by understanding and loving discipline, ours in particular.

¶304. We should frequently ask each other the following questions: Do you walk closely with God? Have you now fellowship with the Father and the Son? At what hour do you rise? Do you punctually observe the morning and evening hours of retirement? Do you spend the day in the manner which the conference advises? Do you converse seriously, usefully, and closely?

¶305. To be more particular, you should use all the means of grace yourself, and enforce the use of them on all other persons.

They are either instituted or prudential.

The instituted are:

1. Prayer — private, family, and public; consisting of deprecation, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving.

Do you use each of these? Do you forecast daily, wherever you are, to secure time for private devotion? Do you practice it everywhere? Do you ask everywhere, "Have you family prayer?" Do you ask individuals, "Do you use private prayer every morning and evening in particular?"

2. Searching the Scriptures — reading regularly, some part every day; regularly, all the Bible in order; carefully, with notes; seriously, with prayer before and after; fruitfully, immediately practicing what you learn there; meditating, at set times and by rule; hearing the Word at every opportunity, with prayer, before, at, after. Have your Bible always about you.

3. The Lord's Supper. Do you use this at every opportunity? With solemn prayer before? With deliberate self-devotion?

4. Fasting. Do you use as much abstinence and fasting every week as your health, strength, and labor will permit?

5. Christian conference. Are you convinced how important and difficult it is to order your conversation aright? Is it always with grace, seasoned with salt, meet to minister grace to the hearers? Do you converse too long at a time? Is not an hour commonly enough? Would it not be well always to have a determined end in view, and pray before and after?

¶306. The prudential means we may use either as Christians, as Free Methodists, or as preachers.

As Christians, what particular rules have you in order to grow in grace? What arts of holy living? As Free Methodists, do you never miss your class? As preachers, have you thoroughly considered your duty? Are you conscientious in executing every part of it? Do you meet each society and its leaders?

These means may be used without fruit. But there are some means which cannot; namely, watching, denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and living always as in the presence of God.

Do you steadily watch against the world? Yourself? Your besetting sin? Do you deny yourself every useless pleasure of sense, imagination, honor? Are you temperate in all things? Instance, in food? Do you use only that kind and that degree which is best both for body and soul? Do you see the necessity of this? Do you eat no more at each meal than is necessary? Are you not heavy or drowsy after dinner? Do you use only that kind and degree of drink which is best both for the body and soul? Do you choose and use water for your common drink? And only take wine medicinally or sacramentally? Wherein do you take up your cross daily? Do you cheerfully bear your cross, however grievous to nature, as a gift of God, and labor to profit thereby? Do you endeavor to set God always before you? To see his eye continually fixed upon you? Never can you use these means but a blessing will ensue. And the more you use them, the more you will grow in grace.

MATTER AND MANNER OF PREACHING

¶307. The best general method of preaching is: (1) To convince. (2) To offer Christ. (3) To invite. (4) To build up. (5) To do this in some measure in every sermon.

¶308. The most effectual way of preaching Christ is to preach him in all his offices, and to declare his law, as well as his gospel, both to believers and unbelievers. Let us strongly and closely insist upon inward and outward holiness in all its branches.

WHERE TO PREACH

¶309. We do not deem it advisable to preach in as many places as we can without forming societies. We have made the trial in various places, and that for a considerable length of time. In all cases the seed has fallen by the wayside. There is scarcely any fruit remaining.

1. We should endeavor to preach most where there is the greatest number of quiet and willing hearers, and where there is most fruit.

2. We ought diligently to observe in what places God is pleased at any time to pour out his Spirit more abundantly; and at that time to send more laborers than usual into that part of the harvest.

PASTORAL VISITATION AND ENFORCEMENT

OF PRACTICAL RELIGION

¶310. We should endeavor to assist those under our care, and to aid in the salvation of souls by instructing them in their own homes. What unspeakable need there is of this!

We can but just touch on a few particulars. How little faith is there among even professing Christians!

How little communion with God! How little living in heaven, walking as for eternity, deadness to every creature! How much love of the world, desire of pleasure, of ease, of getting money! How little brotherly love! What continual judging one another! What gossiping, evil-speaking, tale-bearing! What want of moral honesty! To instance only one particular: Who does as he would be done by in buying and selling?

Family religion is wanting in many branches. And what avails public preaching alone, though we could preach like angels? We must, yea, every traveling preacher must instruct the people from house to house.

¶311. Our religion is not sufficiently deep, or universally uniform. It is superficial, partial, uneven. It will be so until we spend half as much time in this visiting as we now do in talking uselessly. Can we find a better method of doing this than Mr. Baxter's? If not, let us adopt it without delay. His whole tract, entitled *The Reformed Pastor*, is well worth a careful perusal. Speaking of this visiting from house to house, he says: "We shall find many hindrances, both in ourselves and the people.

1. "In ourselves there is much dullness and laziness, so that there will be much ado to get us to be faithful in the work.

2. "Some of us have a foolish bashfulness. We know not how to begin, and blush to contradict the devil.

3. "But the greater hindrance is weakness of faith. Our whole motion is weak, because the spring of it is weak.

4. "Lastly, we are unskilled in the work. How few know how to deal with men so as to get within them, and suit all our discourse to their several conditions and tempers; to choose the fittest subjects, and follow them with a holy mixture of seriousness, terror, love, and meekness!"

Undoubtedly this private application is implied in those solemn words of the apostle: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering."

O brethren, if we could but set this work on foot in all our congregations, and prosecute it zealously, what glory would redound to God. If the common lukewarmness were banished, and every shop and every

house were busy in speaking of the Word and works of God, surely God would dwell in our habitations and make us his delight.

¶312. It is objected, 1. "This will take up so much time we shall not have leisure to follow our studies." We answer, (a) Gaining knowledge is a good thing, but saving souls is better. By this very thing you will gain the most excellent knowledge, that of God and eternity. (b) You will have time for gaining other knowledge, too. Only sleep no more than you need; "and never be idle or triflingly employed." But, (c) If you can do but one, let your studies alone. We ought to throw by all the libraries of the world, rather than be guilty of the loss of one soul.

It is objected, 2. "The people will not submit to it." If some will not, others will. And all the success with them will repay all your labors. Oh, let us herein follow the example of St. Paul! (a) For our general business, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind. (b) Our special work, Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock. (c) Our doctrine, Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. (d) The place, I have taught you publicly, and from house to house. (e) The object and manner of teaching, I ceased not to warn every one night and day, with tears. (f) His innocence and self-denial herein, I have coveted no man's silver or gold. (g) His patience, Neither count I my life dear unto myself.

And among all other motives, let these be ever before our eyes: 1. The church which he hath purchased with his own blood. 2. Grievous wolves shall enter in; yea, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things.

Write this upon your hearts, and it will do you more good than twenty years' study. Then you will have no time to spare; you will have work enough. Then, likewise, no preacher will stay with us who is as salt that has lost its savor. For to such, this employment will be mere drudgery. And in order to do it, you will have need of all the knowledge you can procure, and all the grace you can obtain.

¶313. The sum is, Go into every house in course, and teach every one therein, young and old, to be Christians, inwardly and outwardly. Make every particular plain to their understandings. Fix it in their minds, write it on their hearts. In order to do this, there must be line upon line, precept upon precept. What patience, what love, what knowledge is requisite for this! We must needs do this, were it only to avoid idleness. Do we not loiter away many hours in every week? Each try himself. No idleness is consistent with a growth in grace. Nay, without exactness in redeeming time, you cannot retain the grace you received in Justification.

¶314. Why are we not more holy? Why do we not live as for eternity? Why do we not walk with God all the day long? Why are we not all devoted to doing good, breathing the whole spirit of missionaries?

Chiefly because we do not properly use the means. 1. How few wait upon the Lord in secret prayer until his blessing comes on the soul. 2. Do we know the obligation and benefit of fasting and abstinence? 3. How often do we practice it? 4. How little there is of self-denial. 5. How few bring their tithes and offerings into the storehouse of the Lord. 6. How much there is of consecration to our own wills instead of the will of the Lord. 7. How few manifest a disposition to submit themselves one to another. 8. What a want there is of properly governing the tongue. The neglect of these alone is sufficient to account for our feebleness and faintness of spirit. We should amend from this hour.

¶315. How shall we guard against Sabbath breaking, evil speaking, unprofitable conversation, lightness, expensiveness or gaiety of apparel, and contracting debts without due care to discharge them?

1. We should preach expressly on each of these heads. 2. Read in every society the sermon on evil speaking. 3. The leaders should closely examine and exhort every person to put away the accursed thing. 4. The preachers should warn every society that none who is guilty herein can remain with us. 5. Extirpate from our church all buying or selling of goods which have not paid the duty laid upon them by government. 6. Extirpate bribery, receiving anything, directly or indirectly, for voting at any election. 7. Strongly advise our people to discountenance all treats given by candidates before or at elections, and not to be partakers in any respect of such practices. Show no respect to persons herein, but expel all that touch the accursed thing.

EMPLOYMENT OF TIME

¶316. We advise you to develop and follow as closely as possible a personal schedule which will provide adequate time for prayer, meditation, study, and personal devotion.

Other reasons may concur why the people under our care are not better, but the chief is, because we are not more knowing and more holy.

But why are we not more knowing? Because we are idle. We forget our first rule, "Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary." We fear there is altogether a fault in this matter, and that few

of us are clear. Which of us spend as many hours a day in God's work as we did formerly in man's work? We talk — talk or read what comes next to hand. We must, absolutely must, cure this evil, or betray the cause of God. But how? 1. Read the most useful books, and that regularly and constantly. 2. Steadily spend all the morning in this employment, or at least five hours in the four and twenty. "But I have no taste for reading." - Contract a taste for it by use, or return to your former employment. "But I have no books." Be diligent to spread the books, and you will have the use of them.

UNION AMONG OURSELVES

¶317. We should be deeply sensible, from what we have known, of the evil of division in principle, spirit, or practice, and of the dreadful consequences to ourselves and others. If we are united, what can stand before us? If we divide, we shall destroy ourselves, the work of God, and the souls of our people.

In order to a closer union with each other,

1. We should be deeply convinced of the absolute necessity of it. 2. Pray earnestly for, and speak freely to each other. 3. When we meet, let us never part without prayer. 4. Take care not to despise each other's gifts. 5. Never speak lightly of one another. 6. Defend one another's character in everything, so far as is consistent with truth. 7. Labor in honor each to prefer the other before himself. 8. We recommend a serious perusal of *The Causes, Evils and Cures of Heart and Church Divisions*.

UNION WITH OTHERS

¶318. We have Christian fellowship and love for all persons of whatever denomination who show by their lives that they "follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." We will unite with all well-disposed persons, in an open, Christian manner, in promoting social and civil reforms. But we cannot unite, where we are required to compromise our principles, in holding union meetings with any person, or denomination, whose practical standard of Christian character and church fellowship is obviously below that plainly set forth in the New Testament.

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