

The Free Methodist Church
of
North America

2003
Book of Discipline

“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

Bishop Joseph F. James (chair), Bishop Richard D. Snyder, Byron Forbes,
Helen Kaufmann, William Smout, Barbara Fox (secretary).

Foreword

The Free Methodist Church of North America meets as a deliberative body, called a General Conference, approximately every four years. It is a time when Free Methodists join in celebrative worship, hear the Word, pray for God's guidance, debate the issues, decide on resolutions, set new directions, renew friendships and enjoy fellowship with each other.

Ministerial and lay delegates from the annual conferences across the United States and in other parts of the world, along with the bishops, meet together to clarify the mission, renew the vision, care for denominational business and examine the *Book of Discipline*. Representatives from Free Methodist institutions, associations and auxiliaries as well as executive directors with their leadership teams bring reports and add their insights.

The 2003 *Book of Discipline* is unique as it reflects the creativity and efforts of the Book of Discipline Reformatting Task Force (Byron Forbes, chair, Bill Smout, Barbara Fox, Glenn Teal, Matt Thomas, and Bishop Richard Snyder) who were asked to prepare a reformatted *Book of Discipline* for the Board of Administration's consideration and recommendation to the General Conference. Our special thanks to Bill Smout for his untiring work in organizing this project so that the proposed changes could be easily identified.

The *Book of Discipline* includes the common constitution of the Free Methodist Church worldwide. It is a blend of history, roots and international contemporary mission. It is the ecclesiastical and organizational manual of the church. It represents the heart and vision of the Free Methodist people who serve faithfully at the call of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is our prayer that this *Book of Discipline* will be a useful resource to guide the church in effective ministry under the direction of the Holy Spirit as together we live and serve our Master in the neighborhoods of our world.

— The Editors

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Introduction

Purpose and Character of the Free Methodist Church

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.

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 people and society. It has a mission of holy love. The church exists to produce Christlikeness in all people 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 all people. This description of our mission is both individual and social. It points to a social relationship of all people 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 people.

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 people 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).

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

Purpose and Character of the Free Methodist Church

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.

Purpose and Character of the Free Methodist Church

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.

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 people, pervert the good and lead people and institutions to ruin. They attempt to help people 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.

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 people. 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 the believer’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.

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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, untrammled 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 all people everywhere. 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 1

The Constitution of the Free Methodist Church

Preamble

¶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.

Articles of Religion – God

The Holy Trinity

¶101 There is but one living and true God, the maker and preserver of all things. And 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.

The Son – His Incarnation

¶103 God was himself in Jesus Christ to reconcile people to God. Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, He joined together the deity of God and the humanity of humankind. Jesus of Nazareth was God in flesh, truly God and truly human. 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 us.

The Son – His Resurrection and Exaltation

¶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 people. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Holy Spirit – His Person

¶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.

The Holy Spirit – His Work in Salvation

¶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.

The Holy Spirit – His Relation to the Church

¶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

Authority

¶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.

Authority of the Old Testament

¶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.

New Testament

¶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 humankind, sin, salvation, the world and its destiny.

The books of the New Testament are: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 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.

Humankind

Free Moral Persons

¶111 God created human beings in His own image, innocent, morally free and responsible to choose between good and evil, right and wrong. By the sin of Adam, humans as the offspring of Adam are corrupted in their very nature so that from birth they are inclined to sin. They are unable by their own strength and work to restore themselves 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 humans to respond to His grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. By God's grace and help people are enabled to do good works with a free will.

Law of Life and Love

¶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 persons in their relationship with God, others and society. They set forth the principles of human duty in both individual and social action. They recognize God as the only Sovereign. All people as created by Him and in His image have the same inherent rights regardless of gender, race or color. All should therefore give God absolute obedience in their individual, social and political acts. They should strive to

secure to everyone respect for their person, their rights and their greatest happiness in the possession and exercise of the right within the moral law.

Good Works

¶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

Christ's Sacrifice

¶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.

New Life in Christ

¶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 people into a relationship with Himself as they repent and their faith responds to His grace. Justification, regeneration and adoption speak significantly to entrance into and continuance in the new life.

Justification

¶116 Justification is a legal term that emphasizes that by a new relationship in Jesus Christ people are in fact accounted righteous, being freed from both the guilt and the penalty of their sins.

Regeneration

¶117 Regeneration is a biological term which illustrates that by a new relationship in Christ, one does 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 and is a new creation. The old life is past; a new life is begun.

Adoption

¶118 Adoption is a filial term full of warmth, love, and acceptance. It denotes that by a new relationship in Christ believers have become His wanted children freed from the mastery of both sin and Satan. Believers have the witness of the Spirit that they are children of God.

Entire Sanctification

¶119 Entire sanctification is that work of the Holy Spirit, subsequent to regeneration, by which the fully consecrated believers, upon exercise of faith in the atoning blood of Christ, are 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 believers to love God with all their hearts, souls, strength, and minds, and their neighbor as themselves, and it prepares them for greater growth in grace.

Restoration

¶120 Christians may be sustained in a growing relationship with Jesus as Savior and Lord. However, they may grieve the Holy Spirit in the relationships of life without returning to the dominion of sin. When they do, they must humbly accept the correction of the Holy Spirit, trust in the advocacy of Jesus, and mend their relationships.

Christians can sin willfully and sever their 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 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

¶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.

The Language of Worship

¶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.

The Holy Sacraments

¶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

¶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, 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

¶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

The Kingdom of God

¶126 The kingdom of God is a prominent Bible theme providing Christians with both their tasks 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.

The Return of Christ

¶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.

Resurrection

¶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.

Judgment

¶129 God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness in accordance with the gospel and our deeds in this life.

Final Destiny

¶130 Our eternal destiny is determined by God's grace and our 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.

Scriptural References

¶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

The Holy Trinity (see ¶101)

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.

The Son – His Incarnation (see ¶103)

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.

The Son – His Resurrection and Exaltation (see ¶104)

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.

The Holy Spirit – His Person (see ¶105)

Matthew 28:19; John 4:24; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:13-15.

The Holy Spirit – His Work in Salvation (see ¶106)

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.

The Holy Spirit – His Relation to the Church (see ¶107)

Acts 5:3-4; Romans 8:14; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 2 Peter 1:21.

The Scriptures

Authority (see ¶108)

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.

The Scriptures – Authority of the Old Testament (see ¶109)

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.

The Scriptures – New Testament (see ¶110)

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.

Humankind

Free Moral Persons (see ¶111)

Genesis 1:27; Psalm 51:5; 130:3; Romans 5:17-19; Ephesians 2:8-10.

Law of Life and Love (see ¶112)

Matthew 23:35-40; John 15:17; Galatians 3:28; 1 John 4:19-21.

Good Works (see ¶113)

Matthew 5:16; 7:16-20; Romans 3:27-28; Ephesians 2:10; 2 Timothy 1:8-9; Titus 3:5.

Salvation

Christ's Sacrifice (see ¶114)

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.

New Life in Christ (see ¶115)

John 1:12-13; 3:3-8; Acts 13:38-39; Romans 8:15-17; Ephesians 2:8-9; Colossians 3:9-10.

Justification (see ¶116)

Psalms 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 (see ¶117)

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 (see ¶118)

Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:4-7; Ephesians 1:5-6; 1 John 3:1-3.

Entire Sanctification (see ¶119)

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.

Restoration (see ¶120)

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

The Church (see ¶121)

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.

The Language of Worship (see ¶122)

Nehemiah 8:5, 6, 8; Matthew 6:7; 1 Corinthians 14:6-9, 23-25.

The Holy Sacraments (see ¶123)

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

Baptism (see ¶124)

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 (see ¶125)

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

Last Things

The Kingdom of God (see ¶126)

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.

The Return of Christ (see ¶127)

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.

Resurrection (see ¶128)

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

Judgment (see ¶129)

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.

Final Destiny (see ¶130)

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

Membership

Privileges and Requirements

¶150 The privileges and requirements of full membership in the Church are constitutional, and changes therein may be made only by amendment according to ¶/225-228. Nothing shall be included in the membership ritual that is con-

trary to the following definitions of conditions and privileges of membership.

- ¶151 The requirements of full membership are:
- A. 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;
 - B. acceptance of the Articles of Religion, the Membership Covenant, the goals for Christian conduct and matters of church government as written in the *Book of Discipline*; *
 - C. a covenant to support the church, to live in fellowship with the members thereof, to be an active participant in the ministry of the church and to seek God's glory in all things;
 - D. approval of membership by the local board of administration and the candidates public declaration of membership vows.

- ¶152 The rights of full membership are:
- A. participation in the sacraments and ordinances of the church;
 - B. eligibility to vote and hold office upon reaching the age designated by the general conference;
 - C. 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.

- ¶153 Church membership may be terminated only by:
- A. voluntary withdrawal (including permission to withdraw under complaint);

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

- B. joining another religious denomination or sect or a secret order;
- C. expulsion after proper summary proceeding or trial and conviction;
- D. persistent neglect of church relationship by a member, which in effect is voluntary withdrawal.

Membership Covenant

Privilege and Responsibility

¶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.

¶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.

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

The Confession and Commitment

We confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. By faith, we walk with Him. We commit ourselves to know Him in His full sanctifying grace.

As Regards God

¶157 As God's people, we reverence and worship Him.

We commit ourselves to cultivate habits of Christian devotion, submitting to mutual accountability, practicing private and corporate prayer, studying the Scriptures, attending public worship and partaking of Holy Communion;

We commit ourselves to observe the Lord's Day, setting it apart for worship, renewal and service;

We commit ourselves to give our loyalty to Christ and the church, refraining from any alliance which compromises our Christian commitment.

This we do, by God's grace and power.

As Regards Ourselves and Others

¶158 As a people, we live wholesome and holy lives and show mercy to all, ministering to both their physical and spiritual needs.

We commit ourselves to be free from activities and attitudes that defile the mind and harm the body, or promote the same;

We commit ourselves to respect the worth of all persons as created in the image of God;

We commit ourselves to strive to be just and honest in all our relationships and dealings.

This we do, by God's grace and power.

As Regards the Institutions of God

¶159 As a people, we honor and support the God-ordained institutions of family, state and church.

We commit ourselves to honor the sanctity of marriage and the family;

We commit ourselves to value and nurture children, guiding them to faith in Christ;

We commit ourselves to seek to be responsible citizens,
and we pray for all who lead.

This we do, by God's grace and power.

As Regards the Church

¶160 As God's people, we express the life of Christ in the world.

We commit ourselves to contribute to unity in the church,
cultivating integrity, love and understanding in all our re-
lationships;

We commit ourselves to practice the principles of Chris-
tian stewardship, for the glory of God and the growth of
the church;

We commit ourselves to go into our world and make dis-
ciples.

This we do, by God's grace and power.

Chapter 2

The Constitution (continued)

General Organization

- ¶200 Each annual conference in the Free Methodist Church of North America shall be a member of the general conference of the same.
- ¶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 ¶250.
- ¶202
- A. The general conference shall be represented in a World Conference composed of representatives from all general conferences of Free Methodism, the representation to be proportionate to membership on the basis stipulated in ¶253.E.
 - B. The general conference shall submit to the World Conference 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 ¶253.D.1.
 - C. The general conference shall refer all matters requiring referendum voting by other general conferences to the supervision of the World Conference.
 - D. The general conference, in cooperation with all general conferences, may assign functions other than the foregoing to the World Conference, but in no case shall the World Conference act as a legislative or governing body.
 - E. A general conference or its interim administrative board

may refer to the World Conference, 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 World Conference shall prevail. If within six months either conference shall register an appeal, the World Conference shall arrange a referendum vote to decide the issue.

¶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.

¶204 The general conference shall recognize the World Conference 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.

Restrictive Rules and Methods of Amendment of the Principles of Free Methodism

¶225 ¶100-227 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 ¶228 may not be amended or changed in any way. To ascertain basis for voting see ¶251.C.

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

¶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 ¶100-160, 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 ¶225 above.

¶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 ¶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.

Interrelation of General Conferences

New General Conferences

¶250

- A. 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.
- B. 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 ¶251.A, 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:

1. an effective church organization on the local, conference, and/or general levels;
2. effective programs for the nurture and training of members, new converts, children, young people, and lay workers;
3. an effective program for ministerial training;
4. 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;
5. a definite program of evangelism, church extension and missionary outreach on an indigenous basis;
6. the existence of a property-holding body, or more than one such body if required by local laws;
7. a *Book of Discipline* as approved by the general administrative board of the sponsoring general conference.

Constitution for the General Conferences

¶251

- A. **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 (¶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.
- B. **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 World Conference.

- C. Amendments. The provisions of this Constitution for all general conferences as defined in ¶251.A, 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 World Conference shall declare the result, and it shall be in effect.

- D. 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 World Conference shall be authorized and empowered to declare the results of the voting, which shall be in effect for all general conferences.

Provisional General Conferences

¶252

- A. One or more annual conferences may petition the general conference to which they belong for status as a provisional general conference when the following prerequisites are fulfilled:
 - 1. evidence of maturity in spiritual leadership;
 - 2. a membership growth pattern spanning several years;
 - 3. evidence of being an evangelistic, sending church;
 - 4. demonstrated loyalty to the doctrines and practices of the Free Methodist Church as set forth in its Constitution;
 - 5. evidence of ability to understand and articulate biblically and theologically the essentials of the Wesleyan-Arminian persuasion;
 - 6. 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;
7. adequate financial strength and stability;
 8. where agreements have been made concerning the deployment of missionaries and management of mission properties, approved by Free Methodist World Missions or its equivalent (see ¶4590).
- B. 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 provisional general conference (see ¶4580).

Constitution of the Free Methodist World Conference

¶253

- A. Name. The name of this organization shall be the Free Methodist World Conference.
- B. Purpose. The Free Methodist World Conference is an organization whose purpose is the coordination of the worldwide ministries and activities of the denomination.

In harmony with this purpose its responsibilities shall be:

1. to provide for worldwide fellowship among Free Methodist bodies;
2. to encourage the expansion of the kingdom of God through the Free Methodist Church by evangelism in existing conferences and in new fields in harmony with Wesleyan doctrine and practices;
3. to assume defined legislative and judicial powers in matters relating to the Free Methodist Constitution as presented in the current edition of the *Book of Discipline* in ¶251.A, or its equivalent;
4. to assure the integrity of all Free Methodist institu-

- tions under the constraints of the *Book of Discipline* and this Constitution;
5. to advance the biblical Wesleyan formation of Free Methodist leaders in part through the maintenance of an international scholarship fund.
- C. Legislative Authority. The World Conference has the following legislative authority over the general conferences. Its legislative duties shall be:
1. Proposed amendments to the Free Methodist Constitution initiated by a general conference and approved by a two-thirds vote of the Free Methodist World Conference, or amendments to the constitution initiated by a two-thirds vote of the Free Methodist World Conference shall be submitted as referendums to all general conferences. A two-thirds aggregate vote of all general conferences shall be required for approval. When authorized by a two-thirds vote of a general conference a board of administration may vote in its place. Votes taken by boards of administration shall be reported as the corresponding proportional number of votes by the general conference to which the board belongs.
 2. When a general conference or its board of administration does not assemble, vote and report back to the executive committee of the World Conference within four years of the time the World Conference has submitted the amendment proposal, it shall surrender its right to vote on the said issue and the two-thirds aggregate vote shall be based on the general conference or boards of administration that report within the four years allowed.
- D. Judicial Authority. The Free Methodist World Conference shall be charged with maintaining fidelity to the provisions of the Constitution which are for all general conferences as defined in ¶251.A, or the equivalent text in current editions of the *Book of Discipline*, to decide matters of comity and interrelations of general

conferences, and to supervise referendums under the conditions defined by the above legislative authority section.

The World Conference has the following judicial authority over the general conferences. Its duties shall be:

1. To review, through its executive committee, the legislation, orders and policies of all the general conferences to determine whether any act appears to be in conflict with the provisions of the Free Methodist constitution which are for all general conferences as defined in ¶251.A, or its equivalent in the current *Book of Discipline*. When the executive committee 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 board of administration (or its equivalent) of the general conference whose action is called in question, the action at issue shall await reconsideration by said general conference at its next session.

If the action is rescinded as a result of reconsideration, the process shall be terminated. If a general conference does not rescind the action in question the evidence and related findings shall be submitted to the World Conference.

If the actions in question are upheld by a majority of the votes of the World Conference, the suspension shall be lifted. In the event the ruling of the World Conference Executive Committee is upheld, the action by the offending general conference shall be discontinued (retroactively if possible).

A general conference or general conferences whose case or cases come before the World Conference

shall, after having presented their arguments, refrain from voting on the issue in which they have direct interest.

If the general conference whose action has been called into question should refuse to abide by the referendum, the World Conference 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.

2. To decide any matter that may arise between general conferences involving boundaries, recognition of credentials and other matters of comity. If no solution satisfactory to the involved conferences can be reached, the recommendation of the World Conference shall prevail.
 3. To supervise the voting of the general conferences 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.
 4. To carry out, through its executive committee, the voting on referendums and report the results to the World Conference. A vote of the executive committee by mail or by electronic means may be authorized by the officers.
- E. Organizational Structure. The World Conference shall meet at least once each four years, preferably at the time and place of meeting of a general conference. Special meetings may be called by a two-thirds majority of the executive committee.

Delegates shall be elected from the general conferences as follows:

1. From general conferences: Each general conference shall elect delegates on the basis of total full membership as follows:
 - 2 delegates – up to 5,000 total membership
 - 4 delegates – from 5,001 to 15,000 total membership
 - 6 delegates – from 15,001 to 25,000 total membership
 - 8 delegates – over 25,000 total membership
2. The formula will be reviewed by the World Conference at its regularly scheduled meetings and adjusted as appropriate.
3. In the election of delegates, officers and appointments to commissions, due consideration shall be given to the balance of lay and ministerial representation as well as adequate representation of both genders.
4. Delegates from the general conferences shall include *ex officio*, within the formula, the bishops or equivalent officers from each general conference. They shall be counted as ministerial delegates.
5. In determining representation to the World Conference as well as financial responsibility and other statistical purposes membership shall be determined on the basis of full members only.
6. In addition to the above formula identified in E.1, there shall be two voting delegates from each area fellowship. Two honorary members from each fellowship are permitted. In electing the delegates from the area fellowship, preference shall be given to representatives from annual conferences or other Free Methodist bodies not related to a general conference within the geographical area.
7. Provisional general conferences may elect one ministerial and one lay delegate.

F. Officers of the World Conference

1. The officers shall be president, vice president and secretary-treasurer.

2. The officers shall be members of the World Conference Executive Committee.
3. A nominating committee composed of one representative from each area fellowship may be elected to submit nominations for officers of the World Conference and also members at large of the executive committee.
4. Officers may serve for two terms or until their successors are elected. A term is defined as the period between regularly scheduled meetings of the World Conference.

G. The Executive Committee

1. The executive committee shall meet every two years and shall be composed as follows: president, vice president, secretary-treasurer and three members at large, including the outgoing president. These members at large shall be elected so as to allow equitable representation worldwide.
2. The president shall be the chairperson.
3. The executive committee shall present a budget to the World Conference for approval.
4. The executive committee is amenable for its actions to the World Conference.
5. The executive secretary shall work under the direction of the World Conference Executive Committee and shall implement the policies and decisions of the World Conference; supervise the work of the general office; be responsible for the production of literature; facilitate the exchange of views and information as requested; carry forward such studies and surveys as may be authorized by the World Conference and helpful to member bodies; and, on authorization of the executive committee, visit the member areas as may be necessary in carrying out the instructions of the executive committee. He/She may be employed by the executive committee and shall be amenable to the committee through its president.

- H. The commissions of the World Conference shall be:
Outreach: missions and evangelism
Special Ministries: development, women's ministries
Leadership Development: theological education, scholarships
Constitutional matters: area fellowship constitutions, referendums, world conference constitutions, constitutional compliance
- I. Relationship to Conference Boards of Administration
In each general conference or provisional general conference, the board of administration shall speak officially for its conference and shall be the responsible party in all negotiations with the World Conference and the executive committee. The chairperson of each board of administration shall be responsible for official correspondence with the World Conference. It shall be the duty of the chairperson to keep the board of administration of his/her conference fully informed of the proceedings of the World Conference. Copies of all official correspondence shall be properly filed and available to the bishop or highest administrative officer(s) of the conference and to the board of administration.
- J. Fraternal Members
1. Any body of churches not organically related to the Free Methodist Church, but wishing to become a fraternal member of the World Conference may be admitted after the following has been received:
 - a. a valid request by the governing board of the body making application;
 - b. a statement of agreement of compatibility with Free Methodist doctrine and practice; and
 - c. approval by majority vote of the World Conference.
 2. Such relationship shall be for a period of four years. It may be extended for additional four-year periods by vote of the World Conference.

3. Fraternal members of the World Conference shall be processed according to their appropriate level of development (provisional annual conference, annual conference, provisional general conference) and be recommended by the World Conference for membership in a general conference.
 4. Fraternal members may have one non-voting observer at the World Conference until such time as they are assigned to a general conference.
- K. Amendment of the Constitution. Provisions of this constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting at a quadrennial meeting, provided always that such action is in harmony with the constitution as defined in ¶251.A, or the corresponding paragraph of the *Books of Discipline* of the general conferences, and subject to approval by an aggregate two-thirds vote of the general conferences.
- L. Area Fellowships
1. Area fellowships may be organized where the geographical situation, mutual interests and the need for spiritual counsel and encouragement make it advisable. The area fellowships are to act in harmony with the purposes and the work of the World Conference as set forth in this constitution except for the legislative and judicial functions defined in ¶253.C-D. The area fellowships shall operate under constitutions suited to their own needs and situations.
 2. The constitutions of the area fellowships shall be approved by the World Conference.

Chapter 3

The Christian Journey

The Goal of the Christian Journey

¶3000 The Scriptures affirm that God’s purpose for humanity, from before creation, was that we should “be holy and blameless before him in love” (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Timothy 2:4). God’s purpose was far from empty. For, from before creation, his purpose had reality in the person of the Son, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9). The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are God’s clear statement of the origin, purpose and goal that he has for humanity. For “he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (Ephesians 1:9-10).

The Christian journey is a part of this plan, which was set forth in Christ. The Christian journey is only possible because of God’s eternal purpose, the redemption he made for us in Christ, and the living presence of his Spirit in our lives.

Because of God’s plan, the goal of the Christian journey is nothing less lofty than to attain “unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). The goal of the Christian journey in this life is that we should grow into Christlike maturity. When we enter the life to come, our journey will be complete because we will be like God in an even fuller way than is possible now: “What we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

Bold paragraph numbers and section letters indicate those items which may be changed by the board of administration. All others may only be changed by the general conference.

Therefore, we as Free Methodists affirm with God's Word that the proper goal for our Christian life is this Christlike maturity, which the Bible describes as holiness and righteousness (Matthew 5:6; 1 Peter 1:16). We acknowledge that this is only possible because of the grace that he so richly provides.

Contents

¶3010 This chapter of the *Book of Discipline* is intended to describe some significant features of the Free Methodist understanding of the Christian journey. It is intended to promote in our churches an understanding of the way of salvation, Christian character and Christian responses to modern issues. It also contains some resources for Christian discipleship. This chapter has the following sections:

The first section describes the way of salvation, including the process by which God, through the activity of his Spirit, makes it possible for sinful humans to enter the Christian journey and to grow into Christlike maturity.

The second section is a description of genuine Christian character and the spiritual disciplines that nourish and support Christian life.

The third section addresses the Christian response to certain pressing issues that are a part of Christian life in the modern world as it relates to God, oneself and to others.

The fourth section contains resources for local churches, to help them lead people in a discipleship process toward Christlike maturity.

The Way of Salvation

¶3100 This section, on the way of salvation, describes the Free Methodist standard of teaching on the biblical doctrine of salvation. These paragraphs are an elaboration of what is affirmed in the Articles of Religion – Salvation (see ¶114-120).

They represent our understanding of the clear teaching of Scripture on the process by which God through the activity of his Spirit makes it possible for sinful humans to enter the Christian journey and to grow into Christlike maturity. The way of salvation is the path God has laid out for us to begin the Christian journey, and to grow in faith.

The way of salvation includes God's gracious initiative for salvation, awakening to God, repentance, trust, assurance, consecration and sanctification.

God's Gracious Initiative for Salvation

¶3110 In love God has graciously provided for the salvation of all humankind. God is love. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, was sent by the Father as an expression of God's love for the world. The cross shows the extent of Jesus' love for all. The love of God is further expressed to the world through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Only those who respond in repentance and faith can experience His grace as a redemptive reality.

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, but the outcome of this confrontation is affected by how each person responds.

God deals with all persons as free and responsible. Therefore, He not only makes His grace available, waiting our 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.

Awakening to God

¶3120 The Scriptures teach that by nature humans are corrupt in

every aspect of their beings and have gone far from original righteousness. Added to the depravity common to all because of the Fall, there are the enslaving effects of committed sins. We are unable in ourselves to come to God, 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.

Repentance and Restitution

¶3130 Awakened by the Holy Spirit to their lost condition before God, persons 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.

Sincere repentance leads to moral renewal, often evidenced by restitution – the effort to right one’s wrongs when possible. Acts of restitution, as in the case of Zaccheus, are certainly fruits befitting repentance (Luke 3:8). Neither repentance nor restitution save, however. Salvation is by faith in Christ (Romans 5:1).

Trust / Faith

¶3140 Trust, also known as faith, is 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 full reliance on His integrity, love and power.

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).

Assurance

¶3150 God gives assurance of salvation and peace of heart to all who repent and put their faith in Christ (Romans 5:1). 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).

Christians have peace with God through Jesus Christ because guilt is taken away and fear of judgment removed (Hebrews 6:11; 10:22). 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).

Consecration

¶3160 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; Psalm 100:2). When Christians sincerely follow Christ and listen to the

Holy Spirit as He speaks in the Scriptures, they should sense this 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 5:1-2:14; 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. A Christian who is divided in loyalty cannot serve God victoriously and steadfastly. Christ must be given preeminence. He must be the Lord of the Christian's life.

Therefore, to open themselves to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, believers must give themselves without reservation to God. They freely yield all to the purposes of God and devote every desire and ambition to the service of Christ rather than to self (Colossians 3:8-13). Christians cannot be delivered from the dominion of sin if they permit self to reign in their lives. They cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24).

Sanctification

¶170 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 provided for believers to be entirely sanctified in the atonement (Hebrews 9:13-14; 10:8-10). Accordingly, 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). Sanctification begins with regeneration. It continues throughout the believer's life, as the believer co-operates with the Spirit. And a deeper relationship with Christ is possible when the believer is fully cleansed in heart (Psalm 51:5-13; 1 John 1:5-2.1).

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 unrivalled 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; Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:6-7). 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 5:25-62). They will know an inner surrender to all the will of God, and their lives will be transformed from inner conflict with sin to glad obedience (Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 5:16-25).

Inward sanctification cleanses Christians from sin and delivers from the idolatry of self (1 Peter 3:2-3; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:15-20). When they are cleansed, they are not made perfect in performance, but in love (Hebrews 6:1; 12:14; Matthew 5:43-48; 1 John 4:12-13).

Genuine Christian Character

¶3200 This section describes how genuine Christian character may grow. This statement has its roots in the Scriptures and in classic descriptions of the Christian life that have been written through the centuries. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, wrote comparable descriptions such as *A Plain Account of Genuine Christianity* and *The Character of a Methodist*. Christian character begins with life in the Spirit, and is nourished by the spiritual disciplines of the Christian life.

Christians have a new relationship with God and a new life in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. In new Christians, the joy of this new life in Christ may for a time obscure the need for growing up in Christ. People who have

been Christians for some time can become complacent. Therefore, every Christian must ultimately choose between growth and decline.

This section describes some of the spiritual disciplines that are essential for Christians. Through the exercise of these and other spiritual disciplines, growing Christians will become increasingly sensitive to both good and evil, steadily learning to distinguish between them. The Holy Spirit will guide them, in harmony with the Scriptures. Growing Christians learn to be alert to the Spirit's directives so they may resist temptation and respond to God's call to higher living.

Prayer

¶3210

Prayer is an indispensable means of growth toward Christlikeness. In prayer the Christian talks and listens, confesses and adores, asks and thanks. Prayer should be as conversation, avoiding artificial phrases and tones. Sincere prayer changes the supplicant and often the circumstances (James 5:16). The Bible teaches that both individual and group prayer 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 (Psalm 119:11; 10:5).

Study of the Word

¶3220

The Bible is our source for discovering how we may grow. It is the Christian's "growth manual." It must be taken seriously as the final authority for our lives; therefore, it ought to be read and diligently studied for its meaning. God will speak to growing Christians through its pages if they are listening. The value and meaning of life are found in this book. The prayerful study and application of Scripture is a means of cleansing and of changing attitudes and behavior.

Life in the Church

¶3230

Growing Christians find their supportive 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 believer's active participation. Believers should prepare their minds and spirits for worship. Sincere followers of Christ reach out to God in praise, thanksgiving, dedication, confession, faith and service. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are vital parts of the life of the church that were commanded by the Lord. God has promised to graciously meet the person who faithfully takes part in these sacraments. As a part of the Body of Christ, believers must take part in corporate church worship as well as in the other ministries of the church. Small group participation is a means of grace and growth. Support, insight, inspiration and discipline are fruits of fellowship.

Spiritual Gifts and Ministry

¶3240 Growth comes with the acceptance of full responsibility for the use of natural talents and spiritual gifts in service and ministry. The Holy Spirit endows every believer with natural abilities for service and ministry. These are a trust. They must be used only in ways that will glorify God. To use God-given abilities well is to nurture personal growth. The Holy Spirit also distributes, as He wills, spiritual gifts of speech and service for the common good and the building of the church (1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10-11). Spiritual gifts are to be exercised under the lordship of Christ with His love and compassion, and are not to be the cause of division in the church. Therefore, everything is to be done decently and in order. For example, in public worship, 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 intelligible (1 Corinthians 14). The believer is to seek as the evidence of the Holy Spirit's fullness, not the gifts themselves, but the character and power of the Holy Spirit.

Love of Others

¶3250 Growth in Christ requires taking responsibility to love others, all of whom are loved by God and made in His image. The quality of a Christian's relationships with others af-

fects the quality of his/her own life. Growth in Christ requires readiness to mend relationships both with God and with others (James 5:16). The Ten Commandments, summarized into two commandments by Jesus, (Luke 10:25-28) teach the nature of our relationships with God and with others. Christians will express their love both by deeds of kindness and by personal words of witness that point to Christ as the embodiment of God's love and the Savior of the world.

Divine Healing

¶3260 All healing, whether of body, mind, or spirit has its ultimate source in God who is "over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:6). 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.

Christian Life in the Modern World

¶3300 This section arises from the experience of Free Methodists as they have lived out Christ's command to holiness in the modern world. Therefore, it describes a Christian response to pressing issues in the contemporary world.

There is no claim made that this is a complete or final description of an appropriate Christian response to all of the

important issues faced in the modern world, or that such a description could ever be written. Rather, the approach taken in the following paragraphs illustrates the ways in which a Christian must form a responsible and biblically appropriate response to contemporary issues.

A member of The Free Methodist Church adopts the following paragraphs as an authoritative guide to living an authentic Christian life. These principles (*indicated by italicized text*) arise out of the direct, clear teaching of Scripture. The application statements that follow each principle represent the historic understanding of Free Methodists. We believe that a life lived according to the following statements will be a life that is “worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (Ephesians 4:1 NRSV).

As Regards God (see ¶157)

False Worship

¶3310 *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). The worship of any other person, spirit, or thing is idolatry.*

We abstain from all practices that lead to idolatry. Occult practices, such as spiritism, witchcraft and astrology must be avoided. Moreover, Christians are to be on guard against the idolatries of the heart – the worship of things, pleasures, and self (1 John 2:16).

The Lord’s Day

¶3320 *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 that the Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). We need a special day in which we turn from our daily work 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 His resurrection.*

In keeping the Sabbath principle in a Lord's day setting, we participate in corporate worship with the Christian community as the essential activity of Sunday (Hebrews 10:25). We refrain on that day from unnecessary labors and commerce, and recognize that salvation comes not from our own strivings but by grace, as we rest in God (Isaiah 58:13-14; Hebrews 4:9). Pastors and others who must be involved in necessary work on Sunday are encouraged to observe the Sabbath principle on another day.

Secret Societies

¶3330 *The Christian's supreme loyalty is to Jesus Christ who is Lord (Romans 14:9; Acts 2:36). In every association Christians must keep themselves free to follow Christ and obey the will of God (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). Therefore, we abstain from solemn oaths of secrecy shared with unbelievers which cloud our witness.*

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). As Christians, therefore, we refuse to swear unreserved loyalty to any secret society since we see such an allegiance to be in direct conflict with unconditional surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord. We must keep ourselves free to follow the will of the Lord in all things.

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 refrain, therefore, from membership in all secret societies and when we unite with the church we resign from active membership in any lodge or secret order previously joined.

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.

As Regards Ourselves and Others (see ¶158)

Worth of Persons

¶3340 *We are committed to the worth of all humans regardless of gender, race, color, or any other distinctions (Acts 10:34-35) and will respect them as persons made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and redeemed by Christ's death and resurrection. The Old Testament law commands such respect (Deuteronomy 5:11-21). Jesus summarized this law as love for God and neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). He ministered to all without distinction and His death on the cross was for all (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).*

We are therefore pledged to active concern whenever human beings are demeaned, abused, depersonalized or subjected to demonic forces in the world, whether by individuals or institutions (Galatians 3:28; Mark 2:27). We are committed to give meaning and significance to every person by God's help.

Remembering our tendency to be prejudicial, as Christians we must grow in awareness of the rights and needs of others.

Self Discipline

¶3350 *One attribute of the Spirit's indwelling presence is self-control (Galatians 5:23). The Scriptures instruct us to honor the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).*

As Christians we desire to be characterized by balance and moderation. We seek to avoid extreme patterns of conduct. We also seek to keep ourselves free from addictions or compulsions.

Since Christians are to be characterized by a disciplined style of life, we attempt to avoid selfish indulgence in the pleasures of this world. It is our wish to live simply in

service to others, and to practice stewardship of health, time, and other God-given resources.

We are committed to help every Christian attain such a disciplined life. Although unhealthy habits are not easily broken, believers need not live in such bondage. We find help through the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, prayer, and the counsel and support of other Christians.

Stewardship of Possessions

¶3360 *Although as Christians we accumulate goods, we should not make possessions or wealth the goal of our lives (Matthew 6:19-20; Luke 12:16-21). Rather, as stewards we are people who give generously to meet the needs of others and to support ministry (2 Corinthians 8:1-5; 9:6-13).*

The Scriptures allow the privilege of private ownership. Though we hold title to possessions under civil law, we regard all we have as the property of God entrusted to us as stewards.

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 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 faith we have in Christ.

While customs and community standards change, there are changeless scriptural principles that govern us as Christians in our attitudes and conduct. Whatever we buy, use or wear reflects our commitment to Christ and our witness in the world (1 Corinthians 10:31-33). We therefore avoid extravagance and apply principles of simplicity of life when we make choices as to the image that we project through our possessions.

Life in the Workplace

¶3370 *As Christians we are called to be servants of all. This norm is equally applicable to employer and employee (Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-41). Our concern for justice is primarily a concern to be just and only secondarily a concern to obtain justice. We believe that all persons have the privilege to be gainfully employed irrespective of gender, race, color, national origin, or creed (Romans 10:12).*

We recognize the privilege of employees to organize for their betterment. Oath-bound secret pacts or acts of violence designed to violate or defend their rights cannot be condoned. We also recognize the right of employees to remain independent of such organizations.

As Christians we do not view management and labor as necessarily hostile to each other. They need not bring distrust and hostility to their place of work or the negotiating table. We resist the exploiting of people or seeing them merely as economic units. We discourage rigid confrontation and favor a problem-solving approach to disagreements.

We endeavor to make our witness effective where we work, remembering that as Christian employees we are responsible first to God and then to our employer and the organization. As Christian employers we have a responsibility to deal fairly and kindly with our employees, preserving the witness of Christian character in both word and deed (Matthew 7:12; Colossians 3:17).

Entertainment

¶3380 *We evaluate all forms of entertainment in the light of biblical standards for holy living, and recognize that we must govern ourselves according to these standards. The Scriptures say, "we have an obligation – but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body you will live" (Romans 8:12-13).*

In a culture where pleasure is ardently pursued, we must

exercise care regarding our recreational activities. We face a multitude of entertainment media such as television, videos, movies, recorded music, the Internet, dances, magazines and novels. Since many of these are pursued in the home, our choices regarding them cannot be legislated from afar; we must make them from within, from a renewed heart. In the case of children and young people living at home, however, our convictions as Christian parents should prevail.

Our choices regarding entertainment must recognize that some modern diversions promote violence, excite sexual desire or awaken greed, and certain atmospheres encourage and promote tolerance of vice and vulgarity.

We commit ourselves to be moderate in our pursuit of entertainment, regarding carefully the wise use of time and money and the stewardship of the body so as to avoid evil of every kind and honor Christ in everything.

Therefore when making choices with regard to entertainment, before the Lord we should forthrightly answer such questions as: Does this activity enhance or reduce my witness as a Christian? Does it contradict the teachings of Scripture? Is my conscience clear? Will participation expose me to unnecessary temptation? Is this activity in any sense enslaving?

Misuse of Substances

¶3390 *As Christians we believe that life is full, abundant and free in Jesus Christ (John 8:35; 10:10). Therefore, we abstain from whatever damages, destroys or distorts His life in us.*

Illicit drugs are prime offenders. Because various forms of narcotics cause untold damage to people and relationships and such drugs restrict personal development, damage the body and reinforce an unrealistic view of life, we avoid their use.

Because Christ admonishes us to love God with all our being and our neighbor as ourselves, we advocate abstain-

ing from the use of alcoholic beverages (Mark 12:30-31). The abuse of alcohol, a legalized drug, is damaging to individuals, families, and society. It is unpredictably addictive and its destructive effects cannot be fully measured. Its abuse leaves a trail of broken marriages, family violence, crime, industrial loss, ill health, injury and death. As concerned Christians, we advocate abstinence for the sake of health, family and neighbors. Moreover, we see the adverse social consequences as so pervasive that we seek by advocating abstinence to make a united social witness to the freedom Christ gives.

Because we believe Christians are to treat their bodies as sacred trusts, we advocate abstaining from the use of tobacco. It is a major cause of a variety of cancers and other diseases, as well as being an expensive and socially-offensive addiction. We 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).

Because drug dependency of any kind inhibits fullness of life in Christ, we guard against the 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 as Christians we be vigilant against their misuse.

We believe that the intemperate consumption of food is a form of abusing the body which may result in illness and obesity. We eat healthily so as to preserve the strength of our bodies and so extend our years of usefulness as servants of Christ.

We endeavor by God's help 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 acknowledge the difficulties of overcoming the bondage of addictions, and de-

sire to give whatever help and support are needed while fellow Christians seek full deliverance.

As a further evidence of an awakened conscience, we advocate refraining from the cultivation, manufacture or promotion of these substances which are harmful to health.

Pornography

¶3400 *The Scriptures warn that those who participate in sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery “will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21). Therefore as Christians we avoid participation in these evils or in the glorification of these evils that is found in the many forms of pornography.*

Pornography excites sexual lust, which is the debasement of a gift of God. It depicts and may encourage indecent and deviant sexual conduct such as fornication, incest, rape, sodomy, child molestation and bestiality. It may cause a progressive decay of moral values, beginning with addiction, followed by a desensitizing of conscience, and tending toward the wanton acting out of perverted sexual conduct. It often victimizes the innocent and unsuspecting.

For society, pornography is a rampant degenerative force. It damages and destroys. As Christians, we oppose the abomination of pornography by every legitimate means.

Homosexual Behavior

¶3410 *Homosexual behavior is regarded by the Scriptures as immoral because it is a distortion of God’s created order, a practice contrary to nature. The sanctity of marriage and the family is to be protected against all manner of immoral conduct (Exodus 22:16-17; Deuteronomy 22:23-28; Leviticus 20:10-16). The Scriptures speak explicitly against homosexual practice (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). For those who have fallen into the practice, the grace of God is available and completely adequate to forgive and deliver (1 John 1:9;

Hebrews 7:25; Luke 4:18; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Because the practice is a distortion of nature, therapy may be necessary for healing to take place.

The church has a corporate responsibility to be God's agent of healing, ministering in love to homosexuals and giving them support as they learn to live a Christian life that is wholesome and pure (1 Corinthians 2:7-8).

We oppose legislation that legitimizes homosexual behavior as an acceptable alternate lifestyle.

Sanctity of Life

¶3420

God is sovereign: the world and all that is in it belongs to God. Though God's eternal purposes may never be thwarted by human action we are still free and responsible to make God-consistent choices in matters of life and death. Christians live in the reality that human beings are created for an eternal purpose. As we attend to human suffering, we acknowledge that the ability of medical technology to end human suffering is finite. Therefore, we accept our responsibility to use this technology with wisdom and compassion; honoring God, who is ultimately supreme.

Our convictions about the inherent worth of human life form the foundation of our approach to bioethics. These complex bioethical issues involve 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.

God meets us in our suffering, to comfort us, to shape a Christ-like character within, and to make us instruments of his healing. Chronic disease, diminished physical capacity or ongoing disability do not constitute the end of life and need not compromise one's trust in God.

For the Christian death is not the end of life, but the transition into eternity. Therefore, physical death is not the ultimate enemy, but part of our journey. God's love sustains

us in our suffering. He ministers to us personally and through the healing environment of Christian community. Divine wisdom in the face of suffering comes to us through scripture, prayer, godly counsel and the work of the Holy Spirit. As we are comforted, we are called to extend God's comfort to those who suffer.

A. Reproductive Technology

Reproductive technologies generate a large number of ethical, medical, legal and theological questions even as they offer hope. The guiding principle, that all human life must be valued, respected and protected throughout all its stages must be carefully and consistently applied to every new development. A Christian theology of family (§3440) must also inform these decisions.

B. Abortion

The intentional abortion of a person's life, from conception on, must be judged to be a violation of God's command, "You shall not commit murder," except when extreme circumstances require the termination of a pregnancy to save the life of the pregnant woman. Induced abortion is the intentional destruction of a person after conception and before delivery by surgical or other means. Therefore, induced abortion is morally unjustifiable except when the act has been decided upon by responsible and competent persons, including Christian 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.

The decision to terminate a pregnancy involves religious and moral values, as well as medical and legal realities. Christian morality demands that we consider both the biblical commandment and the human situation in which the law must be applied. As Christians, we believe that human life, whether in vitro, mature

or senile, is sacred because life exists in relation to God.

Compassionate alternatives and long-term care should be offered to women considering abortion.

We counsel physicians and parents to understand that the moral commandment and the law of love are transgressed when human life is destroyed for selfish or malicious ends.

C. Euthanasia

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 recognize that it is permissible to use painkillers and other medications, which carry the risk of shortening life so long as the intent is to relieve or otherwise benefit the patient, rather than to cause death. We further recognize the responsibility of medical professionals to alleviate pain within these parameters. Christians must discourage the assumption that some lives are not worth living. We believe that there is no such thing as a "useless" life. The value and worth in our lives rests primarily in our relationship with a God who loves us.

D. Other Ethical Dilemmas

These biblical principles, which guide our approach to bioethics will need to be applied on an ongoing basis to other ethical dilemmas rising from advances in medical technology. Such ethical dilemmas may include but not be limited to: the allocation of finite resources, organ transplantation, end-of-life concerns, genetic engineering and testing, gender identity issues and others.

As Regards the Institutions of God (see ¶159)

¶3430 There are at least three divinely appointed, earthly institutions. One of these is marriage and the family. A second is the church. A third is the secular government. Only the

church, among these institutions, will last in eternity. Nevertheless, the Scriptures have clearly placed a great deal of importance on how we act with respect to each of these institutions until the return of Christ.

This section is intended to describe a Christian point of view on these important institutions. Important principles are the focus: there is no attempt to be comprehensive. Principle statements, represent what we believe are the central, clear teaching of Scripture on these institutions. We also believe that the application statements that accompany the principle statements are clear inferences from the Scriptures, but they are presented here to assist our churches and members in applying scriptural principles.

The Christian and Marriage

¶3440

A. Principles Regarding Marriage

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."

Sexual intercourse is God's gift to humanity, for the intimate union of a man and woman within marriage. In this relationship, it is to be celebrative (Hebrews 13:4). Marriage is therefore the only proper setting for sexual intimacy. Scripture requires purity before and faithfulness within marriage. Likewise, it condemns all unnatural sexual behavior such as incestuous abuse, child molestation, homosexual activity and prostitution (1 Corinthians 6.9; Romans 12:6-27).

We believe therefore that marriage should be safeguarded and supported by both the church and society and should be formalized with public vows. It is not enough for a couple to live together in private commitment; we believe that they are to covenant before God and the state.

B. 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. Ministers are required to use diligent care when being requested to solemnize a marriage. Those who unite believers to unbelievers go contrary to the explicit teachings of the Scriptures. Before entering into marriage, our people 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 desire that our churches provide 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 to provide resources such as seminars and retreats to strengthen marriages and build Christian homes.

C. 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.

Therefore, if our members find their marriage in crisis, we encourage them to seek the counsel of the pastor and submit to the guidance of the church. Professional counsel may be necessary.

We recognize that domestic violence, emotional and/or physical, does occur in church-related families. It often jeopardizes the safety of a spouse or children and may threaten life itself. These family members need both spiritual and emotional healing (Malachi 2:13-16).

When an impossible situation is destroying the home, we advise that Christians may separate. In such cases, the way to reconciliation must be kept open (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). Even when a marriage is violated by sexual infidelity, the partners are encouraged to work for restoration of the union.

D. Divorce

When one marriage partner is a Christian and the other a nonbeliever, we believe that 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).

When a marriage is violated by sexual infidelity, the partners are encouraged to work for restoration of the union. Where reconciliation is impossible, a divorce may be allowed (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).

Desertion is the abandoning of a marriage without just cause. We believe that a person denies the faith when he/she 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).

Where reconciliation is impossible in a troubled marriage, we acknowledge that divorce may be unavoidable (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). When marriages break down completely, we recognize that, in the words of Jesus, "hardness of heart" is implicit on one or both sides of the union (Matthew 19:3-8; Mark 10:5-9).

Though the Scriptures allow divorce on the grounds of adultery (Matthew 5:32) and desertion (1 Corinthians 7:10-16), they do not mandate divorce and we advise counsel with church leaders to seek other alternatives. One of these may be for both to live celibately.

E. Recovery After Divorce

Divorce always produces trauma. It is the breaking of a 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 also be necessary. If unhealthy patterns of relating exist, the marriage partners must be helped to replace them with new attitudes and behaviors that are Christlike (Colossians 3:1-15). Repentance and forgiveness are crucial to recovery. The goals of the process are personal healing and restoration to wholesome participation within the church. The church must extend its concern to family and others affected by the divorce.

F. Remarriage After a Divorce

A divorced member or one who is considering marriage to a divorced person must come under the authority, 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).

G. 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 local board of administration. Corrective action shall include removal from leadership, and may include suspension, or expulsion from membership.

H. Exceptional Cases

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

Nurture and Education of Children

¶3450 *The Free Methodist Church views the education of its children as a parental responsibility (Deuteronomy 6:5-9; Ephesians 6:4). Part of that responsibility may be delegated but not relinquished to either public or Christian institutions of education.*

The Free Methodist Church expects to be interactively involved with parents in teaching and nurturing all children in the foundations of the Christian faith. It is the purpose of the family, both the human and family of God, to provide a setting in which adults and children can grow together in their love of God and love for each other (Deuteronomy 11:18-19; Joel 1:3).

Due to the value Jesus demonstrated toward children (Matthew 19:14), our churches make ministry to children and youth a priority. Ministries focus not only on leading young persons to faith in Jesus Christ but also on enfoldng them into church membership and ministry.

The church wishes to support public schools and recognizes the challenge to Christian teachers, parents and students to be as lights in the world. When parents choose to use Christian schools or home schooling, we also support them in their decision. We request that our children be excused from assignments and activities which conflict with the values held by the denomination. When conflicts arise, we request of the school that the student's academic standing not be jeopardized, and when necessary, other assignments be given.

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 scien-

tific treatment of the several concepts of origin, including special creation (that all basic life forms and life processes were created by a supernatural Creator). We therefore urge that the concept of special creation be presented in, or along with, courses, textbooks, library materials and teaching aids dealing with the subject of first origins.

The Christian and the Church

¶3460 *The church is part of God's eternal plan to make a people for himself who would be "holy and blameless before him." It was instituted by Christ during his ministry when he commissioned the church to be his unique representative in the world. Therefore, the Scriptures speak of the church as the Body of Christ. The church has been empowered for its ministry by the active, ongoing work of the Holy Spirit since Pentecost. Just as New Testament letters were written to churches in particular places, made up of particular people, the church is not only universal, but also must be visible and local.*

The church is also the people of God in the world. In both Old and New Testaments this fact is amply illustrated. The Lord of the church gives gifts to His people to serve one another and to minister in the world. Although Christians who live in independence from the church may not necessarily forfeit their faith, they will certainly deprive themselves of the spiritual resources and opportunities God Himself has ordained. Consistent with the Scriptures, we affirm membership in the church.

Membership in the church is a biblical reality noted from the earliest days after Pentecost (Acts 2:47). When the Holy Spirit gives new life in Christ, at the same time He effects our spiritual entrance into the church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Free Methodist Church is one denomination among the many other legitimate visible churches in the world. Entrance into the membership of one of our churches is a visible and local sign of entrance into the universal church.

A. Membership in the Church

In accordance with this, our church provides means by which persons who are born of the Spirit may enter into a Membership Covenant (¶154-160) and register their

membership in a public way. We provide categories for believers under sixteen years of age and adults. As an aid to Christian development we provide membership instruction, which may be followed by entrance into membership. For further information on the requirements and rituals for membership (see ¶150-164).

B. Leadership in the Church

Leadership in the church is an honor that has accompanying responsibilities and sacrifices. The Scriptures provide descriptions of the qualities of leaders in such passages as: Exodus 18:21, Acts 6:3, 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. Those who are chosen to lead in the church do so in a spirit of humility and dependence upon God. They must be spiritually mature individuals whose lifestyle shall be in harmony with the Scriptures, the doctrine of The Free Methodist Church (¶100-131), the principles of the Membership Covenant (¶150-160) and of ¶6200.E. They must live personal and public lives that clearly exemplify these principles.

The Christian and the State

¶3470 *As Christians, we are citizens of the kingdom of God and of this world. We receive benefits from and bear responsibilities to both relationships. Our first allegiance is to God, but that does not release us from responsibilities to our own country if such relationships do not conflict with the clear teachings of the Scriptures (Romans 13:1-7). We recognize the sovereign authority of government and our duty to obey the law (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1-7). Thus, we bear the responsibilities of good citizenship.*

A. Civic Participation

As Christians we pray for “all who are in high positions” (1 Timothy 2:2) and are “subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution” (1 Peter 2:13). We actively participate in civic life by involvement in efforts for the improvement of social, cultural and educational conditions (Matthew 5:13-16). We oppose degrading cultural influences (2 Peter 2:4-10). We exercise the responsibility to vote.

B. War and Military Enlistment

We believe that military aggression, as an instrument of national policy is indefensible (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, our duty as Christians to promote peace and goodwill, to foster understanding and mutual trust among all people, and to work with patience for the renunciation of war as a means to settle international disputes (Romans 12:18; 14:19).

It is our firm conviction that none be required to enter military training or to bear arms except in time of national peril and that the consciences of our members 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.

C. Swearing Oaths

Vain and rash swearing is forbidden by our Lord (Matthew 5:34; James 5:12). We hold that the Christian religion does not prohibit the taking of an oath when it is required by a public official. In every case, the Christian must speak in justice and truth (Jeremiah 4:1-2; Ephesians 4:25).

Resources for Churches

¶3500

A. Understanding Lifestyle Issues in the Membership Covenant

Because the Membership Covenant is a part of the Constitution, the recent changes are a result of a referendum decision made by Free Methodists around the world. In essence, the Covenant moved from a legal base (with a longer list of specific behaviors and attitudes) to a principle base (with a shorter list of guiding, overarching principles).

For example, when the Covenant addresses lifestyle issues it says, “As a people, we live wholesome and holy lives and show mercy to all, ministering to both their physical and spiritual needs. We commit ourselves to be free from habits and attitudes that defile the mind and harm the body, or promote the same”

This principle maintains the denomination’s longstanding position of calling people to be committed to living healthily by avoiding addictive substances like alcohol and tobacco. It also reminds us, for example, not to overeat or overwork.

When the Membership Covenant is principle-based, then the question is raised as to when one may be considered a member of the fellowship of God’s people. Our previous approach saw membership as the graduation diploma at the end of a discipleship process that prepared people to live within specific requirements. The present approach sees membership as the doorway into the discipleship process. As members continually allow the Holy Spirit to make new applications of the Covenant’s principles at deeper levels, we will become healthier Christians.

Therefore, we fix our eyes on Jesus, and with the Holy Spirit’s enabling we commit to live in joyful obedience, setting aside everything that keeps us from becoming more like Christ (Hebrews 12:2).

B. Further Resources

Additional resources are available through *Light and Life Communications* at www.LLCom.net.

Chapter 4

General Administration

General Conference

Free Methodist Church of North America

Preamble

¶4000 “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.

Purpose

¶4010

- A. The general conference shall have general organizational, legislative, judicial, promotional and supervisory powers over the activities of the church. It shall have power to determine the number of its officers, their qualifications for office and the manner of their selection.
- B. The general conference is the primary legislative body in the church. It shall have full power to make rules and regulations for the church, under the limitations and restrictions described in ¶225-228. *Robert's Rules of Order* in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure in the general conference sessions.
- C. 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

Bold paragraph numbers and section letters indicate those items which may be changed by the board of administration. All others may only be changed by the general conference.

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.

Composition

¶4020 The general conference shall be composed of the bishops and an equal number of ministerial and lay delegates to be elected by each annual conference at its last session prior to the session of the general conference, except that conferences held within nine months of the general conference may elect their delegates the year before.

Ministerial Delegates

¶4030

- A. Each annual conference and provisional annual 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 lay members, it shall be entitled to two ministerial delegates, and to an additional ministerial delegate for every subsequent six hundred full lay members, provided, however, that in no case shall a person be counted more than once in the election of delegates.
- B. The ministerial delegates shall be elected by the ministers of the provisional annual or annual conference by ballot. Delegates may be nominated by the nominating committee if the annual conference so chooses, not precluding nominations from the floor. They shall present at least two nominations for each ministerial position. Using the nominees, both delegates and reserve delegates shall be elected by ballot. Candidates 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 that elected them. When a ministerial delegate leaves the conference from which he/she is elected prior to the time of the general conference by accepting an appointment to serve another

conference, he/she shall be automatically disqualified as a delegate.

- C. 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.

Lay Delegates

¶4040

- A. Each annual conference and provisional annual conference shall be entitled to the same number of lay as ministerial delegates in the general conference.
- B. Lay delegates to the general conference shall be elected by ballot of the lay delegates of the provisional annual or annual conference they are to represent. Delegates may be nominated by the nominating committee, if the conference so chooses, not precluding nominations from the floor. They shall present at least two nominations for each lay delegate position. Using the nominees, both delegates and reserve delegates shall be elected by ballot. 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.
- C. 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.

Delegate Credentials

¶4050

- A. The secretary of each annual conference shall furnish certificates of election to all delegates, signed by the president and the secretary as the credentials upon which they are to be admitted to the general conference.
- B. A delegate to the general conference is not a member until present with credentials and seated.
- C. Conferences of mission origin may send their delegates to general conference as provided in their several constitutions which have been approved by the general conference.

Time and Place

¶4060

- A. The general conference shall meet every four years at the time and place determined by the general conference (see ¶4200.N).
- B. The bishop(s), 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 and the time of assembling later than the next ensuing session of each of the annual conferences.
- C. The determination of the location for the subsequent general conference shall be considered prior to final adjournment of a regular general conference session, with careful consideration given to the use of Free Methodist facilities.
- D. The Friday preceding every general conference shall be observed as a day of fasting and prayer.

Organizing Principles

¶4070

- A. The bishops shall preside at the sittings of the general conference in such order as they may determine. If no

bishop is present, the general conference shall elect by ballot an elder to preside.

- B. The general conference secretary (previously elected by the board of administration) 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 ¶3470.B, ¶5120.B.8).
- C. At all times when general conference is in session, two-thirds of all the delegates elected by the annual conferences shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The general conference may adjourn from time to time until a quorum is present.
- D. 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.

Bishops

¶4100 Each bishop shall be amenable to the general conference for the discharge of his/her official duties and shall be responsible for his/her conduct to the annual conference to which he/she belongs.

The Nomination and Election of Bishops

¶4110

- A. 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. These are to be persons who exhibit exemplary character and leadership qualities, and who embody deep commitment to the mission, doctrine and theology of the Free Methodist Church. 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.

- B. In preparation for the election of bishops, each annual conference's newly elected general conference delegation may submit a maximum of two nominees. Due attention shall be given to the nomination of persons having qualifications equal to or exceeding those for conference superintendents (see ¶5110.B); as well as to ethnic, gender, cultural and geographical considerations. A one-page biographical sketch and rationale for each nominee shall be submitted to the general conference secretary no later than sixty days prior to the opening of general conference. The general conference secretary shall compile the nominee information in standardized format and distribute, by paper or electronic means, to all delegates no later than thirty days prior to the opening of general conference. The first ballot for election of bishops shall consist of the names of these nominees and the incumbent bishops.

- C. In the event of a vacancy on the Board of Bishops during the interim between sessions of the general conference, the preceding general conference shall fill the vacancy with an election held by paper or electronic ballot. Existing rules for the election of bishops by the general conference shall apply.

The Role of a Bishop: Conceptual

¶4120

- A. All elders have responsibilities in Word, sacrament and order. Bishops are elders who are called to be pastors of the church at large. As such, for the health of the church, their duties in each of these areas are expanded by the responsibility of general oversight.

- B. Word. The task of the Word applies to the bishop in two regards, to teach the apostolic gospel and to protect the church from error. The first concerns such things as

preaching, making official statements to the church and the public at large, overseeing the preparation of tools for evangelism and discipleship and training for the ordained ministry. The second refers to the protection of the church from heresy or from trends that obscure the Gospel. Thus the bishop must be theologically orthodox and an able preacher of the gospel.

- C. **Sacrament.** In worship the church gives praise to God, pleads with Him for mercy and receives the grace God mediates to His people. The bishop leads the church in its adoration and petition of God and in upholding the sacredness of the Lord's Supper and baptism as a means of grace. We extend the sacramental scope of the bishop's tasks to deep personal piety and intercession for the church and the world. Thus, bishops must be persons whose souls are nourished by public and private devotion and who can lead congregations into the renewing presence of Almighty God.
- D. **Order.** Bishops lead the church by articulating its vision. Thus, bishops must have a deep commitment to the church's mission, insight into the complexities of human nature and skill at guiding others. As apostolic leaders of the church-at-large, bishops give oversight to the pastoral care of each local church. They oversee the ordained ministry. Bishops, on behalf of the church, set apart those persons whom the church has determined are called of God and competent to feed the sheep. This enables the general ministry of the church to practice the Great Commandment and fulfill the Great Commission. Bishops, together with superintendents, give oversight to the ordained ministry through appointment, guidance and discipline.

The Role of a Bishop: Practical

¶4130 In each generation and culture, the applications of foundational concepts may vary. To assist the bishops in directing the church, these practical leadership priorities are set forth.

- A. Regarding Self and Family, the bishop shall:
 - 1. feed his/her soul (heart, mind, spirit), diligently attending to the means of grace;
 - 2. love his/her spouse and family, maintaining a household of faith; and
 - 3. fulfill his/her vows as a baptized disciple and elder called to leadership.

- B. Regarding the Church at Large, the bishop shall:
 - 1. multiply godly, competent leaders, who disciple and equip others; and
 - 2. encourage every church to be a healthy church with Spirit-filled leaders, working a plan to fulfill the biblical mission (our Expected Outcomes).

- C. Regarding Annual Conferences. Accepting mutual responsibility for the mission to make Christ known and to develop whole people through forgiveness and holiness, the bishop shall:
 - 1. ordain those called to and approved for Elder's Orders;
 - 2. teach and guide regarding denominational priorities;
 - 3. oversee the organizational health of the annual conference, as the conference president; and
 - 4. disciple each superintendent to:
 - a. identify, recruit, equip, deploy and encourage godly, competent leaders by:
 - 1. encouraging faith-driven ministry;
 - 2. guiding leaders to be wise innovators;
 - 3. facilitating change so that healthy process is the norm; and
 - 4. supporting godly, competent risk-takers.
 - b. encourage and equip conference leaders in crucial priorities, such as:
 - 1. convert and membership growth;
 - 2. making disciples who make disciples;
 - 3. networking;

4. church planting;
 5. cell-based ministries; and
 6. Free Methodist missionary enterprises.
- c. influence all churches to be Wesleyan in:
1. ethos (see *Distinctive Principles*, pages 6-8);
 2. doctrine (see *Articles of Religion*, ¶101-130); and
 3. practice (see *The Christian Journey*, ¶3000-3470).
- D. Regarding Local Churches. In partnership with superintendents and others the bishop shall develop and nurture Spirit-filled leaders, who equip believers to minister, resulting in a healthy biblical community of holy people multiplying disciples, leaders, groups and churches.

Additional Duties of Bishops

¶4140

- A. Each bishop shall:
1. assist superintendents in personal and professional development through periodic training, giving special training for newly elected superintendents;
 2. serve as chair of the ministerial appointments committees of his/her assigned area (see ¶5220);
 3. 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 ministerial education and guidance board or the annual conference;
 4. cite a conference appointee to show cause (see *Church Order*, ¶7000-¶7200);
 5. suspend conference appointees (see ¶7000-¶7200);
 6. form new annual conferences in the interim between general conferences, as the needs of the work demand, subject to the approval of the gen-

- eral conference. No new conference shall be formed without the consent of the conferences whose territory is affected, nor without the consent of two-thirds of the members of the board of administration. 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 bishop, in consultation with conference board of administration and the Board of Bishops, shall submit recommendations for change to the board of administration; and
7. assist the area fellowships or the approved equivalent group in the development of national leadership to achieve the disciplinary standards for new general conferences.
 8. decide all questions of law at annual conferences, subject to an appeal to the general conference. A bishop's decision upon a point of law arising in annual conference session shall be the rule until reversed by the general conference. Also, when a bishop is requested by an annual conference of which he/she is president to rule upon a point of law not arising in conference proceedings, the request shall be in writing giving full explanation of the circumstances, including statements by the opposition, if there be any. The bishop, upon ruling, shall immediately appeal to the other bishops, and with the agreement of the majority of the bishops in writing, the ruling shall be binding, until reversed by the general conference. All documents shall be presented, along with the ruling, for the review of the general conference.
- B. Nothing in ¶4140.A.6 shall prevent the organization of annual conferences of mission origin out of provisional annual conferences, the areas of which may extend over the boundaries of other conferences, when such other

conferences have approved and all other requirements for annual conference status have been met. For a provisional annual conference of mission origin to become an annual conference, there must be no less than five national elders and four hundred adult lay members.

Retirement of Bishops

¶4150

- A. A bishop shall retire:
 1. at the time of the general conference following his/her sixty-eighth birthday;
 2. following his/her sixty-second birthday if the bishop so chooses; or
 3. at any time because of failing health. Disability status shall be determined by the board of administration upon recommendation from either the human resources department or the board of administration benefits committee, based upon medical evidence.
- B. When a bishop, or former bishop, retires he/she shall be given the title of bishop emeritus provided he/she has served the church as bishop for a minimum of six years.

Board of Bishops

¶4200

The Board of Bishops shall:

- A. practice healthy biblical community as a board by speaking the truth in love;
- B. organize as a board to oversee all conferences, presiding at the general and annual conference meetings;
- C. assign themselves to the several areas and arrange conference schedules so that no annual conference has a non-bishop presiding officer for two successive years;
- D. receive from the presiding officer of an annual conference a comprehensive written report of all the administrative proceedings which arose in the conference;

- E. administer the annual conferences of mission origin of the North American General Conference. The bishop, in consultation with the conferences and the area director, shall designate the presiding officer for the conference; and
- F. have authority to initiate and recommend corrective measures to the general board of administration and the affected conference, when a conference falls below six hundred lay members, has less than ten ministers in full membership, or shows continuous loss.

Board of Administration

The Nomination and Election of the Board of Administration

¶4300

- A. The general conference shall elect a board of administration, determine its powers, and prescribe the qualifications of its members and manner of their selection. The board shall be comprised of:
 - 1. all the U.S. bishops;
 - 2. sufficient additional elders to give a total of twelve clergy (equal representation from each U.S. bishop's area);
 - 3. twelve lay members (equal representation from each U.S. bishop's area);
 - 4. two representatives (two elder and two lay members in rotation) from conferences of mission origin; and
 - 5. honorary members to include president of Women's Ministries International, executive director of Men's Ministries International, president of Association of Human Services Ministries, president of Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions, president of Free Methodist Foundation and denominational executive directors.
- B. Each annual conference may, if it desires, submit up to two clergy and two lay nominees for election to the

board of administration. Such a nominee shall:

1. be widely known in the community, church and conference as a follower of Christ in word, attitude and deed;
 2. have demonstrated keen interest in the mission of the Free Methodist Church;
 3. have served on at least one local church and one conference board;
 4. have served, or be serving, as a delegate to annual conference, or be an ordained elder in the conference;
 5. have demonstrated strong ability to engage in dialog and listen reflectively; and
 6. have demonstrated commitment to attend and positively participate in scheduled meetings.
- C. Submission of such nominees must be completed no later than sixty days prior to the general conference, and must be submitted on the provided nomination form, including biographical data. A one-paragraph introduction from the conference may be attached to the nominating form.

Nomination forms from each bishop's area will be sent to the general conference delegates from that area no later than thirty days prior to the general conference. The forms will also be distributed prior to balloting for election of the board of administration.

The delegates from each bishop's area will meet during general conference for the purpose of nominating its representatives to the next board of administration. During that meeting, the nomination forms will be distributed, and each nominee will be introduced by the area bishop. The general conference delegates from each bishop's area shall select their nominees by ballot from the nominee slate and present them to the general conference for election to the board of administration.

A maximum of one lay member and one elder may be elected from a given annual conference. A majority of the board of administration members shall be delegates to the general conference electing them.

Organization

¶4310

- A. The board of administration shall meet immediately at the close of the general conference to organize itself by electing a chair, vice chair and the nominating committee, from its membership.

The outgoing board of administration members present at general conference shall caucus to nominate the chair and vice chair of the new board of administration. The chair and vice chair of the outgoing board of administration shall absent themselves from the meeting which, shall be convened and chaired by the chair of the Board of Bishops.

- B. A nominating committee of not less than six persons, including two bishops and consisting of equal lay and clergy representation shall be elected by the board of administration to subsequently nominate the members and chairs of the committees and task forces of the board. In the selection process, sensitivity to regional, ethnic and gender diversity should be demonstrated.
- C. The nominating committee shall nominate a secretary of the general conference from outside the membership of the board of administration, who shall also serve as the secretary of the board. The board shall elect the secretary, who shall serve with voice but no vote, unless his/her vote is needed to establish lay-clergy balance.
- D. It shall be the secretary's duty to make a full report of the proceedings of the board of administration to the general conference.
- E. The board of administration may 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.

- F. Termination of membership in the Free Methodist Church shall automatically terminate membership on the board of administration.
- G. No general conference officer other than the bishops and the secretary may be a member of the board of administration.
- H. The board shall assign its work to committees and boards as it shall determine and may elect an executive committee. The board may determine the rules and regulations for the conduct of its business.

Authority and Responsibilities

¶4320

- A. The board of administration shall have general organizational, promotional, policy making and supervisory powers over all the activities of the church during the interim between general conference sessions.
- B. It shall meet at least annually and whenever the bishops or one-third of the members shall deem it necessary.
- C. A majority of the members elected shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.
- D. Each member of the board of administration owes primary duty to the board and secondary duty to the committees to which he/she has been elected.
- E. The board of administration shall have power to accept resignations, fill vacancies and remove for cause any of its members during the interim between general conference sessions, subject to the provisions of the *Book of Discipline*.

- F. The board of administration shall elect the board of directors of The Free Methodist Foundation. The board of directors of the foundation may suggest names to the nominating committee of the board of administration.
- G. The board of administration shall set the salaries of the bishops and the executive directors, considering the recommendations from the budget and finance committee.
- H. World Ministries Center Personnel
 1. The Board of Bishops may designate one of its members to serve as the World Ministries Center overseer and as chair of the operating committee. This person will give general oversight to the World Ministries Center and other responsibilities as assigned by the board of administration, and shall report to the board.
 2. The board of administration may employ a World Ministries Center administrator upon nomination by the Board of Bishops or, in consultation with the Board of Bishops, assign to an existing executive director the responsibility of administering the World Ministries Center.
 3. The board of administration shall have power to employ suitable personnel in the leadership of the various church ministries and may delegate this responsibility to the Board of Bishops. Executive directors and other personnel employed by the church shall work under the supervision of the World Ministries Center overseer. Each shall make a report to the board of administration as to his/her official duties and shall meet with the appropriate committees of the board of administration.
- I. The Executive Director of Administration and Finance shall serve as the general church treasurer to administer the finances of the church. This person shall be bonded.

J. Financial Reporting

1. The board of administration shall employ a certified public accountant firm to audit annually the accounts of the general church. The auditor will make an annual report in writing to the board of administration with recommendations, if any.
2. The proper officers shall publish in the *Yearbook* annually full and detailed statements of the assets, liabilities, net worth and financial standing of the general church and its corporations.
3. Women's Ministries International and Men's Ministries International auxiliaries shall make and file annually their financial statements with the secretary of the board of administration.

K. The board of administration shall be the Board of Directors of the Free Methodist Publishing House.

L. The board of administration shall oversee all church property (see ¶6400).

M. Legal Matters

1. The board of administration shall, if needed, elect a court of appeals, whose decision shall be final. Should any member of this court be absent or disqualified to sit, the place shall be temporarily filled by the board of administration from its members. If a member is disqualified, a replacement from a list of members of the church-at-large, approved by counsel for both sides, shall be selected. 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 by any ordained minister who is a member of an annual conference. The chair of the board of administration shall ordinarily preside over the court. If the chair is absent or disqualified, the board shall elect another of its members to preside.
2. The board of administration shall have the power

to decide all legal matters referred to it during the interim of general conferences.

- 3 The board of administration shall, as needed, elect a board of industrial relations. This board shall receive 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 the church.

N. The board of administration shall have the power to change the time and place for the meeting of the general conference. It shall make appropriate arrangements for the general conference.

O. Conference Boundaries

1. Any question of conference boundaries that may arise in the interim between general conferences shall be referred to the board of administration.
2. 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 board of 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.
3. Conferences considering merger or the revision of their boundaries (except as provided in ¶6850) may initiate discussions with their concerned neighbors, keeping the 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 board of administration.

P. Christian Schools

1. The Free Methodist Church of North America shall encourage and promote the establishing of Christian day schools (see ¶5270 and ¶6340). It shall make available to local churches and annual conferences information concerning existing Christian elementary and preschools.
2. It is recommended that such schools be designated Light and Life Christian Schools.

- Q.** The 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 the Free Methodist Church of North America Corporation (see ¶9100).

Finance and Pension

Budget and Finance Committee

¶4350

- A. The board of administration shall elect a budget and finance committee of five members. All members, including the chair, shall be elected with nominations from the nominating committee. The World Ministries Center overseer and the general church treasurer shall be ex-officio members of the committee.
- B. Terms of service shall be for the interim of general conferences.
- C. In consultation with the executive director of administration and finance, the budget and finance committee will:
 1. recommend policy to assure good stewardship of

- church financial assets, assure appropriate levels of financial performance and debt levels, maintain appropriate financial flexibility, select investment managers, negotiate fees and review performance and assure proper accounting and reporting of all church financial records;
2. recommend to the board of administration compensation levels for the bishops and executive staff;
3. provide a careful review and recommend to the board of administration the operating budgets of United Ministries for Christ - Home Ministries, and United Ministries for Christ - World Missions;
4. serve as the audit review committee; and
5. develop and recommend to the board of administration the funding model for Home Ministries' support.

United Ministries for Christ

¶4360

- A. United Ministries for Christ is the approved system for funding of all ministries of the general church.
- B. The portion of United Ministries for Christ that pertains to world missions shall be funded by methods and programs devised by the Missions Executive Leadership Team, in consultation with the missions committee, and approved by the board of administration.
- C. All other general church ministries, including their administrative costs, shall be funded as determined by the board of administration upon recommendation of the budget and finance committee.
- D. The board of administration may 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.
- E. Approved projects outside of United Ministries for

Christ may be made available to individuals, groups, and organizations outside the Free Methodist Church.

- F. Contributions received at the World Ministries Center shall be applied to United Ministries for Christ - Home Ministries budget unless specifically designated otherwise by the donor.
- G. John Wesley Seminary shall be supported by general funds, special appropriations and solicitations consistent with United Ministries for Christ and approved by the board of administration.
- H. The proposed budget of each general church ministry shall be prepared annually by the appropriate executive director, reviewed and approved by the operating committee and presented to the budget and finance committee. The recommended budget shall be submitted by the budget and finance committee to the board of administration for approval each year.

Social Security

¶4370

- A. The benefits available under Social Security are a part of the church's plan for support of its retired ministers and missionaries, or their widows and orphans.
- B. It is recommended that each society, annual conference or other organization responsible for a minister's or a missionary's salary obligate itself to contribute, in addition to salary, an amount equal to at least one-half of the annual contribution, or assessment, for Social Security as a "self-employed" minister.

Pension Plan

¶4380

- A. The board of administration by authorization of the 1964 General Conference has established a defined contribution pension plan which became effective January 1, 1969 and covers ministers, general officers and other persons as described in the pension plan. On January 1,

1981 a defined benefit pension plan was added.

- B. 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 1986, as the same may be amended from time to time.
- C. The trustees of the pension plans shall be the Board of Directors of the Free Methodist Church of North America, who shall be responsible for seeing that the plans are administered in accordance with the plan documents.
- D. The pension plans shall be administered by the board of administration serving as the pension board, in accordance with the rules and regulations of the plans. The details of this administrative responsibility may be delegated to a benefits committee that is elected from nominations from the nominating committee by the board of administration.
- E. If established, the benefits committee make recommendations concerning the administration of the plans, and shall regularly review the plans and their administration for needed clarification, procedural adjustments or amendments. The benefits committee's work is subject to the approval of the board of administration.
- F. Benefits Committee. The benefits committee shall:
 - 1. administer and monitor the Free Methodist Church of North America Defined Benefit and Defined Contribution pension plans in a manner consistent with the definition of a qualified pension plan in section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 as amended. The pension plans may be amended by the general conference or the board of administration. The text of such amendments shall be communicated to the participants of the plans in writ-

- ing. 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.
2. administer an overall policy regarding enrollments, contributions and retirement benefits that will ensure that all appropriate personnel receive a benefit;
 3. regularly review the plans' provisions and provide clarification, adjustments or amendments;
 4. receive and review annually the plans' audit and valuation for any possible benefit improvements;
 5. periodically meet with the plan actuary to review the plans' financial profile related to current and future plan participants and refer participants' issues to legal counsel when appropriate;
 6. periodically meet with the Free Methodist Foundation to receive and review reports of the plans' investment performance and fee structure;
 7. communicate with the plans' participants on a regular basis regarding plan changes and accrued benefits, and in conjunction with the Free Methodist Foundation, provide retirement financial planning;
 8. provide any necessary reports and recommendations for the plans to the board of administration which has ultimate responsibility for the plans' administration; and
 9. work with the administration of the World Ministries Center on benefit issues that are outside of the retirement plans.
- G. Each United States church shall contribute to the support of the defined benefit pension plan in accordance with the rules and regulations of the plan. The contribution paid by the church shall be in addition to the pastor's earnings, not a deduction from them.
- H. 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.

- I. No participant in the pension plans shall have any right to assign, alienate, anticipate or commute any payments from the plans; 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.

Free Methodist Communications

¶4400

- A. The purpose of Free Methodist Communications is to communicate the vision and core values of the Free Methodist Church to its constituents and to the world-at-large.
- B. Free Methodist Communications includes the Free Methodist Publishing House (Light and Life Communications), a corporation established by the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America. The Free Methodist Publishing House is incorporated under the laws of the state of Illinois, with headquarters at Indianapolis, Indiana, and is the denomination's official publishing agency. The Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church of North America constitutes the corporate membership of the Free Methodist Publishing House.

Communications Committee

¶4410

- A. The board of administration shall elect a communications committee, including the chair, with nominations from the nominating committee. The terms of service shall be for the interim of general conference.
- B. In consultation with the executive director of Free Methodist Communications, the communications committee shall:
 1. recommend policy regarding communications to the board of administration, assuring effective com-

- munications among church leadership, pastors, staff, and members; promotion of the Church at large; and doctrinal integrity in church publications;
2. recommend the Free Methodist Communications budget to the budget and finance committee of the board of administration;
 3. recommend communications vision and strategy; and
 4. review the performance of the sales of Free Methodist Communications.
- C. The Board of Bishops will consult with the chair of the communications committee and the chair of the board of administration regarding the board of bishops' recommendations in the selection and/or termination of the executive director.

Free Methodist World Missions

¶4500 The Free Methodist Church 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, 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. Free Methodist World Missions shall carry the gospel into areas where no Free Methodist ministry exists and serve in partnership with the national church in evangelization and church planting.

General Missionary Board

¶4510

- A. The board of administration shall constitute the General Missionary Board of the Free Methodist Church of North America, which has authority over world missions functions. The general missionary board is incorporated and is used for special financial transactions for Free Methodist World Missions.

- B. The objectives for which this corporation is formed are:
 - 1. to receive, hold, pay out or dispose of any property, of whatever nature and situation as allowed by law, that may be obtained in aid of the general missionary work of the Free Methodist Church; and
 - 2. 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.

Missions Committee

¶4520

- A. The board of administration shall elect a missions committee of up to twelve members. All members, including the chair, shall be elected with nominations from the nominating committee. The Canadian General Conference shall have a representative on the missions committee. Terms of service shall be for the interim of general conference.
- B. In consultation with the executive director of World Missions, the missions committee shall:
 - 1. recommend policy regarding World Missions to the board of administration;
 - 2. review the World Missions budget, and send a recommendation to the budget and finance committee of the board of administration;
 - 3. consult with the executive director regarding World Missions vision and strategy and their implementation;
 - 4. advise missions leadership with the intent of increasing ownership and giving within the Free Methodist Church of North America;
 - 5. review developments in World Missions.
- C. The Board of Bishops will consult with the missions committee chair and the board of administration chair regarding the board of bishops' recommendations in the selection and/or termination of the executive director of World Missions.

Free Methodist World Missions Executives

¶4530

- A. The executive director of Free Methodist World Missions shall be employed by the Board of Bishops.
- B. In consultation with the Board of Bishops and the chairs of the missions committee and the board of administration, the executive director of Free Methodist World Missions shall appoint overseas area directors.
- C. The executive director shall develop and have on file job descriptions for mission directors, including area directors.

Missions Executive Leadership Team

¶4540

- A. The Missions Executive Leadership Team includes the executive director of World Missions, on site directors and overseas area directors/coordinators.
- B. They shall, under the leadership of the executive director, oversee all missionary work originating in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom that is directed toward peoples outside of those countries, except for areas which the board of administration may assign elsewhere.
- C. The team shall:
 1. devise methods and programs for funding that portion of the United Ministries for Christ that pertains to Free Methodist World Missions;
 2. be responsible for receiving and appropriating all monies allocated for foreign missions to the purpose for which they have been contributed or budgeted;
 3. prepare the annual budget in consultation with the missions committee, the operating committee and the budget and finance committee;
 4. review and approve a call for funds for special projects; and
 5. review and approve loan applications from overseas churches to the Free Methodist Loan Fund.

The missions administration will co-sign the loans, assuring repayment, and be responsible for collecting payments from the churches with outstanding loans.

D. The team shall:

1. recruit, appoint, license and commission candidates for missionary service;
2. appoint all short-term Volunteers In Service Abroad (VISA) personnel; and
3. decide the status of missionaries not on their field of assignment for other than a normal home ministry assignment.

E. The team shall:

1. encourage and aid church planting outside Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States among all population groups in cooperation with a national church, whenever possible; and
2. recognize that in areas not presently served by the Free Methodist Church, new work shall first be a mission district under the jurisdiction of Free Methodist World Missions or of another general conference before being established as a provisional annual or annual conference.

F. The Missions Executive Leadership Team shall approve all candidates for ordination in mission districts under its jurisdiction.

G. Trustees and property

1. Titles to land purchased for missions and institutions under the direction of Free Methodist World Missions shall be in the name of Free Methodist World Missions or deeded to trustees elected or approved by the General Missionary Board. Trustees may be missionaries, nationals, or both.
2. Such trustees shall hold the property for the ben-

efit and use of Free Methodist World Missions of the Free Methodist Church of North America. Where property cannot be titled or held in trust for Free Methodist World Missions, it shall be held for the benefit and use of the Free Methodist Church and its institutions in those countries.

3. 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 Missions Executive Leadership Team on behalf of Free Methodist World Missions of the Free Methodist Church, in consultation with the area bishop of the Free Methodist Church of North America, and ratified by the board of administration.
4. Whenever possible the tenure of the trustees shall be subject to Free Methodist World Missions and in all cases to the laws and regulations of the country where the property is located.

Mission Districts

¶4550

- A. A mission district may be approved as a provisional annual conference by the Free Methodist World Missions executive director and area director, in consultation with the area bishop, by adopting in principle the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America together with a constitution adapted to local culture and circumstances.
- B. Membership in a provisional annual conference does not cancel membership in an annual conference. Members of annual conferences serving in a provisional annual conference shall, within two years, become members of that provisional annual conference.

Provisional Annual Conferences of Mission Origin

¶4560

- A. All provisional annual conferences of mission origin shall be under the jurisdiction of Free Methodist World Missions, through its Missions Executive Leadership Team, except where provisional annual conferences

have been organized from an existing annual conference, in which case they shall be administered by the bishop of the originating annual 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 executive director of World Missions.

- B. The conferences so recognized are noted in the *Yearbook*.

Annual Conferences of Mission Origin

¶4570

- A. When a provisional annual 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 general conference, or its board of administration, it shall be recommended to the area bishop or the president of the conference to be organized into an annual conference as outlined in ¶4140.A.6, and B.
- B. Any changes in constitutions of annual conferences of mission origin shall be considered by the executive director, area director and area bishop with legal counsel for recommendation to the board of administration or general conference for approval.
- C. An annual conference of mission origin may submit requests for personnel and finances through the area director of World Missions.

Provisional General or General Conferences of Mission Origin

¶4580

- A. Requirements for forming a provisional general conference are found in ¶252.
- B. To prepare for a new provisional general conference, the area bishop shall form a provisional general con-

ference task force of the superintendents, lay representatives from the participating annual conferences and the area director to prepare a provisional general conference proposal. It shall be presented to the participating annual conferences for adoption in principle.

- C. The governing body of a provisional general conference shall be composed of the suffragan bishop(s) and an equal number of lay and ministerial delegates elected by the participating annual conferences. The number of delegates shall be recommended by the area bishop in consultation with the provisional general conference task force and be approved by the Free Methodist Church of North America Board of Administration.
- D. The Free Methodist Church of North America Board of Administration shall elect an elder(s), a national citizen(s) of the provisional general conference country, as a suffragan bishop(s) from the nominee(s) presented by the annual conferences or the provisional general conference. A suffragan bishop is a bishop of a provisional general conference and serves under the supervision and counsel of the Board of Bishops.
- E. The suffragan bishop(s) shall be a member(s) of the Board of Bishops of the Free Methodist Church of North America and shall report annually to the provisional general conference board of administration.
- F. The provisional general conference shall have powers and duties conferred upon it by the Free Methodist Church of North America General Conference and as set forth in its *Book of Discipline* and/or its constitution, including:
 - 1. to constitute the Free Methodist corporation which shall hold in trust all real estate belonging to the Free Methodist Church for the use and benefit of its membership;
 - 2. to have general supervision of all matters pertaining to the functions of the Free Methodist Church;

3. to be responsible for all activities such as: 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;
 4. to form a board of administration to carry on the work during the interim between meetings of the provisional general conference; and
 5. to establish budgets and raise funds to support the work, particularly the office of the suffragan bishop(s) and the process of legal representation.
- G. A provisional general conference, once formed, may continue for a maximum of four years before moving to general conference status, unless an extension is granted by the Free Methodist Church of North America General Conference Board of Administration.

Free Methodist Foundation

- ¶4600 The board of administration approves Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the Free Methodist Foundation which govern the business and affairs of the foundation. These documents provide that the:
- A. Free Methodist Foundation is a separate religious and charitable corporation formed to establish, promote, fund, extend and maintain the Christian faith according to the tenets of, and for the exclusive benefit and support of, the Free Methodist Church of North America;
 - B. Board of Administration shall elect the Directors of the Foundation. Directors shall be laypersons and ordained ministers who are members in good standing of the Free Methodist Church. At least two members of the Foundation Board shall be ordained ministers, one of whom shall be a U.S. Bishop (see ¶4320.F).
 - C. denomination may assign to the Foundation the man-

agement of appropriate activities related to estate planning, wills, trusts, estates and other types of deferred gifts;

- D. denomination may assign to the Foundation the management of investments for the denomination, its departments, subsidiaries, and related agencies, pension funds and all other funds assigned by the board of administration;
- E. denomination may assign to the foundation the management of the Free Methodist Loan Fund; and
- F. Foundation reports annually to the board of administration, providing a statement of philosophy of operation, any significant changes in policies or procedures, audited financial reports and related federal income tax returns and other items requested by the board of administration or its budget and finance committee.
- G. The president of the Free Methodist Foundation shall be an honorary member of the board of administration.

Chaplains

¶4700

- A. 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.
- B. Ecclesiastical chaplain endorsement procedures and guidelines of the Free Methodist Church of North America are established and approved by the Board of Bishops and the board of administration. Endorsement procedures are printed in the *Chaplain Guidelines Manual*.
- C. All ordained ministers wishing to serve as Free Methodist chaplains in the military, Veterans Affairs or civilian institutions must be approved by the Board of

Bishops and credentialed by the Free Methodist Church
Chaplain Endorsing Agent.

- D. All credentialed chaplains shall be appointed to denominational service. No non-credentialed ordained minister shall be appointed as chaplain by any annual conference.
- E. The Free Methodist Church of North America recognizes the association of chaplains, whose name is The Free Methodist Chaplains Association of North America, together with its constitution and duly elected officers.

Association of Human Service Ministries

¶4750

- A. The Association of Human Service Ministries members accredited by and receiving support from the Free Methodist Church shall report annually to the board of administration
- B. The board of administration shall:
 - 1. receive and examine the annual reports of each accredited ministry, including financial reports, their work and the general plan and scope of their activities;
 - 2. determine if the ministry continues to qualify for accreditation by the Free Methodist Church; and
 - 3. regulate the establishment of new human service ministries so as to avoid jeopardizing accredited institutions.
- C. A new Human Service Ministry shall not be approved without an official recommendation from its annual conference.
- D. Accredited members of the Association of Human Service Ministries shall be listed in the *Yearbook*.
- E. Pastors are encouraged to preach on the subject of prac-

tical charity, receiving offerings and providing opportunities for financial support. These offerings are to be used for the relief of the poor in that society or sent to an accredited human service ministry.

- F. The president of the Association of Human Service Ministries shall be an honorary member of the board of administration.

Educational Institutions

¶4800 Educational institutions are responsible for promoting and helping to maintain adequate opportunity for college and graduate training of the people of the Free Methodist Church.

Denominational Institutions

¶4810 The Free Methodist Church of North America recognizes as denominational institutions those colleges and universities whose commitments are consistent with the history, theology, mission and character of the Free Methodist Church.

A. Leadership Commitments

1. The president shall be a member of the Free Methodist Church who actively seeks to create a Free Methodist presence in the life and leadership of the institution.
2. The chief academic officer shall be a member of the Free Methodist Church, or one who is in both conviction and spirit committed to Wesleyan theology and perspectives.

B. Mission Commitments

1. The Free Methodist educational institutions shall have articles of incorporation, bylaws or other appropriate governance documents which:
 - a. identify the college or university as a private institution of evangelical higher education affiliated with the Free Methodist Church of North America;

- b. define the relationship of the institution to the churches and conferences of the Free Methodist Church of North America; and,
 - c. specify Free Methodist Church of North America representation in the governing board.
2. The Free Methodist educational institutions shall have a Wesleyan statement of faith consistent with Free Methodist Church of North America doctrine which boards of trustees and executive leaders agree shall guide the policies of the institution.
3. The Free Methodist educational institutions shall have a mission statement which includes an institutional priority to serve as an educational resource for the advancement of Christianity through the church.
4. The Free Methodist educational institutions shall have a statement of lifestyle expectations for the campus community, which is consistent with the principles and practices of the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America.

C. Connectional Commitments

1. All trustees shall be committed Christians of whom no less than twenty-five percent shall be members of the Free Methodist Church.
2. No less than ten percent of faculty shall be members of the Free Methodist Church.
3. The school, division or department of religion shall have a majority of full-time faculty who are members of the Free Methodist Church or sister Wesleyan denominations with all members affirming Wesleyan theology and the Articles of Religion of the Free Methodist Church as its educational focus.
4. The Religion Department chair shall be Free Methodist or thoroughly Wesleyan.
5. The institutions shall offer courses in Free Methodist history, government, mission and theology.
6. The relationship to and presence of bishops and denominational leaders shall be defined.

7. The institutions shall have an intentional plan for Free Methodists to speak at chapel, colloquia and events.
8. The institutions shall participate in the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions.

D. Recognition Process

Based upon an application to the Free Methodist Church of North America Board of Administration in the year prior to general conference, an institution of higher education which meets these leadership, mission and connectional commitments may be endorsed as a denominational institution. Denominational institutions shall be recognized at each general conference.

Affiliated Institutions

¶4820

- A. Other institutions of higher education may apply to the board of administration for endorsement as affiliated institutions. The minimal expectations for this relationship shall be that:
 1. the institution shall have Free Methodist representation on the board of trustees, administration and faculty; and
 2. provision shall be made for instruction in Free Methodist curricula of concern: i.e. Free Methodist history, doctrine, polity, mission and vision.
 3. All instruction shall be in harmony with and conformity to the teachings of the Scriptures and the Free Methodist Articles of Religion.
 4. The task of nurturing a Free Methodist presence on the campus, by welcoming Free Methodist clergy, educators, leaders and innovators to speak at chapel, colloquia and special events shall be assigned.
- B. Based upon an application to the Free Methodist Church of North America's Board of Administration in the year prior to general conference, an institution

of higher education, which meets these criteria may be endorsed as an affiliated institution.

Associate Institutions

¶4830

- A. Other institutions (see Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions Constitution and Bylaws) may apply to the annual meeting of the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions (see ¶4850) for endorsement as associate institutions. The minimum expectations for this relationship shall be:
 1. The institution shall have Free Methodist representation on the board of trustees.
 2. The institution's instruction shall be in harmony with and conformity to the teachings of the Scriptures and the Free Methodist Articles of Religion.
 3. The institution's mission shall connect to and support the mission of the Free Methodist Church of North America.
- B. Based upon a letter of request, with substantiating documents regarding how it meets these criteria, the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions, at its annual meeting may endorse such an institution as an associate institution.

Educational Funds

¶4840

All educational endowment funds, including the permanent endowment fund, designated to educational institutions (including John Wesley Seminary Foundation) and such as may be raised or otherwise received for the Educational Endowment Fund, shall be held for investment as directed by the board of administration. The income shall be distributed annually to the Free Methodist denominational schools in the United States as directed by the board of administration. When funds are available for operating budgets or capital projects, the board of administration shall determine the appropriation for each school according to the numeric enrollment of full-time Free Methodist students in those institutions.

The Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions

¶4850

- A. The denomination sponsors an association for denominational institutions of higher education: to advance their common mission as Free Methodist schools, to explore cooperative programs, and to define and maintain the quality of their relationship with the denomination.
- B. Denominational institutions shall be represented by the president and the chairperson of the board of trustees, each having one vote.
- C. Affiliated institutions shall be represented by the president and a Free Methodist member of the board of trustees. Each affiliated institution shall have one vote.
- D. Associate institutions shall participate as honorary members, having voice without vote.
- E. The president of the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions shall be an honorary member of the board of administration.

John Wesley Seminary

¶4860

- A. The Free Methodist Church shall maintain a theological seminary for the post-college training of candidates for the pastoral 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. The board of administration shall constitute the membership of the John Wesley Seminary corporation.
- C. John Wesley Seminary shall be supported by United Ministries for Christ (UMC) Home Ministries and special project funds, as approved by the board of administration.

Auxiliary Organizations

Men's Ministries International

¶4900 Men's Ministries International of the Free Methodist Church is recognized as an auxiliary of the Free Methodist Church of North America, and is governed by its own constitution and bylaws. The director of Men's Ministries International shall be an honorary member of the board of administration (see ¶4320.J.3).

Women's Ministries International

¶4910 Women's Ministries International of the Free Methodist Church is recognized as an auxiliary of Free Methodist World Missions and is governed by its own constitution and bylaws. The president of Women's Ministries International shall be an honorary member of the board of administration (see ¶4320.J.3).

Chapter 5

Annual Conferences

Preamble

¶5000 Annual conferences, after the pattern of the Methodist Episcopal Church, have been a basic organizational structure of the Free Methodist Church since its beginning. After the first annual conference was organized in Pekin, NY in 1860, twenty-two more were born in the next twenty-five years, as, in the words of Bishop Leslie Marston, early Free Methodism “marched across the nation.” Today, as then, the annual conference is the organization at the regional level that joins local churches into a network. The annual conference ensures that pastors and congregations are counseled and encouraged, identifies those who are being called into the ordained ministry and promotes and oversees church planting and evangelism.

Organization

Ministerial and Lay Delegates

¶5010

- A. The general conference shall organize the work at large into annual conferences. Each annual conference shall be composed of all ministers in full membership, and lay delegates elected by the several societies.
- B. One lay delegate shall be admitted from each society. If there is more than one pastor in full membership appointed to a society, the society shall be entitled to one additional lay delegate for each additional pastor. A society that has more than one hundred full members, may elect an additional lay delegate; and for each additional two hundred full members, an additional lay delegate may be elected. The election of a delegate and any reserve delegate shall be by separate ballot

Bold paragraph numbers and section letters indicate those items which may be changed by the board of administration. All others may only be changed by the general conference.

and each shall require a majority vote of those present and voting.

- C. 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.
- D. In consultation with the area bishop, each annual conference shall provide for substantially equal ministerial lay representation in its annual sessions.

Responsibilities of Delegates

¶5020 In the Free Methodist connectional system, annual conference delegates have a two-fold responsibility: to represent their societies and to act for the good of the conference. Delegates shall be considered as liaison between the local church and the conference during the interim between conference sessions. They are expected to report significant actions of the conference to the society which elected them (see ¶6250.E).

Voting

¶5030 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 shall vote separately. 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.

Time and Place

¶5040 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 every annual conference shall be observed as a day of fasting and prayer.

Conference Year

¶5050 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.

Limitation of Powers

¶5060 An annual conference cannot enact laws, nor can it interpret the *Book of Discipline* by resolutions or reports.

Organizational Structure

¶5070 In consultation with the area bishop, the annual conference may choose any organizational structure which appropriately reflects the operational values and desired outcomes of the Free Methodist Church.

Nominating Committee

¶5080

- A. Each annual conference shall elect a standing nominating committee of not less than six 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 ¶6310). Representation by districts/regions or other appropriate distinctions shall be determined in advance by the conference body.
- B. Nominating committee members may be elected to rotating terms as determined by the conference. The chair shall be elected by the nominating committee.
- C. The nominating committee shall:
 1. prepare for the annual conference a list of nominations for positions vacated by either resignations or expiration of terms; and
 2. review board and committee memberships in light of the standing rules of the annual conference.

Officers

Presiding Officer

¶5100 The bishop is the presiding officer of the annual conference. In the absence of the bishop or his/her designee, 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.

Superintendent

¶5110

A. Nomination, Election and Terms

1. Each annual conference shall elect one elder as superintendent, except as otherwise provided (see ¶5110.A.7). A conference may elect, appoint, or make provision to employ one or more elders to serve as assistant(s) to the superintendent.
2. Superintendents must be elected from among the ordained elders of the denomination upon due nominating process. The annual conference shall designate the ministerial education and guidance board 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.
3. Should the nominating process fail, the superintendent may, by decision of the conference, be elected by open ballot without debate or petition.
4. Should the area bishop not be available to chair an overseas conference, the special committee to nominate the superintendent may elect its own chair or the conference may elect a superintendent by open ballot without debate or petition.
5. Superintendents shall be elected by a majority vote for four-year terms, except for special arrangements approved by the area bishop for a shorter term.
6. 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 com-

posed of at least one lay and one ministerial member from each of the conferences with the area bishop serving as chair. The nominee must receive a majority vote in each conference involved. Election shall be by ballot.

7. 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 candidates.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Recall of a superintendent shall be by a two-thirds ballot vote by any succeeding annual conference.

B. Qualifications

1. The area bishop shall assist the annual conference in determining the qualifications desired in a superintendent.
2. A prospective superintendent shall:
 - a. have demonstrated productive leadership within the past five years of pastoral ministry;
 - b. have a favorable result from a job-related professional evaluation;
 - c. articulate a vision for the conference for review and approval by the area bishop and the superintendency nominating committee;
 - d. 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. commit to attend and participate in training events provided by the church for superintendents.

C. Financial Support

1. Annual conferences in the United States are expected to demonstrate fiscal viability by providing a workable budget, including a base remuneration for the superintendent that is at least equivalent to the level of a denominational executive director. Each society shall contribute its proportion as adopted by the annual conference.
2. Where this salary level is not attainable, the area bishop shall assist the conference administrative committee in preparing a leadership plan that shall be presented to the Board of Bishops, and upon its approval, implemented.
3. Superintendents shall be supported by the conferences to which elected in the manner determined by the conferences. Stationed superintendents shall receive an appropriate portion of their support from the pastoral charges to which appointed. The conference shall remain responsible for assuring that the total compensation of a stationed superintendent is consistent with provisions of ¶5110.C.2. A conference shall provide for the superintendent's office and travel expenses, whether stationed or itinerant.
4. A home purchased for the superintendent can be rented to others only if the superintendent consents and receives the rent.

D. Duties

The conference superintendent shall:

1. 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. 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. visit each church as deemed to be in the best interest of the work. They may hold a local board of administration, a society or an annual meeting in connection with the visits.
 4. visit a society when requested to do so by the local board of administration in an emergency, with power to call a local board of administration, a society or an annual meeting and preside over it;
 5. 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 administrative committee;
 6. labor as an evangelist in the assigned area when directed to do so by the annual conference;
 7. promote and oversee the development of specific strategies and to mobilize personnel and financial resources for church planting;
 8. maintain close contact with the conference's 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. recommend appointment, reception and change of pastors in the assigned area to the ministerial appointments committee in the interim between the annual reading of the appointments;
 10. suspend a conference appointee according to ¶7000-¶7200;
 11. 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 (see ¶6400);

12. divide societies in the interval of the annual conferences, if in their judgment the interests of the work require it and the pastor and local board of administration 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 local board of administration of the former.
13. give the bishop all the necessary information regarding the state of the conference and cooperate in setting goals and framing plans;
14. be the liaison between the pastor and the general church;
15. notify the superintendent of another conference before giving serious consideration to the employment of a minister from that conference, and, when feasible, to provide sixty days notification; and
16. be an ex-officio member of all boards and committees.

Secretary

¶5120

- A. The annual conference shall elect a secretary who shall continue in office until a successor is elected.
- B. The secretary shall:
 1. record in a suitable book the proceedings of the conference, excluding non-conference business matters;
 2. keep, in a book to be preserved with the journal, the original or so-called rough minutes as approved by the conference;
 3. keep on file the reports adopted by the conference and record in the journal financial and such other reports as the conference may order;
 4. be custodian of the conference records and journal;
 5. 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;

6. 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;
7. report annually to Ministerial Credentialing Services 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 Free Methodist papers, withdrawal, expulsion or death, listing the reason for such invalidation; and
8. 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 ¶3470.B, and ¶4070.B).

Treasurer

¶5130

- A. The annual conference 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 shall be remitted monthly. The general church treasurer shall, immediately after the conference session, notify the conference secretary of any deficit.
- B. The annual conference shall require each society to remit a financial report of its receipts and expenditures. This report shall be published in the *Yearbook*.

Auditor

¶5140 The annual conference shall elect an auditor who shall audit the accounts of the treasurer and report to each annual session.

Pension Agent

¶5150 The annual conference shall designate a pension 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.

Standing Boards and Committees

Administrative Committee

¶5200

- A. Each annual conference shall elect a standing administrative committee of not less than four members, giving due regard to clergy /lay balance. It shall act as the standing administrative committee of the conference in the interim between annual conference sessions to care for routine business and items specifically delegated to it by the conference within the limits of the *Book of Discipline* (see ¶6400).
- B. The conference administrative committee shall give strategic planning attention to such ministries as world missions, Christian discipleship, church planting and social action. It may assign individuals, form task forces and create standing committees to carry out the ministries deemed appropriate for the health and growth of the church.

Superintendents Cabinet

¶5210

- A. Each annual conference may establish a superintendents cabinet, to meet at the call of the superintendent.
- B. The purpose of the superintendents cabinet shall be:
 1. to serve as a forum for the superintendent, pastors and laity;

2. to aid the superintendent in counsel, encouragement and evaluation; and
 3. to inform the churches concerning the nature and function of the superintendency.
- C. The members of the superintendents 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.

Ministerial Appointments Committee

¶5220

- A. Each annual conference shall have a standing ministerial appointments committee composed of the bishop as chair, the superintendent as vice chair, and one lay member. An annual conference may, if it so desires, increase the number of members by electing an additional elder and an additional lay member. The annual conference may ask the nominating committee or the administrative committee to prepare nominations for election; however nominations must also be allowed from the floor. Elections may be for three-year terms with provision for rotation and continuity. When a new superintendent is elected, the immediate past superintendent may not serve on the ministerial appointments committee for the succeeding year.
- B. If for any reason a member is unable to serve during the conference session, the board of administration may appoint 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 licensed pastor (see ¶5640), though acting as a delegate, shall be eligible to serve on the ministerial appointments committee.
- C. The committee shall serve until the close of the following annual conference.

- D. The committee shall appoint pastors for an indefinite tenure. The committee shall monitor progress and make changes at each annual conference when deemed necessary.
- E. To assist in the assessment of the work, pastors shall be offered an opportunity to express themselves and shall be given opportunity every three years to participate in a ministry effectiveness evaluation (see ¶5800), which shall be considered by the ministerial appointments committee.
- F. Proposed changes shall be discussed with both pastors and delegates of churches involved.
- G. In the event a change in pastoral leadership becomes necessary between annual conferences, the committee shall have authority to make appointments. Delegates of churches involved shall be consulted, but final authority rests with the ministerial appointments committee.
- H. The ministerial appointments committee report of appointments shall be announced at the annual conference session.
- I. The 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 administrative committee.
- J. The committee shall follow the restrictions regarding divorced ministers or spouses (see ¶5650).
- K. The committee shall have authority to suspend any conference appointee for cause according to due process (see ¶7000-¶7200). This is not to be construed as conflicting with an ordained minister's rights as outlined in Chapter 7.

- L. The committee planning to recommend that a pastor not receive a pastoral appointment the ensuing year shall notify that pastor at least sixty days prior to the session of the annual conference.

Ministerial Education and Guidance Board

¶5230

- A. Each annual conference shall have a standing ministerial education and guidance board, composed of the members of the ministerial appointments committee and additional members as determined by the electing body.
- B. 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.
- C. 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.
- D. When a new superintendent is elected, the immediate past superintendent shall not serve on the Board for the succeeding year.
- E. The board shall assist in recruiting personnel and shall be responsible to screen candidates for reception into the conference and/or for ordination.
- F. The annual conference, acting upon the recommendation of the ministerial education and guidance board has final responsibility for the approval of conference ministerial candidates in keeping with the standards outlined in ¶5340.
- G. The board, in consultation with the area bishop, is the authority on the meeting of the standard criteria for ordination.
- H. The board shall guide and counsel those who are re-

ceived so that they may be able to meet the demands of pastoral ministry.

- I. For instructions on administration of multiple staff, see ¶¶6700-6730 and the *Ministerial Education and Guidance Board Manual*.
- J. The board shall develop and oversee a mentoring program that provides qualified mentors to assist new pastors in personal, spiritual and professional growth.
- K. The board shall identify potential church planters among current pastoral personnel and new recruits.
- L. Each pastor shall present to the board annually a program for continuing education and the board shall monitor the program.
- M. The board may grant a certificate of standing with view to transfer to another conference during the interim between annual conference sessions.
- N. The board shall give consideration to the integrity and Christian discipleship of each ministerial member and the performance of duty of each appointed pastor of the conference and shall present to the annual conference a statement to this effect: "The ministerial education and guidance board has given due consideration to the integrity and Christian discipleship of each ministerial member of the _____ Conference and affirms the integrity and Christian discipleship of each in accord with ¶5310 of the *Book of Discipline* (with the exception of _____)" (see ¶5220.K).
- O. The board shall affirm the integrity and Christian discipleship of located deacons and located elders, reporting such action to the annual conference as follows: "Upon recommendation by the various pastors and local boards of administration of the churches where they are located, the ministerial education and guidance board reviewed and affirmed the integrity and

Christian discipleship of the located deacons and located elders (except for _____)" (see ¶5220.K).

- P. The early identification of people sensing God's call to pastoral ministry shall be a primary responsibility of the ministerial education and guidance board in cooperation with the local church.
- Q. The board shall set policies for care of pastors. These policy guidelines shall address such issues as salary and benefits, maternity and paternity leave, vacations and sabbaticals.

Finance Board

¶5240 Each conference shall elect a finance board with not less than five members. Its duties may include the preparation and supervision of the conference budget. It shall assist the superintendent in stewardship education and the promotion of United Ministries for Christ throughout the conference. The conference superintendent and treasurer shall be ex-officio members.

Social Issues and Ministries Committee

¶5250

- A. The annual conference may elect a social issues and ministries committee to assist churches in seeking justice for all, showing mercy to the poor, empowering the disenfranchised and maintaining openness and sensitivity to the social problems of all ages, race and gender.
- B. The social issues and ministries committee shall:
 - 1. articulate to the annual conference the denomination's position on social issues and study and recommend resolutions for general conference;
 - 2. communicate to the local churches and to the public the denomination's positions on social issues; and
 - 3. organize the resources of the conference, both

human and material, to assist the local church in seeking justice for all, showing mercy to the poor and empowering the disenfranchised.

World Missions Board

¶5260

- A. The annual conference may elect a world missions board in cooperation with Free Methodist World Missions to present the interests and needs of world missions. The board shall designate its chair, who shall serve as a liaison to Free Methodist World Missions.
- B. Functions of the board may include:
 - 1. coordinating conference-wide missions related activities, including major events and scheduling of missionaries in cooperation with Free Methodist World Missions;
 - 2. encouraging churches to achieve excellence in missions programming and promotion by such means as workshops for pastors and lay leaders; and
 - 3. stimulating churches to participate in missions projects, to recruit individuals for long-term missionary service and Volunteers in Service Abroad (VISA) short-term activities and to increase the financial support of worldwide missionary outreach.

Light and Life Christian School Board

¶5270

- A. Each annual conference is authorized to establish a conference Light and Life Christian Schools board which shall oversee the work of all Light and Life Christian Schools within the conference in accord with guidelines established by the conference administrative committee and the annual conference (see ¶6340). The president of the conference shall instruct the nominating committee to exercise care in naming to this board persons competent to serve.
- B. It is the responsibility of each conference having Chris-

tian schools and of the local officials administering the schools to see that the appropriate trust clause is a part of each deed pertaining to school property, the same as other church property (see ¶6400.D).

- C. The leadership commitments, mission commitments and connectional commitments as found in ¶4810 for denominational institutions shall apply, as appropriate, to Light and Life Christian Schools. Any complaint of violation of any of these principles shall be directed to the Light and Life Christian Schools board 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 conference administrative committee.

The Ordained Ministry

Preamble

¶5300 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. In each assignment, the ordained minister follows the model of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who gave His life for the sheep (John 10:1-18; Ezekiel 34), served willingly and selflessly (1 Peter 5:1-4) and commanded the undershepherds to feed the sheep (John 21:15-17).

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.

Ordained elders may be elected to lead the church at large as bishops or superintendents. Under the direction of the bishop they may also be given other assignments, such as those of general church administrators, chaplains, missionaries, evangelists or theological teachers in universities or seminaries.

Qualifications for Pastoral Ministry

¶5310

- A. A person called by 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 these qualities and skills: spiritual qualifications, personal characteristics, pastoral care, communication and leadership.

- B. These qualities are intended to assist the church. Ordained ministers should examine themselves in light of these; conferences should publicly review these when designing evaluation and reporting instruments for pastors; ministerial education and guidance boards should consider these qualities and skills when interviewing and guiding ministers.
1. Spiritual Qualifications. The candidate:
 - a. is committed to Jesus Christ as Lord;
 - b. shows evidence of integrity through holiness of heart and life;
 - c. displays the fruit of the Holy Spirit;
 - d. receives and gives forgiveness;
 - e. possesses healthy self-esteem and maintains a positive attitude;
 - f. demonstrates faith, creativity and initiative;
 - g. respects people regardless of race, gender or economic status; and
 - h. models a teachable spirit.
 2. Personal Characteristics. The candidate:
 - a. is called to ministry;
 - b. practices spiritual disciplines;
 - c. is gifted for leadership;
 - d. models a balanced life and a healthy self-discipline;
 - e. maintains freedom from addictions;
 - f. engages in life-long learning;
 - g. submits biblically to authority;
 - h. seeks professional and personal accountability; and
 - i. has the support of his/her spouse, if married.
 3. Pastoral Care. The candidate:
 - a. loves his/her family as Christ loves the church;
 - b. responds appropriately and warmly to people;
 - c. embodies a passion for making disciples;
 - d. ensures appropriate care for the people of God;
 - e. builds up people and inspires hope;

- f. demonstrates interpersonal skills; and
 - g. resolves conflict effectively.
4. Communication. The candidate:
- a. handles the Word of God correctly;
 - b. calls people to faith in Christ;
 - c. understands the culture, community and congregation;
 - d. utilizes effective means of communication;
 - e. affirms and articulates Wesleyan theology;
 - f. prepares thoroughly for public presentation;
 - g. persuades people to make godly, life-changing decisions;
 - h. challenges the status quo in love, when necessary; and
 - i. facilitates an environment of holy worship.
5. Leadership. The candidate:
- a. leads out of personal and corporate prayer;
 - b. articulates a vision from God;
 - c. sets strategic goals to accomplish the vision;
 - d. instills congregational ownership of vision and goals;
 - e. mobilizes resources to fulfill the vision;
 - f. practices sound principles in accomplishing change;
 - g. identifies, attracts and equips leaders;
 - h. fosters a positive atmosphere;
 - i. participates in the denomination's mission; and
 - j. promotes involvement in world evangelization.

Steps Leading Toward Ordination.

¶5320 There are four steps to becoming an ordained minister in the Free Methodist Church.

- A. The person sensing the call of God and the church to pastoral ministry is first licensed as a local ministerial candidate (see ¶6500).
- B. Step two involves acceptance by the annual conference as a conference ministerial candidate.

- C. Conference ministerial candidates, upon recommendation of the ministerial education and guidance board, are received into annual conference membership and elected to elders orders.
- D. Ordination as elder completes the process.

Local Ministerial Candidate

¶5330 A local ministerial candidate is a member of the Free Methodist Church who is seriously considering a call to full-time Christian ministry. Local ministerial candidate status provides the opportunity to explore the perceived call to ministry with the pastor in the context of the local church. The requirements and responsibilities of a local ministerial candidate are found in ¶6500.

Conference Ministerial Candidate

¶5340

- A. A conference ministerial candidate is a member of the Free Methodist Church who has been received by an annual conference in preparation for ordained ministry.
- B. The conference ministerial candidate shall:
 - 1. be a local ministerial candidate;
 - 2. have completed History and Polity of the Free Methodist Church (knowledge of this subject required for the Apollos Model);
 - 3. have completed application for ministry appointment;
 - 4. be interviewed, certified and recommended by the ministerial education and guidance board and received by the annual conference upon satisfactory response to the questions (see ¶8710);
 - 5. be under the guidance of the conference superintendent.
 - 6. maintain membership in a local Free Methodist church;
 - 7. maintain relationship as a conference ministerial candidate by annual recommendation of the ministerial education and guidance board.

- C. A candidate who has been involved in a divorce, annulment or dissolution of marriage shall not be admitted to the conference as a conference ministerial candidate or in full membership until approved by the Board of Bishops upon recommendation from the ministerial education and guidance board. This shall also apply to a candidate whose spouse has been divorced. Divorce prior to conversion shall not in itself bar a candidate from consideration for conference membership.

- D. The ministerial education and guidance board shall examine potential conference ministerial candidates by considering the following:
 - 1. Is the candidate holy and loving in all personal relationships?
 - 2. Has the candidate gifts as well as graces for the ministry?
 - 3. Does the candidate have good judgment, adequate discernment of the things of God, and a proper understanding of salvation by faith?
 - 4. Is the candidate able to speak effectively?
 - 5. Does the candidate present the gospel with doctrinal integrity?
 - 6. Are people convinced of sin and converted to God by the candidate's preaching and witness?

- E. A conference ministerial candidate shall be interviewed annually, allowing three years to complete the course of study required for ordination and conference membership. 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 ministerial education and guidance board.

- F. When a conference ministerial candidate is under appointment to a church as pastor-in-charge, he/she is considered "clergy" (to maintain a lay/clergy balance) when serving on committees and boards. In all other matters he/she is considered a "lay person."

Ordained Deacons

¶5350 The practice of ordaining deacons has been discontinued. The church now provides for consecrated deacons who are members of a local church (see ¶¶6600-6610). Those who continue as ordained deacons are members of an annual conference and have the authority to baptize, to officiate in marriage ceremonies, to administer the Lord's Supper, and, when appointed to a church, to perform all the other responsibilities of a minister.

Elder's Orders

¶5400

- A. A minister may be received into membership, elected to elder's orders and be reported as having a seat in the annual conference after having been employed in pastoral work three successive years subsequent to reception as a conference ministerial candidate, having satisfactorily completed the required course of study (see ¶¶5410-5440) and having given satisfactory answers to conference membership questions (see ¶8720).
- B. 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.
- C. The elder shall administer baptism and the Lord's Supper, solemnize marriages, and lead in divine worship. When appointed to a society, an elder shall perform the responsibilities of a minister.

Seminary Model

¶5410 To qualify for elder's orders using this model, one shall:

- A. be a conference ministerial candidate or ordained deacon;

- B. be a graduate of an approved John Wesley Seminary Foundation school or other accredited seminary with an M.Div. or equivalent degree, or have met the minimum educational requirements (see ¶5510.B);
- C. have completed three years of full-time pastoral experience under conference appointment after becoming a conference ministerial candidate;
- D. be interviewed, certified and recommended by the ministerial education and guidance board to elder's orders; and
- E. be approved by the annual conference and be ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee.

College Model

¶5420 To qualify for elder's orders using this model, one shall:

- A. be a conference ministerial candidate or ordained deacon;
- B. be a graduate of an approved Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions school or other accredited college, with a bachelor's degree and a major in religion or have completed approved courses in: Inductive Bible Study, 2 semester credits; Introduction to Christian Doctrine, 2 credits; Biblical studies, 10 credits; Systematic Theology, 7 credits; Wesleyan Theology, 3 credits; Pastoral Studies, 7 credits; Homiletics, 3 credits;
- C. have completed three years of full-time pastoral experience under conference appointment after becoming a conference ministerial candidate;
- D. be interviewed, certified and recommended by the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board to elder's orders; and
- E. be approved by the annual conference and ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee.

JT-XT (J-Term – Extended Studies) Model

- ¶5430 To qualify for elder's orders using this model, one shall:
- A. be a conference ministerial candidate or ordained deacon;
 - B. have completed approved courses: Inductive Bible Study, 2 semester credits; Introduction to Christian Doctrine, 2 credits; Biblical Studies, 8 credits; Systematic Theology, 3 credits; Wesleyan Theology, 3 credits; Homiletics, 3 credits; Pastoral Care, 2 credits; Church Administration/ Team Building, 2 credits; Spiritual Formation, 2 credits; Leadership/Growth, 4 credits; elective courses, 3 credits;
 - C. have completed three years of full-time pastoral experience under conference appointment after becoming a conference ministerial candidate;
 - D. be interviewed, certified and recommended by the ministerial education and guidance board to elder's orders; and
 - E. be approved by the annual conference and ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee.

Apollos Model

¶5440 This model is established for those persons of unusual giftedness, fruitfulness and experience as determined by the conference ministerial education and guidance board according to criteria described in the *Ministerial Education and Guidance Board Manual*.

To qualify for elder's orders using this model, one shall:

- A. be initially approved by the local church and granted a local ministerial candidate's license;
- B. be granted conference ministerial candidacy by the conference upon recommendation of the ministerial education and guidance board as determined by the candidate's satisfaction of the criteria for the Apollos Model;

- C. maintain an ordination readiness file which collects the data documenting assessments, reports and progress through the process as described in the *Ministerial Education and Guidance Board Manual*;
- D. complete the prescribed process of coaching, assignments and assessment under ministerial education and guidance board guidance;
- E. be interviewed, certified and recommended by the ministerial education and guidance board to elder's orders; and
- E. be approved by the annual conference and ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee.

Service Requirements for Ordination

¶5450

- A. Conference ministerial candidates are required to complete the equivalent of three years of full-time pastoral service under conference appointment to be eligible for ordination as elder. This service requirement provides the church a meaningful time frame for focused mentoring and observing the character and giftedness of the potential ministerial leader. The ministerial education and guidance board may appeal to the Board of Bishops for a reduction of this service requirement for a conference ministerial candidate. It is unusual, however, for a conference ministerial candidate to be ordained without at least three years of full-time ministry experience, including at least two years of service in the Free Methodist Church.
- B. For conference ministerial candidates appointed to part-time service, the amount of service to be granted each year is to be determined in consultation with the local board of administration and the conference ministerial appointments committee prior to the appointment using these criteria:

1. If the conference ministerial candidate is paid a salary, the ratio of the part-time salary to a full-time salary is the basis. For instance, a half-time salary is equivalent to a half-year of service. If the conference ministerial candidate is serving without salary, the ratio of the part-time service to full-time service is the basis. For instance, twenty hours per week is the equivalent of one-half year of service.
2. While conference ministerial candidates are attending seminary, up to one year of service may be earned through practical service under supervision.

Ordination in Ethnic Ministries

¶5460

- A. The ministerial education and guidance board in conferences with non-English-speaking constituencies shall be authorized to establish educational and other requirements for the ordination of pastors, taking into account their cultural and educational background. Such provisions are to be developed in consultation with the conference superintendent and the area bishop. Final approval rests with the Board of Bishops.
- B. In the case of ethnic ministries, where circumstances warrant, upon recommendation of the ministerial education and guidance board, and upon approval of the area bishop, candidates may be ordained having less than the required service requirements.
- C. 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.

Ordination Credentials

¶5470

- A. Ministers, whether located 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, are remitted by the president of the conference for retention and permanent filing by Ministerial Credentialing Services.

- B. 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.
- C. 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 they have been separated, the conference, by official action, shall declare them null and void.
- D. In the event of the loss of ordination credentials, a certified duplicate copy shall be made available through the Board of Bishops' office.
- E. After a period of three years, an ordained person neither appointed to nor actively seeking a recognized ministry function in the life of a Free Methodist Church shall deposit his/her credentials with the secretary of the conference and receive a receipt for them (see ¶5630).

Conference Membership Transfers and Termination

¶5500

- A. The licenses of conference ministerial candidates and credentials of ordained deacons and elders may be transferred from one annual conference to another. Transfers shall be by means of a certificate of standing from the ministerial education and guidance board or

the annual conference. This certificate is valid until the next session of the annual conference to which the certificate is given.

- B. The annual conference or its ministerial education and guidance board 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.
- C. A minister who unites with another denomination without having requested or received proper credentials of withdrawal from our church may, upon satisfactory evidence of that fact, be declared withdrawn by a majority vote of the conference.
- D. The unauthorized founding of or the unauthorized assumption of a leadership role in an independent congregation by a Free Methodist minister is equivalent to joining another denomination. All rights and privileges of the minister cease and his/her credentials must be deposited with the secretary of the conference.
- E. A minister who is serving a conference and who plans employment elsewhere the succeeding year shall notify the superintendent at least sixty days prior to annual conference, or, failing to give such notice, shall apply to the ministerial education and guidance board for permission to withdraw from the service of the conference at the close of the current conference year.
- F. When a superintendent is elected and accepts office in another conference, the superintendent's membership shall be transferred to that conference. If a superintendent serves more than one annual conference, he/she shall choose membership in one of those conferences.

Reception From Other Denominations

¶5510

- A. Ministers from other evangelical churches who desire to unite with the Free Methodist Church may be received according to the church's procedures, provided that they:
 1. satisfy an annual conference that they currently have ministerial credentials;
 2. give satisfactory answers to the questions which the church proposes to:
 - a. lay persons for membership; and
 - b. ministers for admission to annual conference membership;
 3. indicate agreement with the church's doctrine, discipline, government and usages and give evidence of appropriate gifts, graces and usefulness;
 4. complete courses in Free Methodist History and Polity and in Wesleyan theology; and
 5. be recommended by the ministerial education and guidance board and received by the annual conference.
- B. No person may be ordained more easily by transfer from another denomination than through meeting the requirements of the *Book of Discipline* for Free Methodist ministers. Equivalency is the guideline. The candidates must qualify in both educational and service requirements.
- C. Candidates received shall be given an appropriate certificate in lieu of ordination credentials.
- D. The credentials of ministers from other denominations will not be recognized if they have remarried and have a divorced spouse living, or if their spouse has a divorced spouse living, unless the Board of Bishops has reviewed the ministerial education and guidance board's recommendation and approved admission into the conference.

Termination of Conference Membership

¶5520

- A. Conference membership ceases when:
 1. a conference honors the request of an ordained minister to return to lay membership status in a local church and receives the minister's credentials;
 2. an ordained minister voluntarily withdraws from the conference and denomination, having surrendered credentials (see ¶7000-¶7200);
 3. a conference allows an accused minister to surrender credentials and return to lay membership in a local church (see ¶7000-¶7200);
 4. a conference allows an accused minister to surrender credentials and withdraw from the conference and denomination under charges or complaints (see ¶7000-¶7200);
 5. an ordained minister joins another denomination;
or
 6. an ordained minister is expelled (see ¶7000-¶7200).
- B. Conference relationships change when ordained ministers are located, either voluntarily or by unilateral action of the conference. In such instances their memberships and voting rights are transferred to the churches where they are located while they remain accountable to the conference for their doctrinal integrity and character (see ¶5610, ¶5620).
- C. Ordained 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 ¶7000-¶7200.

Special Cases of Appointments

Left without appointment

¶5600 An annual conference may, upon the unanimous recommendation of the ministerial appointments committee, leave a minister without an appointment. Any ordained minister left without an appointment two years in succession may be located by vote of the annual conference.

Leave of absence

¶5610 An ordained minister not 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 located deacon or located 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.

Located

¶5620 When an ordained 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 local board of administration of the church involved. Ordained persons in good standing shall be listed as located elders or located deacons as the case may be.

Return to Lay Status

¶5630 An ordained minister who leaves appointed 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 pur-

sue active pastoral ministry must make application to and be recommended by the ministerial education and guidance board where their credentials are held. This does not pertain to special leaves of absence as authorized by the conference ministerial education and guidance board.

Licensed Pastor

¶5640

- A. Any person appointed to a church who is not a member of the annual conference in which he/she is appointed shall be designated a licensed pastor. A person becomes a licensed pastor when approved for ministry by the ministerial education and guidance board and appointed by the ministerial appointments committee. Licensed pastor status shall be renewed annually. Licensed pastors have the right to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper and solemnize marriages in that place if civil law permits.
- B. No person may be appointed to serve as a licensed pastor who does not meet the qualifications of a minister outlined in ¶5310, ¶5650.

Divorce and Remarriage

¶5650

A ministerial member of a conference who divorces or is divorced by his/her spouse may not remarry while the former spouse lives until, upon recommendation from the ministerial education and guidance board, 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 also apply to a minister whose spouse has been divorced from a mate who still lives.

Evangelists

¶5660

- A. 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.

- B. General evangelists devote full time to their ministry. Conference evangelists are those limited by circumstances to a part-time ministry.
- C. All evangelists shall be recommended by the conference administrative committee and approved by the conference ministerial education and guidance board 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 ¶5660.D. They shall prepare a prospectus for publicity and use the standard forms for evaluation.
- D. No evangelist shall appoint or hold meetings where he/she will interfere with the regular work of any society, without the consent of the pastor and the superintendent.

Located Deacons and Located Elders

¶5700

- A. Located deacons and located 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 ministerial education and guidance board 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 ¶5620).
- B. A located deacon or located elder may be transferred to an itinerating ministry within the conference upon the recommendation of the ministerial education and guidance board, having given satisfactory answers to the questions of ¶8720 and having received the approving vote of the annual conference.

- C. Located deacons or located elders who move to another conference area shall approach the ministerial education and guidance board 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 the receiving conference to locate the deacon or elder.
- D. Located deacons and located 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 ministerial education and guidance board. This discipline may include the request for surrender of ordination credentials. However, no located deacon or located elder shall be deprived of ordination credentials without due process.
- E. Located deacons and located elders shall be approved annually by the ministerial education and guidance board, upon recommendation by the pastor and local board of administration of the church where they are located.

Evaluation of Ministry Effectiveness

Preface

¶5800

- A. The evaluation of ministry effectiveness is intended to provide insight 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 ministerial education and guidance board as each carries out its work.
- B. The ministerial education and guidance board not only certifies pastors for work in the conference but also through this evaluation, identifies areas of pas-

toral ministry which need improvement and facilitates this training.

- C. The ministerial appointments committee makes its decisions after reflection on information and perspectives from the delegate(s), recommendations from the superintendent, a confidential report from the pastor and the results from the evaluation.
- D. All who participate in the evaluation are encouraged to do so with Christian grace, prayer and fasting, as the Lord may lead.
- E. The elements of the evaluation of ministry effectiveness include:
 1. annual staff evaluations to be handled by the senior pastor and local board of administration. For each conference-appointed staff person, the ministerial education and guidance board will review the local board of administration's evaluation as well as the character of these individuals.
 2. a pastoral evaluation conducted annually by the superintendent to assist the pastor in setting goals and objectives for his/her ministry. The results of each evaluation shall be submitted in appropriate form by the superintendent to the ministerial education and guidance board and/or ministerial appointments committee. Periodically, the superintendent will review progress with the pastor. The pastor will review the evaluation with the pastors cabinet and/or the local board of administration.
 3. an evaluation of its ministry effectiveness by each church every three years with the society's participation. The superintendent or designee, with the pastor, will facilitate the evaluation. The results will be communicated to the church, and shared with the ministerial education and guidance board. If the stability or mission of a local church is

threatened, any member of the local board of administration may move to request assistance from a conference intervention team. If passed by a majority vote of the local board of administration, then the pastor, board of administration vice chair or annual conference delegate shall make this request known to the conference superintendent who will respond within previously-established conference guidelines.

4. an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of conference ministries, provided during the local church ministry effectiveness evaluation.
5. the use of evaluation tools developed by the ministerial education and guidance board in consultation with the area bishop.

Chapter 6

The Local Church

Preamble

¶6000

- A. 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 members of the body of Christ in the world, the visible and universal church of Jesus Christ.
- B. 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.
- C. Each local congregation accepts members on condition of agreement with a covenant commonly approved and accepted by all local congregations of the church.
- D. Each holds its real estate and all of its property and assets in trust for the Free Methodist Church of North America.
- E. 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.

Bold paragraph numbers and section letters indicate those items which may be changed by the board of administration. All others may only be changed by the general conference.

- F. 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.
- G. 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.
- H. 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.
- I. True worship of God demands service to one another within the church and to those outside the church with their varied needs. This service that we define as the mission of the church includes Christian education, evangelism, world missions and social services.
- J. 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. Free Methodist Communications produces and markets books, magazines and other literature.
- K. 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.

- L. World missions involves sending the gospel message to areas of need around the world. This is done through a missionary endeavor that involves both long-term 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.
- M. 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.
- N. 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.

Mission and Vision

¶6010

- A. 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 equip for ministry all who respond in faith. The biblical Great Commis-

sion (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) commands believers to make disciples in every place and among all peoples.

- B. The vision of the Free Methodist Church is to be a healthy biblical community of holy people multiplying disciples, leaders, groups and churches. The path to this vision requires every church to be a healthy church with Spirit-filled leadership working a plan to fulfill our Expected Outcomes (see ¶6070).

Characteristics of the Living Church

¶6020

- A. 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).
- B. 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.
- C. 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.

Holiness – The Great Commandment of Our Community

¶6030 Believers pursue holiness in its most comprehensive meaning of loving God with all their 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. The church calls 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 sin, be it addiction, selfishness, evil speaking, or anything else that dishonors the name of God.

Disciple-making – The Great Commission of Our Community

¶6040 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 longtime Christians.

Non-Negotiable Fundamentals

¶6050 All structures, ministries and personnel of the church shall reflect these non-negotiable fundamentals of the Free Methodist Church:

1. We may not live in violation of the Scriptures.
2. We may not live in violation of the Articles of Religion, the Constitution, the Membership Covenant or the mission of the Free Methodist Church.
3. Our pastors may not live in violation of their ordination vows.
4. Our leaders may not lead the church in ways which detract or divert from our mission.

Operational Values

¶6060 All structures, ministries and personnel of the church shall reflect these operational values:

1. We are a connectional church. We are strengthened most by our relationships based on truthfulness and grace.
2. We believe our mission drives everything we do.
3. We proclaim a grace that is free. Jesus said the crowning work of authentic ministry is this: when the poor have the gospel brought to them. Hence, the destitute and disenfranchised of the world deserve our particular care.
4. We strive to make the message of the gospel relevant to our culture by remaining faithful to God while showing love and sensitivity to the world.
5. We accept all who come to us, seeing the most desperate sinner with the potential to become a whole and devoted follower of Jesus.
6. We see smaller groups and cells within the larger body of Christ as the best environment for the birth, mentoring, encouragement and care of believers.
7. We view our local churches as mission outposts. Our pastors are appointed not just to a local congregation and building, but to the evangelization of whole communities, towns, or cities.
8. We see ourselves as an apostolic movement. We are a "sent" people, charged with the task of reaching new territories and new populations of people with the gospel.
9. We are Wesleyan in our doctrine and in our practice.
10. We value the guidance of the Scriptures and the consensus of the church throughout her history.
11. We are to be a holy people. Our conduct and our teaching are to reflect the holiness and love of God. We seek nothing less than the healing of mind, body and soul of all who come under our care.

Expected Outcomes

¶6070 All structures, ministries, and personnel of the church shall produce these expected outcomes:

1. Every church a prayer-saturated congregation
2. Every church a worshipping congregation

3. Every church a discipling congregation
4. Every church an evangelizing congregation
5. Every church a reproducing congregation
6. Every church a culture-engaging congregation
7. Every church a world-mission congregation
8. Every church a purpose-driven congregation

Membership

¶6100 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 purpose of membership preparation is to identify life issues and receive assistance; identify theological/doctrinal questions and attain answers; and learn the mission of the church and express commitment to it. The principles of Christian conduct as expressed in ¶¶3300-3470 are to be the maturing life goals of all who are invited into membership.

Admission into Membership

¶6110

- A. The conditions for membership in the Free Methodist Church are described in ¶151. Persons meeting these requirements shall be admitted to the privileges of membership. Those members, who rise to leadership, shall also meet expectations described in ¶6200.E. (See *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual* for guidance in membership preparation.)
- B. The ritual of membership is found in ¶8800.
- C. Any person in good standing in an evangelical church may be received into membership upon meeting the requirements of ¶151.

- D. When two or more societies vote to merge, individual membership is automatically transferred to the united society.
- E. Members who withdraw from the church with no complaints against them at the time may by action of the local board of administration be reinstated into membership if the following conditions are met:
 - 1. evidence of present faith in Christ; and
 - 2. reaffirmation of the Membership Covenant.
- F. Members living at a distance physically, spiritually or emotionally from the society in which membership is held and who are not attending, shall send to the pastor a written testimony at least once a year describing their active worship and involvement in a local church of similar doctrinal beliefs. The pastor of that church shall confirm these activities. 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 local board of administration. The church shall seek to contact all absentee members annually to ascertain the viability of the membership connections and shall respond accordingly (restore, remove permanently, remove to the inactive list).
- G. 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 restoration, they must be dealt with according to the due process of the church (§6330, §§7000-§7200).
- H. 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 the pastor 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 ¶6110.E. Inactive members shall not be reported in the *Yearbook* or any other official membership data.

- I. 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.

Youth Membership

¶6120

- A. 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.
- B. The names of youth members shall be reviewed by the local board of administration at least once each year, with a view to character cultivation and Christian nurture.
- C. At age sixteen youth members may be approved by the local board of administration for adult membership. To be admitted as adult members, they must answer satisfactorily the questions for adult membership before a public meeting of the church.

Associate Membership

¶6130

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 another Free Methodist church. All rights and privileges except the right to vote shall be granted. Associate members shall be recorded on a separate list.

Transfer of Membership

¶6140

- A. 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.

- B. Members wishing to transfer to another society must have a letter of transfer from the pastor (see *Pastors Handbook*). When giving a letter of transfer, the pastor shall promptly notify the pastor of the society to which the letter is addressed. The letter of transfer is valid for one year.
- C. Members given a letter of transfer shall remain members of, and be amenable to, the society by which the letter was given. Once the letter is presented to another society and they are received into membership, they shall be responsible to the new society for their conduct.
- D. It shall be the duty of the pastor receiving the letter to notify the pastor who gave it (see *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual*).
- E. Youth members may be transferred to another society by the pastor giving a letter of transfer (see *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual*).
- F. The conference superintendent must give consent for the issuing of a letter of transfer for a licensed pastor in charge of a society (see ¶5640).

Membership – Special Circumstances

¶6150

Conferences of mission origin as well as in North America who, for cultural reasons, encounter difficulties with membership procedures as outlined in ¶ 6100-6110 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 Board of Bishops 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.

Local Church Administration

¶6200

- A. 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 under Membership and Covenant (¶150-160).
- B. A business meeting of the members is called a society meeting and is conducted at least annually. The purposes of this meeting include the election of officers and a review of the year's progress and of plans for the upcoming year.
- C. New societies and smaller churches should view the organization outlined as a goal to be reached as the church grows and ministries expand. Some offices/functions may be omitted or combined in such instances.
- D. Recognizing the diversity in the Free Methodist Church, diversity in board and ministry structures is needed to meet the expected outcomes. Ministry settings vary due to size, goals and culture. The local church is free to organize its boards and ministry structures in such a manner as to maintain Free Methodist values while accomplishing the Expected Outcomes (see ¶6070).
- E. Selecting Leaders
 - 1. Leaders of the local church give substance and direction to the church as they seek to fulfill our Expected Outcomes. They pray, strategize and focus the energies, spiritual gifts and passion of the whole body.
 - 2. Leadership and/or policy-making positions shall be filled by members who:
 - a. live consistently within scriptural guidelines (expectations) for leaders (e.g. Exodus 18:21, Acts 7:3, 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9) and express Christlike attitudes in life and in rela-

- tionships (e.g. Matthew 20:26-28; John 15:12-17; Acts 6:1-7 and Ephesians 4:1-17);
- b. give evidence of spiritual gifts such as leadership, faith and administration;
 - c. agree with and sincerely seek to live out the goals for their maturing life in Christ;
 - d. continue in harmony with our doctrine, membership covenant and mission; and
 - e. are vital in faith, faithful in attendance and financially supportive of their church to at least the level of a tithe.
3. Leadership and/or policy-making positions are defined as: the board of administration, delegate(s), nominating committee, financial chairman and/or treasurer, plus other key ministry or teaching position as determined by the local board of administration.

Society Meeting

¶6250

- A. The society meeting shall be composed of the full members of the society. Youth members are ineligible to vote (see ¶6120).
- B. The pastor shall be chair of the meeting without vote. The secretary of the local board of administration shall be the secretary of the society. The minutes of the society meetings shall be kept in the record book of the local board of administration.
- C. The meeting shall be announced at least ten days before it is held. Absentee voting is not permitted.
- D. Prior to the annual election process, the pastor shall present to the society the scriptural qualifications for lay leadership positions such as those noted in ¶6200.E.
- E. Annual Conference Lay Delegates.
 1. Adult members, with the exception of conference

- ministerial candidates, who conform to the conditions outlined for leaders in ¶6200.E.2, are eligible to be a delegate(s) or reserve delegate(s). However, a delegate who is received as a conference ministerial candidate during the current session of the annual conference shall not be disqualified to serve as a delegate. The society shall, from those nominated by the nominating committee, elect by ballot their delegate(s) and reserve delegate(s) to the annual conference, according to the provisions in ¶5010. The election of the delegate(s) and reserve delegate(s) shall be by separate ballot and shall each require a majority vote of those present and voting. The secretary will provide a credential(s) for the delegate(s).
2. 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.
 3. Delegates are to support pastors and staff in the planning and promotion of Great Commission strategies.
- F. The society shall elect a nominating committee (see ¶6310).
- G. The society shall elect adult members from the local church to serve in various capacities on the local board of administration, in addition to those named by virtue of office.
- H. The society may determine the number of stewards and may elect a board of stewards (see *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual*).
- I. The board of administration may serve as the trustees

of the church, or others may be elected. All trustees shall be elected as specified in the charter or bylaws or by civil law (see ¶6400.B).

- J. The society shall elect a treasurer who shall be an adult member of that society. He/she shall keep a record of all money received and expended by the church and report to the society (see 6300.G).
- K. A financial review or audit shall be performed annually.
- L. The society may elect other personnel to serve the church.
- M. The society may elect a pastors cabinet (see ¶6320).
- N. The society shall determine the propriety of incorporating and identify the local church governing body required by the state (see ¶6400).
- O. The pastor's state of the church, the treasurer's and board or committee reports will be given at the annual society meeting.
- P. The pastor or local board of administration may call a society meeting.
- Q. *Robert's Rules of Order* in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure in the sessions of the society meetings.
- R. A suggested order of business for a society meeting may be found in the *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual*.

Standing Boards and Committees

Local Board of Administration

¶6300

- A. The local board of administration 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, nor more than fifteen members. At least one delegate and one trustee shall be included. It is also recommended that no member, with the exception of the pastor, serve for more than six consecutive years.

1. In consultation with the conference superintendent, the local church may choose other structures and titles to appropriately reflect operational values and desired outcomes.
 2. 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 tithe (see ¶6200.E).
 3. Only adult members of the local church may serve on the local board of administration, except that members of an annual conference may serve on the board if the society elects them.
 4. Whenever practicable, the board shall meet once a month.
- B. The pastor shall be chair of the board, except as provided in ¶5110.D.3-4, and when absent, a chair shall be elected. Annually, the pastor may designate a layperson as presiding officer of the local board of administration, from among those elected to serve on this board, upon mutual agreement and confirmation by the board.
- C. The pastor is an ex-officio member of all boards and committees.
- D. The local board of administration shall work in partnership with the senior pastor to provide vision, general oversight, planning and coordination of the ministries of the church. The purpose shall be to stimulate and ensure the furtherance of the congregation's mission and the spiritual growth and development of the entire body. The board shall provide spiritual leadership for the society. It shall seek to be guided by and strive to model the scriptural admonitions found in

Matthew 28:19-20; Matthew 22:37-39; Ephesians 4:11-16; Matthew 20:25-28; John 17:20-21; that we may be presented to Christ in accordance with Ephesians 1:22-23; John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 14:33; Galatians 5:22-23; James 3:17; and Hebrews 12:14.

- E. The pastor, in partnership with the board, is responsible for making provision to accomplish the mission of the church including Christian education, evangelism, missions, church growth and the work of stewards.
- F. The 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 minutes of the proceedings of the local board of administration and of the society meetings, and shall record all marriages and baptisms.
- G. The treasurer of the society shall keep a record of all monies raised and of the manner in which they are expended. The treasurer shall provide a detailed monthly financial statement in writing to the finance committee and the local board of administration, with a full report to the annual society meeting.
- H. To safeguard the treasurer, it is recommended that the board elect tellers who shall count each offering and provide the necessary documentation for the financial review or audit.
- I. A financial secretary may 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 local board of administration.
- J. It is recommended that the local board of administration elect from the members a finance board. The pastor and the treasurer shall be ex-officio members. The finance board shall report regularly to the local board of administration (see ¶6440.A).

- K. Upon the joint request of the pastor and the finance board, the financial books shall be made available for examination.
- L. The members of the finance board 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/her means (see ¶6430).
- M. The board shall keep a permanent record 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. Each year the senior pastor will oversee the completion of the local church annual report.
- N. The 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.
- O. The 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.
- P. Where a separate membership care committee is not feasible, these duties may be assigned to an existing committee such as the pastors cabinet (see ¶6320).
- Q. The board licenses local ministerial candidates according to the guidelines provided in ¶6500.
- R. *Robert's Rules of Order* in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure in the sessions of the local board of administration.

- S. A suggested order of business may be found in the *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual*.

Nominating Committee

¶6310

- A. At the annual meeting, the society shall elect by ballot from its adult membership a standing nominating committee of not fewer than three nor 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. The nominating committee may not present nominations for the next nominating committee; however the society may allow for nominations from the membership to be received in advance of the annual meeting. In this case, a form for nominations shall be provided at least thirty days prior to the election. The local board of administration shall process these nominations and provide a ballot including the names of all available nominees. In addition, the society may determine whether nominations will be allowed from the floor and set a standing rule in advance to that effect.
- 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. The society and the board of administration shall ensure a member's right to submit nominations.
- D. The nominating committee shall:
1. recommend to the society persons to serve in the leadership roles of all standing committees or boards;
 2. nominate annual conference delegates, if the society so chooses, presenting at least two nomina-

- tions for each delegate position for election by ballot (see ¶6250.E);
3. consult ¶6200.E when considering persons for the position of delegate(s) and reserve delegate(s) to annual conference and for all leadership positions. The board of administration shall establish a procedure whereby the pastor and/or cabinet can review the nominations and remove from the final ballot the names of members who have shown inadequate growth in Christian practice or Christ-likeness. Prior to the annual election process, the pastor shall remind the society and/or nominating committee (whichever is most appropriate) of the scriptural qualifications for leadership positions as defined in ¶6200.E; and
 4. make their report available to the society at least ten days prior to the election.

Pastors Cabinet

¶6320

- A. Each society may elect a pastors cabinet. It shall be composed of not fewer than three nor more than nine lay members, including representation by delegate(s) 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.
- B. The cabinet is to assist the pastor in making his/her ministry more effective in these ways:
 1. serve as a prayer cabinet;
 2. be available for counsel;
 3. keep the congregation informed concerning the nature and function of the pastoral office;
 4. keep the pastor advised concerning conditions within the congregation as they affect relations between pastor and people;

5. serve as a planning committee;
6. 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;
7. assist in selecting suitable supply pastors when the pastor is to be absent, groups for special services and special speakers, unless otherwise provided for by the local board of administration;
8. serve as the church calendar committee;
9. serve as the membership care committee when so designated by the local board of administration; and
10. assist the pastor in counseling and guidance of local ministerial candidates (see ¶6500).

Membership Care Committee

¶6330

- A. The local church may 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 genders.
- B. When the local board of administration so decides, the duties of the membership care committee may be assigned to an existing committee.
- C. 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 ¶6110.G).
- D. The membership care committee shall:
 1. assist the pastor(s) in identifying and recruiting members;
 2. review the membership rolls at least annually;
 3. counsel with members whose conduct and relationship to the church may be cause for concern, such as

- the threatened breakup of a marriage (see ¶3440.A);
4. make recommendations to the local board of administration regarding the membership status of those who have been counseled;
 5. provide continuing ministry to former or inactive members (see ¶6110.H); and
 6. perform the duties of discipline prescribed in ¶7000-¶7200.

Christian Schools

¶6340

- A. The Free Methodist Church of North America shall encourage and promote the establishing of Christian day schools (see ¶4320.P, ¶5270).
- B. It is recommended that such schools be designated Light and Life Christian Schools.
- C. Light and Life Christian Schools are expected to maintain a Christian emphasis and exceed state educational standards.
- D. Responsibility for the operation of Light and Life Christian Schools shall rest with the local board of administration, which may elect a board of directors to give specific oversight. If a Light and Life School board of directors is in place, it shall provide financial and statistical reports to the local board of administration at least once each quarter. The Light and Life School board of directors, of whom at least two-thirds shall be members of the Free Methodist Church, shall cooperate with the conference board in accord with the guidelines established by the board and the annual conference.
- E. The local board of administration which has responsibility for the operation of a Christian School, Preschool or Day Care program shall require an annual financial report to be completed by a qualified auditor or accountant.
- F. A person shall be employed by a local church to be prin-

cipal of its school only after meeting these criteria:

1. the local board of administration has determined that the candidate's educational and spiritual leadership is appropriate;
 2. the conference ministerial education and guidance board, upon examination of the candidate's qualifications, has given employment approval to the local society;
 3. the local board of administration approves the candidate for employment; and
 4. the candidate is, or upon employment will become, a member of the Free Methodist Church.
- G. The leadership commitments, mission commitments and connectional commitments as found in ¶4810 for Denominational Institutions shall apply, as appropriate, to Light and Life Christian Schools. Any complaint of violation of any of these principles shall be directed to the Light and Life Christian Schools board 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 conference administrative committee.

Property and Finance

¶6400

- A. Before an annual conference, a pastoral charge, or a society purchases real estate, the articles of incorporation, wherever the law will permit, shall provide that the corporation 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. When incorporation is complete, the deed(s) shall be made out directly to the owning body in its corporate name

and shall without exception contain the trust clause in ¶6400.D.

- B. The board of administration of an annual conference, a pastoral charge, or a society of the Free Methodist Church shall have and hold in trust (see ¶6400.D) any and all property committed to it. Whenever local law requires church property to be held by trustees, references in the *Book of Discipline* to “Board of Administration” may be construed to be synonymous with “Board of Trustees.” The board of administration shall be elected by ballot where civil law requires. The task of caring for property and facilities may be referred to a separate properties committee.
- C. The board of administration of the owning body shall see that titles are good; that deeds are drawn in harmony with civil law; that they are immediately recorded; and that abstracts and other valuable papers are safely stored.
- D. **Trust Clause.** 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 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 ¶6400.F of the *Book of Discipline*.

“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 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 constructed or that may here-

after be constructed on said promises 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*."

- E. An annual conference, a pastoral charge, or a society shall not accept a deed which contains a clause by which the land conveyed may revert to the original grantor, the heirs, or assigns, nor shall it 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 Free Methodist churches without the consent of both the pastor and a majority of the local board of administration of the pastoral charge or society.
- F. Whenever it becomes advisable and the electing body so authorizes, the local board of administration may sell or encumber or otherwise dispose 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 the same local church, 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 administrative committee 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.

- G. Whenever any property is no longer used permanently for church purposes and it is so declared by the annual conference, the local board of administration, if any remains, shall sell it and turn over the proceeds of the sale to the annual conference or convey the same to the conference in its corporate name. If the local church board should refuse to do so, their offices shall be declared vacant by the annual conference and shall be replaced by the conference designees. If no such board remains, the annual conference shall take possession of the property by due process of law. The annual conference may sell and convey such property and the proceeds of sale may be used as the conference may direct, in accordance with the civil law.

Construction of Churches

¶6410

- A. Church buildings are a visual testimony to the surrounding community of the church's 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.
- B. No step shall be taken involving pecuniary liability in constructing houses of worship or parsonages, or in purchasing real property of any kind, until the finance plan is approved in writing by the proper conference boards as determined by the annual conference.
- C. Each annual conference may appoint a buildings and locations committee of not less than three or the ad-

ministrative committee may serve this function. No real property shall be purchased or building constructed 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 projected ministries before giving its approval.

- D. No houses of worship, parsonages, or other buildings shall be purchased or constructed 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 administrative committee of the annual conference in whose territory the property is situated.

Church Merger/Closing

¶6420 The determination of the continuance, merger, or closing of a local church by an annual conference, when recommended by its conference administrative committee, 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 members, or is deemed by the conference board of administration to be incapable of adequately supporting the society, the conference administrative committee may at its discretion assume responsibility for the property.

Raising of Funds

¶6430

- A. The support of the church is to come from the tithes, offerings and gifts of its people. The membership is requested to cooperate heartily by giving not less than one-tenth of their income for the Lord's work (see ¶6200.E, ¶8800.5).

- B. Other methods for the raising of funds may be used by constituents of our churches providing that:
 - 1. they are not a substitute for the giving of tithes and offerings;
 - 2. they are consistent with the ethics and practices of our faith; and
 - 3. the church itself does not serve as a marketing agency for the commercial products of its constituency.
- C. The church may support community-wide 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.
- D. All fund appeals to be made by local churches outside of their annual conference must first be cleared by the administrative committee of the conference(s) into whose area the appeal is to be sent.

Support of Pastors

¶6440

- A. It shall be the duty of the finance board to consult with the pastor and then prepare an estimate of the amount necessary for the support of the pastoral staff. This estimate is to be presented to the local board of administration for action (see ¶6300.J).
- B. If a pastor chooses not to occupy the parsonage, the local board of administration 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.

Resources

- ¶6450 Superintendents, pastors and lay members are encouraged to make frequent use of resources such as:
 - Chaplains Guidelines Manual,*
 - Deacon Handbook,*

Local Ministerial Candidate Handbook,
Ministerial Education and Guidance Board Manual,
Pastors and Church Leaders Manual,
Superintendents Manual, and the
Working Together in the Twenty-first Century booklet.

Local Ministerial Candidates

¶6500

- A. A local ministerial candidate is one who is seriously considering a call to full-time Christian ministry and who has completed the processes of licensing. Local ministerial candidate status provides the opportunity to explore the perceived call to ministry with the pastor in the context of the local church. Prior to being approved to work toward a local ministerial candidate license, the person shall have been a member of the church long enough to have given evidence of possessing the developing qualities and gifts normally expected of a Christian minister: a heart for God and the mission of the church, leadership potential, good conduct and the ability to work with people.
- B. Persons who do not show adequate potential of being an elder who can lead a congregation to fulfill the mission of the church and our expected outcomes, should be counseled at an early time to consider the support and service role of a deacon.
- C. The pastor shall enter into a mentoring relationship with the potential local ministerial candidate, establishing a learning contract (see *Local Ministerial Candidate Handbook*). The pastor shall journey with the individual through licensing as local ministerial candidate, and possibly even through licensing as a conference ministerial candidate. A local ministerial candidate shall be amenable to instruction, supervision and related discipline to assure growth in grace, knowledge and leadership skill (see ¶6300.Q, ¶6320.B.10).

- D. Licensing as a local ministerial candidate is contingent upon:
1. membership in the Free Methodist Church;
 2. exploring a call to ordained ministry in a mentoring relationship with pastor/designee (see *Local Ministerial Candidate Handbook*);
 3. an interview with and approval by the local board of administration upon satisfactory answers to the questions provided in ¶8700.A; and
 4. receiving a local ministerial candidate certificate before the congregation upon satisfactory answers to the questions provided in ¶8700.B.
- E. Following licensing, the new local ministerial candidate opens a file with Ministerial Credentialing Services (see *Local Ministerial Candidate Handbook*).
- F. The names of all local ministerial candidates shall be reported to the annual conference ministerial education and guidance board.
- G. A local ministerial candidate shall maintain membership in the church that licensed him/her, unless appointed as a licensed pastor (see ¶6500.H).
- H. A local ministerial candidate appointed as a licensed pastor shall hold membership in the church served (see ¶5640).
- I. A local ministerial candidate's license is subject to annual review and renewal by the local board of administration.
- J. A local ministerial candidate, who after four years does not actively progress toward conference ministerial candidacy leading to elder's orders, shall choose to study for the diaconate or to serve in another lay capacity, thus discontinuing the local ministerial candidate license.
- K. A local ministerial candidate appointed by a ministe-

rial appointments committee to have charge of a society may administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper and solemnize marriages in that place if civil law permits.

- L. Finally, the local board of administration recommends to the conference ministerial education and guidance board that the candidate be accepted as a conference ministerial candidate.

Deacons

¶6600

- A. Deacons are members in good standing in the Free Methodist Church. They are persons of good reputation, full of wisdom and the Spirit, whose spiritual gifts from God have been confirmed by their local churches. In response to God's call on their lives, deacons offer servant-leadership in particular areas of congregational life, according to the gifts and graces God has given and they have developed. Complementing the work of elders, deacons serve the local church by assisting and leading the membership to carry out its ministries to one another and the world.
- B. The specialized ministries of the deacons include, but are not limited to, ministries of:
 - 1. care and mercy
 - 2. worship and music
 - 3. administration and organization
 - 4. spiritual nurture and counsel
 - 5. outreach and service
- C. Under the leadership of the pastor(s), local congregations will help people recognize, accept and use their gifts in ministry. In due course, God will call some to lead the body in specialized ministries, assisting the pastor(s) in equipping the people for ministry and dedicating significant time to this work.

- D. Under the guidance of the pastor(s) and the local board of administration, persons called to such ministry will be recognized, encouraged, mentored, trained, examined and certified for the diaconate.
1. The local board of administration shall guide prospective deacons in a process of study and mentoring appropriate for their areas of ministry and according to denominational standards. In the process, the local board of administration will give due consideration to character, calling, gifting, training and fruitfulness in ministry (see *Deacon Handbook*).
 2. When a prospective deacon or his/her spouse has been divorced, clearance for ministry shall be required, according to denominational guidelines used by the bishops. The ministerial education and guidance board will review and recommend clearance for ministry to the local board of administration for final approval. The file will go to the conference office, so that if the deacon were later to proceed to elder's orders, the bishops would have access to the previous endorsement.
- E. Upon meeting the requirements and completing the process of preparation, the local board of administration shall approve the candidate for consecration as deacon within the local church. The conference superintendent or designee shall consecrate the deacon with the assistance of the pastor(s) and other deacons. The local Free Methodist Church shall issue a certificate of consecration to the newly consecrated deacon.
- F. On an annual basis the local board of administration shall review and approve deacons within their care as to their character and performance in ministry. When appropriate, with due process, the local board of administration may discontinue certification.

The Deacon's Role

¶6610

- A. Deacons remain members of the local Free Methodist Church with no official standing in the annual conference. Deacons may therefore serve as lay delegates to annual conference and general conference.
- B. The deacon's particular ministry role is defined by his or her individual gifts, passions and calling from God. Deacons may therefore serve the local congregation in a variety of ways.
- C. Deacons may administer the sacraments only when authorized by an elder.
- D. The consecration of a deacon will be valid only in that local church. Whenever a deacon transfers membership to another Free Methodist Church, the receiving pastor may decline to recognize the prior consecration. If the pastor chooses to affirm the transferring deacon's consecration, the person may be approved for ministry in the new congregation after review by the pastor and local board of administration of the receiving church.
- E. A composite record or list of deacons will be kept at the conference office and not listed in the denominational *Yearbook*. They shall be clearly distinguished from ordained located deacons who are listed in the *Yearbook*.

Pastoral Staff Assistants

¶6700

These guidelines apply to part-time or full-time paid local church pastoral staff, ordained, consecrated deacons 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.

Selection/Appointment

¶6710

- A. 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 ministerial education and guidance board and the ministerial appointments committee in the initial stages of selecting a suitable person for the proposed position.

- B. The process of selecting a staff member shall involve the senior pastor, the local church, the ministerial education and guidance board, and the ministerial appointments committee.
 - 1. 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.
 - 2. The local board of administration shall select a personnel committee which may be the pastors cabinet, and must include the senior pastor. This committee shall establish a job description which delineates the responsibilities of the staff member and recommends salary and benefits. The committee shall screen and interview candidates, using conference applications and reference forms, and present its report to the local board of administration. If the local board of administration accepts the recommendation of the pastor and personnel committee, it shall then forward the recommendation to the ministerial education and guidance board for approval.
 - 3. The ministerial education and guidance board shall review the application and recommendation from the local church.
 - 4. If the ministerial education and guidance board approves the recommendation and the prospective staff member is (or anticipates being) in con-

ference relationship, the recommendation shall be referred to the ministerial appointments committee, which shall have final jurisdiction regarding appointment.

Supervision

¶6720

- A.** 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(s) to the senior pastor and to the church.
- B.** In case of a problem between the pastor and the assistant, the following procedure is recommended:
 1. The pastor and the assistant shall first seek to resolve the problem themselves.
 2. If they cannot resolve the problem, the matter shall be referred to the personnel committee for counsel and assistance.
 3. 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.
 4. 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 ministerial education and guidance board or the ministerial appointments committee to take whatever steps are necessary to solve the problem.

Change in Appointment

¶6730

- A.** 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.

- B. The assistant shall also notify the conference superintendent and, if in conference relationship, the ministerial appointments committee.
- C. 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.
- D. If the ministerial appointments committee wishes to appoint the assistant (when that person 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.
- E. If the senior pastor is to be moved, the incoming pastor shall be given the responsibility of deciding whether to retain the existing assistant(s). Letters of resignation from all staff pastors shall, without exception, be submitted, when he/she arrives. The new senior pastor has up to one year to exercise the option on each resignation. No resignation of conference-appointed assistants shall be accepted without due cause and/or process, which shall include the conference superintendent, the ministerial appointments committee, and the designated personnel committee and/or team of delegates. The ministerial appointments committee shall retain all of its appointment authority including the timing of any change. When the senior pastor is to be moved, the ministerial appointments committee

shall communicate this information to each conference-appointed assistant and the personnel committee of the church.

Formation of New Churches

¶ 6800

- A. The fulfillment of the Great Commission and the mission of the Free Methodist Church requires larger, growing and more effective local churches as well as more and varied 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.
- B. 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.
- C. 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 name “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 pro-

vide consistency in policy while allowing latitude in strategy for multiplying local churches.

- D. An annual conference or local church may partner with Free Methodist World Missions to design and implement strategies for ministries to ethnic peoples within the United States. Groups of immigrant residents within the United States may be identified as missions initiatives by Free Methodist World Missions.

Church-Planting Projects

¶6810

- A. A church-planting project is the first phase in the formation of most new churches.
- B. Authority to Form. Each church-planting project must have a sponsoring agency, which may be a local society or conference board or committee. The project comes into existence when the sponsoring agency announces its decision.
- C. 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.
- D. 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.
- E. 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.
- F. Local Organization. A church-planting pastor or lay

project leader may appoint a ministry committee to provide counsel and direction.

- G. 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 (§6820).
- H. 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.

Fellowship Status

§6820

- A. Fellowship status is the second phase in the formation of most new churches. The conferences administrative committee or board of evangelism shall serve as the fellowship's sponsoring agency.
- B. Authority to Form. A conference superintendent, with the concurrence of the sponsoring agency, may recognize a group as a fellowship when:
 - 1. enough prospective members have been adequately prepared for 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 containing the denominational mission statement, the official name of the group and adequate statements of mutual responsibility and accountability between the fellowship and the conference has been signed by these prospective members, the superintendent and representatives of the sponsoring agency.
- C. Accountability and Responsibility. The pastor or lay project leader and the fellowship shall be accountable to

the conference superintendent and the sponsoring agency. The fellowship shall be guided toward becoming a Free Methodist society. A written report of progress and needs for further guidance shall be submitted to the superintendent and sponsoring agency each quarter.

- D. Membership. A fellowship may receive members in all relationships and shall report them in the same manner as societies.
- E. Financial Matters.
 - 1. A fellowship shall hold and disburse its own funds but the sponsoring agency shall retain authority to audit.
 - 2. 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, rather than in the name of the fellowship.
 - 3. In the case of dissolution of a fellowship, the accumulated assets become the property of the sponsoring agency.
 - 4. A fellowship 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.
- F. Local Organization. Members of the fellowship shall elect a local board of administration 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 local board of administration may form other boards and committees as needed.
- G. Duration. A fellowship shall remain in this relationship no longer than three years unless the sponsoring agency grants an extension. In the event of the dissolution of a fellowship, letters of transfer shall be issued to its members in good standing.

- H. Conference Relationship. A fellowship shall be represented in the annual conference by an honorary delegate who shall have a voice but no vote.

Affiliate Congregations

¶6830

- A. Congregations established outside of Free Methodist sponsorship and wishing to become part of the denomination may enter as affiliate congregations.
- B. Authority to Recognize. A conference superintendent, with the concurrence of the conference administrative committee, may receive a congregation in an affiliate relationship when:
 - 1. the members of the congregation have received adequate orientation to the doctrine, organization, and mission of the Free Methodist Church;
 - 2. a document of affiliation has been signed by the governing board of the congregation, the superintendent, and representatives of the conference, affirming the Articles of Religion and the mission statement of the Free Methodist Church and describing mutual responsibilities; and
 - 3. the members have given public joint assent to the document of affiliation and questions for church membership.
- C. Accountability and Responsibility. The pastor and board of the affiliate church shall meet periodically (at least twice a year) with the conference superintendent or designated liaison to review and strengthen the connectional relationship and shall participate in conference fellowship, mentoring and reporting procedures. The pastor and board shall consult with the ministerial appointments committee of the conference regarding any proposed changes in pastoral leadership during affiliate status.
- D. Membership. An affiliate congregation may receive members in all relationships and report them in the same manner as societies.

- E. Financial Matters.
1. An affiliate congregation is encouraged to contribute generously to conference and denominational ministries as the first step towards full participation in these responsibilities.
 2. Staff members are eligible but not required to participate in the denominational pension program during affiliate status if an alternate retirement plan is already in effect.
 3. An affiliate congregation which owns real property need not incorporate the trust clause of ¶6400.D into its deed until recognition as a society occurs. Denominational assistance for capital improvement shall be in the form of loans repayable if the church chooses not to become a Free Methodist society.
- F. Local Organization. The governing board of an affiliate congregation shall be guided by the *Book of Discipline* and the mission of the Free Methodist Church in its decisions and the development of new ministries but may retain its existing bylaws until recognition as a society occurs.
- G. Duration. The normal duration of this relationship shall not exceed three years from the adoption of the document of affiliation. At the end of this period the congregation would become a society, terminate the affiliate relationship or request the conference to grant an extension of time for clarification and development of denominational relationships.
- H. Conference Relationship. An affiliated congregation shall be represented in the annual conference by an honorary delegate who shall have a voice but no vote.

Societies

¶6840

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

B. Authority to Form. The conference superintendent, in consultation with the annual conference administrative committee, 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 ¶6820.B.2-3.

C. Financial Matters.

1. An affiliated church must insert the trust clause of ¶6400.D 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.

D. 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.

New Societies on Conference Boundary

¶6850 When a church-planting project, fellowship, or society is formed near or within a territory or population group also served by or assigned to a denominational entity other than its sponsoring agency, all parties shall seek to establish and enhance fellowship and connectional ties as noted in ¶6810, ¶6820, ¶6830, while recognizing evangelistic effectiveness as the highest priority.

Chapter 7*

Church Order

Preamble

¶7000 The vision of the Free Methodist Church begins with a call and commitment to be a healthy, biblical community of holy people (¶6010.B). We purpose to follow Paul's instruction to the Galatian Church, "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Galatians 5:6). James 3:17-18 informs us, "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness." Therefore we do our part to live in peace with everyone as far as it depends on us (Romans 12:18).

Healthy Biblical Community

¶7100 As we learn together from the Word of God, encourage one another in faith and life, practice healthy accountabilities and serve together in the cause of Christ, we contribute to the health of each person and help keep them from falling away from love for God and others. These principles and practices will support and nurture healthy order in the church.

Order in the church is best realized when we "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21), honor our membership covenant and ordination vows and partner together in the mission of the church. The church has a responsibility to disciple each believer. This is done best in transformational communities (¶6060.6) which purpose to nurture every believer and witness to those who do not know God.

* This is the 2003 General Conference authorized re-write of Chapter 7.

Biblical Principles

- ¶7110 The Bible describes specific behaviors which guide us in creating and maintaining a healthy biblical community. These include:
- A. We urge all persons to live lives worthy of the calling we have received. We strive to be humble and gentle, patient, bearing with one another in love. In all our actions we make the effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-3).
 - B. We urge all persons to maintain a prayerful and Christlike spirit at all times, earnestly seeking to discern, find and follow the mind of Christ (Galatians 6:1-2; Philippians 2:1-5; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7).
 - C. We urge all persons to exhibit meekness of heavenly wisdom, which is first pure; then peace-loving, courteous, willing to yield to reason, full of mercy, compassion and good fruits; wholehearted and straightforward, impartial, sincere and without hypocrisy (James 3:17).
 - D. We urge all persons in the restoration of a brother or sister to pray that all actions will produce the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11), to promote holiness of heart and life (Titus 2:11-14), to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3), to serve as a warning to the vulnerable and careless (1 Timothy 5:20) and rescue those who are in spiritual danger of perishing (2 Thessalonians 2:10).
 - E. We urge all persons to be submissive (Ephesians 5:21). This submission is to be mutual toward both those under authority and in authority (1 Thessalonians 5:11-13). Quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder are unworthy of healthy biblical people (2 Corinthians 12:20).
 - F. We urge all persons to avoid the adversarial patterns which characterize unredeemed societies (Matthew 5:23-25). We regard ourselves as Christ's ambassadors who strive for peace with one another as we share the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:16-21).

- G. We urge all persons to speak the truth in love as we all grow into Christ's likeness. This mature unity in Christ will join us together in doing our part to create healthy community life (Ephesians 4:15-16).
- H. We do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is substantiated by witnesses and/or evidence (1 Timothy 5:19).
- I. When a person is caught in sin, it is our responsibility to restore them gently and with all humility, aware that we also can be tempted (Galatians 6:1-3).

Purpose and Goals

¶7120 If an accusation is shown to be true, all action by the church is designed to lead to repentance, forgiveness and return to fellowship with God and the church. The church assumes the responsibility to follow the patterns of Jesus by consistently exercising grace and truth to restore a sinning member to wholesome relationships as made possible through Christ. Where there are persons who are harmed by a sinning member, the church will offer ministry to them in the protection of a transformational community and through the loving care of a godly individual.

Responding to Disorder

¶7130 Overseers, Ministry Education and Guidance Boards (MEGB) and Membership Care Committees (MCC) shall not ignore sin in the church. When it is clear that a member's relationship with Christ or with another person is compromised or damaged by sin, appropriate action shall be taken to speak the truth in love and restore health in the church and in the person(s) involved.

- A. Matters requiring attention include such things as:
 - 1. When there is a pattern of behavior of speaking and acting out of selfish ambition (Philippians 2:3).
 - 2. When there is a breakdown of communication which causes divisions (2 Corinthians 12:20).
 - 3. When there is a lack of wisdom and/or competence that brings leadership effectiveness and/or call to ministry into question.
 - 4. When there are unhealthy personal habits which

- clearly contribute to a lack of fruitfulness in life and ministry.
5. When there are teachings contrary to our Articles of Religion and/or our Membership Covenant.
 6. When there is a pattern of a lack of submission to an overseer, elder or church body or when there is a pattern by an overseer, elder or church body toward a person under their care that reveals a lack of reverence to Christ (Ephesians 5:21).
 7. When there is accusation and evidence of a pattern of sin in the life of an elder/member.
 8. When there is accusation and evidence of a pattern of living in breach of the non-negotiable fundamentals of the Free Methodist Church (§6050) or the *Code of Ethics for Ministers of the Free Methodist Church*.
- B. Restoring Order: When there is a breach of order, the response of the church shall include one or more of the following:
1. Private Counsel: The first step in restoring order usually begins with private confidential counsel. The overseer shall address the problem and call the person to deal truthfully with the issue(s) and follow Jesus with his/her whole heart, including sincere repentance. See “Checklist For Processing Accusations of Breach of Church Order” in the *Review Board and Court of Appeals Procedure Manual*.
 2. MEGB/MCC Counsel: When a person is discovered in their sin by others, or in situations when private counsel has not been effective in stopping the sin, the MEGB/MCC or the overseer and representative(s) from the respective board shall address the problem and call the person to deal truthfully with the issue(s) and follow Jesus with his/her whole heart, including sincere repentance.
 3. Covenant of Restoration: If private counsel has been resisted or ineffective, or MEGB/MCC counsel has been required due to the discovery of sin in the elder’s/member’s life, the MEGB/MCC shall establish a “Covenant of Restoration” (see

Restoration Process — A Manual for Superintendents and Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards, see Superintendents and MEGB Manuals).

4. Suspension from Ministry/Membership: The MEGB/MCC may suspend a person from ministerial appointment and/or membership when they fail to complete the Covenant of Restoration.
5. Immediate Suspension from Ministry: When an overseer becomes aware of the following cases, he/she shall immediately suspend an elder/member until a MEGB/MCC can be convened:
 - a) When the elder/member is accused of sin by at least two witnesses or has confessed to sin that reveals a long-standing brokenness in his/her life and relationships of such seriousness that it dictates the necessity of a healing process for the church, all persons involved and their families.
 - b) When an elder/member is teaching doctrine that is contrary to our Articles of Religion.

Processing Complaints, Accusations and/or Admission of Sin

¶7140 Overseers, MEGBs and MCCs shall process all complaints, accusations and/or admissions of sin that are not resolved by private counsel, by following both the *Review Board and Court of Appeals Procedure Manual* and *Restoration Process — A Manual for Superintendents and Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards*. Every time an elder's membership is suspended there shall be a review by a Regional Review Board.

Review Boards

¶7150

- A. CONFERENCE MEMBERS (elders and deacons). At each General Conference, a four-person Regional Review Board shall be elected from each bishop's area. Candidates shall be nominated by the nominating committee of the General Conference. Each Regional Review Board shall be comprised of two lay persons and two clergy, at least one of whom shall be a superintendent and shall include at least one male and one female. Upon a MEGB's action to suspend or expel an

elder, the Regional Review Board from the same Bishop's area shall:

1. Examine the MEGB minutes and review the overseers/MEGB log of notes and time lines in accordance with the "Checklist for Processing Accusations of Breach of Church Order" found in the *Review Board and Court of Appeals Procedure Manual* (pp. 5-6).
2. Request from the accused elder the completion of the accountability questionnaires referenced in the *Restoration Process — A Manual for Superintendents and Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards*, page 13, ¶B.2.C.
3. Prepare a report to the conference MEGB including any recommendations.
4. If, in the opinion of the Regional Review Board or the accused elder, injustice has occurred, the Regional Review Board shall convene a meeting of the MEGB and the accused elder. The accused elder shall have the right to be accompanied by another member of the FMC and/or his/her spouse.

The Regional Review Board shall listen to both parties, raise any questions, and, in the absence of both parties, deliberate and make a decision. Either party may submit any information, even if new, which lends itself to a discovery of truth. The action of the Regional Review Board may be appealed by right (¶228, ¶7200).

- B. LOCAL MEMBERS. The annual conference MEGB shall be the Conference Review Board. Whenever a local church MCC takes action to suspend or expel a member from ministry and/or membership, the Conference Review Board shall:
1. Examine the MCC minutes in accordance with the "Checklist for Processing Accusations of Breach of Church Order" found in the *Review Board and Court of Appeals Procedure Manual* (pp. 5-6).
 2. Request from the accused member the completion of the accountability questionnaires referenced in

the *Restoration Process — A Manual for Superintendents and Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards*, page 13, ¶B.2.C.

3. Prepare a report to the local MCC including any recommendations.
4. If, in the opinion of the Conference Review Board or the accused member, injustice has occurred, the Conference Review Board shall meet with the MCC and the accused member. The accused member shall have the right to be accompanied by a member of the FMC and/or his/her spouse.

The Conference Review Board shall listen to both parties, raise any questions, and, in the absence of both parties, deliberate and make a decision. Either party may submit any information, even if new, which lends itself to a discovery of truth. The action of the Conference Review Board may be appealed by right (¶228, ¶7200).

Confidentiality

¶7160 The confidential care of personal information is a necessary aspect of spiritual care and congregational life. The responsibility to treat personal information confidentially extends not only to elders, but also to all persons working within the organizational and institutional life of the church. The need for confidentiality exists in two general areas: spiritual care and personnel matters.

Confidentiality in Spiritual Care

¶7170 In providing spiritual care, our elders and members maintain a relationship of trust and confidentiality, holding in confidence all information revealed to them whether it is formally or informally shared. If a person gives express consent to reveal confidential information, our elders and members may, but are not required to, reveal this information.

- A. Elders have a responsibility to keep confessional confidences inviolate, breaking this confidentiality only if the risk of imminent bodily harm to any person is present. The exception to this confessional confidentiality includes any confession of sexual abuse of a child

or any other conduct required to be reported under federal/state law.

- B. The confession of one elder to another is an inviolate confidence, unless the conduct is both ongoing and unrepentant. This conduct by any elder who continues to take advantage of any person under his/her care is an abuse of position. The confession is not confidential, but a request to be helped to stop this abuse and removed from the temptations and responsibilities of his/her position until repentance and healing occurs.

Confidentiality in Personnel Matters

¶7180 Respecting the privacy of church personnel requires confidentiality in personnel matters. This confidentiality extends not only to the discussions required in the interviewing, approving, appointing, supervising, disciplining and dismissing of personnel, but also to all records pertaining to these matters (except pursuant to ¶7190).

- A. The requirement that all financial records be public includes all salary and compensation figures of paid personnel.
- B. The appeal of a personnel decision by a committee or board assigned with this responsibility is not confidential. The decision to appeal a decision requires the information on which the decisions were made to be made public at the appeal. All such appeals are held in open session.

Communication

¶7190 Paul wrote to Timothy, stating, “Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning” (1 Timothy 5:20). He is speaking here of those who continue to sin even after the church has done what it is able to do to warn and restore the offender. However, if repentance is demonstrated by a change of behavior, communication to the whole church is to be avoided. While each case must be carefully examined, these instructions are to be followed:

- A. If a suspended or expelled elder attempts to seek employment in another conference or denomination, the superintendent and/or bishop shall accept responsibility to make known to appropriate persons in a con-

ference or, if asked, another denomination, the status and reasons surrounding the suspension or expulsion of the elder.

- B. If an elder is suspended or expelled, after review the Regional Review Board shall send a written communication to each superintendent and bishop in the FMCNA noting the action taken and the reason for the action.
- C. The presiding bishop of the annual conference or his/her designee shall read to the conference during the reading of Special Appointments a letter from the Regional Review Board pertaining to the Regional Review Board hearing and decision.
- D. The *Yearbook* of the FMCNA shall list the name of the offender in one of these ways, appropriate to the case:
 - Under Review
 - Suspended
 - Covenant of Restoration
 - Withdrawn Under Complaint
 - Expelled

Processing Appeals

¶7200 The Court of Appeals shall process appeals pursuant to the *Review Board and Court of Appeals Procedure Manual*. A Court of Appeals member is disqualified if he/she has any involvement in the matter or is in a position of conflict of interest.

- A. An elder whose suspension or expulsion has been affirmed by the Regional Review Board or a local church member whose suspension or expulsion has been affirmed by the Conference Review Board has a right to appeal to the Court of Appeals (see ¶4320.M.1, ¶7150.A.4, ¶7150.B.4).
 1. Notice of intent to appeal and the grounds for an appeal must be provided in writing to the secretary of the Board of Administration within 30 days of the Regional Review Board's decision for an elder or the Conference Review Board for a local church member.
 2. No less than 30 days before the hearing of the appeal, the elder or member must provide in writ-

- ing to the secretary of the Board of Administration a statement of the reasons why the decision of the Review Board (Regional/Conference) should not be affirmed. The statement shall contain all relevant information that is pertinent to the grounds of the appeal and shall not exceed ten pages, double-spaced.
3. No less than 14 days before the hearing of the appeal, the designee of the MEGB/MCC may file with the secretary of the Board of Administration a statement in rebuttal of the elder or member's statement.
 4. No less than 7 days before the hearing of the appeal, the elder or member may file with the secretary of the Board of Administration a reply to the MEGB/MCC's rebuttal. The reply by the elder or member is confined to issues raised in the MEGB/MCC's rebuttal and shall not restate content from the original statement.
- B. The Court of Appeals shall review all documents from the Regional Review Board/Conference Review Board, listen to both parties, raise any questions and, in the absence of both parties, deliberate and issue a decision.
1. If the decision of the Regional Review/Conference Review Board is affirmed, the decision of the Court of Appeals is final.
 2. If the decision of the Regional Review Board/Conference Review Board is not affirmed, a new review will occur with the Court of Appeals serving as the Review Board.
 3. The action of the Court of Appeals serving as a Review Board shall be final.

Chapter 8

The Ritual

Baptism

¶8000 Adults and the parents or guardians of every child to be baptized shall have the choice of immersion, sprinkling or pouring.

We will on no account whatever make a charge for administering baptism.

Service of Infant Baptism

¶8010 *The pastor coming to the font, which is to be filled with pure water, shall say:*

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.

^{*}Deuteronomy 6:6-7; ^{**}Matthew 19:14; ^{***}Acts 2:39

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 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 pastor will say:

Let us acknowledge our duty to strengthen this family with prayers and encouragement, thus aiding the parent(s) and child to fulfill all that has here been promised. The congregation will affirm this by standing.

The pastor shall 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 pastor may offer an extemporaneous prayer, which will include the petitions set forth in the printed prayer.

Service of Infant Dedication

¶8020 *The pastor shall say:*

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 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

^{*}Deuteronomy 6:6-7; ^{**}Matthew 19:14; ^{***}Acts 2:39

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* that 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 the pastor will say:

Let us acknowledge our duty to support this family with our prayers and encouragement, thereby aiding the parent(s) and child to fulfill all that has here been promised. The congregation will affirm this by standing.

The pastor 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 dedication to God, with a prayer that at an early age

in life he/she may experience His justifying and sanctifying grace. Amen.

Here the pastor shall pray an extemporaneous prayer on behalf of the parents and their child.

Service of Baptism for Children Under Twelve

¶8030 In place of the questions asked to parents or guardians in ¶8010, the pastor may ask the following questions to candidates for baptism who are under twelve years of age.

Questions to candidate

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 that you know to be sinful or displeasing to God?

Answer: I will.

5. Will you attend church services and do those things you know a Christian should do?

Answer: I will.

The Affirmation of Baptismal Vows

¶8040 *The pastor shall say:*

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" (Matthew 10:32).

Questions to be asked of those affirming their baptismal vows:

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

Service of Baptism for Adults

¶8050 *The pastor shall say:*

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 that 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 the pastor shall 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 by this act give 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.

The pastor shall instruct the congregation to stand and then shall say:

Christ Jesus said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

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 Apostles' Creed is to be used by the pastor 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 Spirit, 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 Spirit; 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 Pastors and Church Leaders Manual.)

These questions are to be asked by the pastor 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 the pastor shall 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.

The pastor shall use this 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.

A benediction may be used if the service is ending.

Holy Communion: The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

General Directions

¶8100 Let all our ordained pastors exercise due care to see that no person known to be living an 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.

All persons properly included in the general invitation may be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper among us.

The officiating pastor may select lay assistants in the distribution of the elements. The use of individual communion cups is recommended, wherever practicable.

Alternate rituals printed in the *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual* may be used. Sections marked with an asterisk may be used when an abbreviated service is desired.*

Order for the Administration of The Lord's Supper

¶8110

*The Invitation

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 pastor may pray:

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all people, 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.

***The Lord's Prayer**

The pastor may say:

Let us continue our confession as we pray together the prayer Jesus taught His disciples.

(To be prayed in unison)

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, forever. Amen (KJV).

***The Affirmation of Faith**

The pastor may continue the prayer:

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.

***The Collect**

The pastor may say:

Let us pray for inner cleansing.

(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

The pastor may say:

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.

The Prayer for Spiritual Communion

The pastor may pray:

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**

The pastor may pray:

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, (*The pastor 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, (*The pas-*

tor 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.

The pastor may first receive the communion, both the bread and the cup, and then give of the same to other pastors who may be present to assist in the service. After that the pastor shall give to the congregation the communion, both the bread and the cup.

When the bread is delivered, the pastor 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 pastor 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 pastor should consecrate more by repeating the prayer of consecration. When all have communed the pastor shall return to the Lord's table and place upon it the consecrated elements that remain, covering the same with a white linen cloth. The pastor 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.

The Solemnization of Matrimony

¶8200 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 pastor 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 pastor 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.

¶8210 *At the time set, the man and woman to be married shall stand together facing the pastor, the woman on the man's left, and the pastor shall say:*

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 pastor 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.

The pastor 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.

The pastor 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.

The pastor shall say:

Who gives _____ to be married to _____?

The father of the woman, or whoever gives her in marriage, shall answer: I do.

The pastor, 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.

They shall loose their hands, and the woman, with her right hand, shall take the man by his right hand, and shall likewise say after the pastor:

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.

They again shall loose hands. The groomsman may give to the pastor a ring, which the pastor 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 pastor:

This ring I give you in token and pledge of our constant faith and steadfast love.

In case of a double ring ceremony, the pastor 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 pastor :

This ring I give you in token and pledge of our constant faith and steadfast love.

The pastor 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.

The pastor 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 pastor shall pray over them an extemporaneous prayer, prepared especially for the two of them.

The man and woman shall stand, and the pastor 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.

The Burial of the Dead

¶8300 We will not charge for funeral services.

The Funeral Service

¶8310 The pastor may use this order of worship at the church or chapel.

The pastor may use 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” (John 11:25-26, RSV).

“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” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18, RSV).

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 pastor shall at the appropriate time at the cemetery say:

“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” (John 11:25-26, RSV).

“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).

This 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 pastor say:

Inasmuch as Almighty God, in His wise providence, has taken out of this world our deceased brother (sis-

ter, 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 pastor may pray extemporaneously or use 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.

Ordination of Elders

¶8400 *The secretary shall present the ordinands to the president, saying:*

I present to you these persons (*reading the names aloud*) to be ordained elder in the Free Methodist Church.

Then the president shall say to the congregation:

Dear friends in Christ. All persons who belong to Jesus Christ are called to minister his reconciling work through the Church. But to lead the Church, our Lord calls particular believers to shepherd the people, teach doctrine, administer the sacraments and keep order. Each person who stands before you testifies to such an inward call of the Holy Spirit to the work of an elder.

God calls men and women, but the Church examines them so as to confirm the presence of spiritual gifts and personal graces. These persons who stand before you have been so examined and affirmed by conference leaders for ordination.

When people are set apart for this leadership responsibility, they are ordained by the laying on of hands. Paul remembered this moment in his counsel to Timothy when he said: "I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6, RSV).

Whether elders serve as pastors, teachers, missionaries, chaplains or in unique combinations of these vocations, they provide Spirit-filled leadership. In fulfilling the Great Commandment to love the Lord our God and to love others, and in fulfilling the Great Commission to go into all the world to make disciples, elders are God's gift to the Church.

Pastoral leadership focuses on developing healthy biblical communities of holy people. These communities multiply disciples, mentor leaders, create new groups and plant new churches. Such Spirit-filled leadership

requires vision and courage to move people to obey the Word of God and increase His church.

Rooted in a deep love for Christ and sharing His compassion for people, Free Methodist elders help create congregations that are fervent in prayer, enthusiastic in worship, holy in lifestyle, insistent for justice, caring for the poor, and reaching out locally and globally to bring all people into relationship with Jesus Christ.

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 seraphim, 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 one 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 al-

tar. 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 and 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.”

The president shall say:

Dear Friends in Christ, *(The ordinands may be called by name; and the president shall say to them:)*

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 Chris-

tian 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.

The president will present credentials to each and offer congratulations.

Consecration of Deacons

¶8500 The service may be either a special service with appropriate music and preparation, or as a part of a Sunday worship service.

The pastor or designee shall present to the superintendent the one who is (those who are) to be consecrated, saying:

Superintendent _____ (name), I present to you _____ (name or names) to be consecrated deacon in the _____ (name of church), a Free Methodist Congregation.

The superintendent shall say to the pastor:

Have you diligently examined *this person/these persons*, whom you present to us, to be capable and qualified? *Has he/she / Have they prepared himself/herself/themselves* educationally and spiritually, so that *his/her/their* life and ministry will bring honor to God and edify His Church?

The senior pastor shall respond:

He has/She has/They have been so examined and we believe *him/her/them* to be a *person/persons* God has called to be a consecrated *deacon/deacons* in this church.

The superintendent shall say to the congregation:

Dear Friends in Christ: We purpose, God willing, to consecrate as a deacon *this person/these persons* who *stands/stand* before you. *He has/She has/They have* been examined and *has/have* been found to be a *person/ persons* called by God to this ministry and suited for the same. We ask you, people of God, to declare your assent to the consecration of *this person/these persons*.

Do you trust that *he is/she is/they are* worthy, by God's grace, to be consecrated?

People: We do. Thanks be to God.

Superintendent:

Will you uphold *him/her/them* in *his/her/their* ministry?

People: With God's help, we will.

Superintendent:

Let us stand together as we pray in unison the prayer our Lord taught us to pray:

People: 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, forever. Amen.

Superintendent:

You may be seated.

Superintendent continues in prayer with The Collect:

Let us pray: Almighty God, who appointed ministers in Your church and inspired Your apostles to consecrate as deacon Your first martyr, Stephen, with others; look with mercy upon this, *Your servant/these, Your servants*, whom You have called to the same order and administration; may *he/she/they* be replenished with the truth of Your doctrine and adorned with blamelessness of life, so that both by word and good example, *he/she/they* may serve You faithfully; 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 superintendent may assign readers:

Mark 10:42-45 (NRSV)

“So Jesus called them and said to them, ‘You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but

whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

1 Timothy 3:8-13 (NRSV)

“Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons. Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be married only once and let them manage their children and their households well; for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.”

1 Peter 4:10-11 (TNIV)

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If you speak, you should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If you serve, you should do so 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 superintendent shall then say to the candidate(s):

My brother/sister/brothers and sisters you are to be consecrated to the ministry of deacon in this church.

God has called you to represent to the Church the ministry of servanthood in the world, a ministry to which all Christians are called in baptism, but to which you are called in a special way. You are to be a co-worker with your pastor(s) (and other deacons), serving this congregation in the area of your gifting and calling. In the name of Jesus Christ you are to serve all people,

particularly the poor, the sick, and the oppressed. You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns and hopes of the world. At all times, by your life and teaching you are to show Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ.

So that we may know that you believe *yourself /yourselves* to be called by God and that you profess the Christian faith, we ask you the following questions:

1. Do you believe you are inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit to take upon you the ministry of a deacon in this church, to serve God, promoting His glory and edifying His people?

Answer: I so believe.

2. Are you persuaded that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain all things necessary for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and are the inspired and authoritative standard for the Church's faith and life?

Answer: I do so believe and am persuaded.

3. Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and do you accept the beliefs and teachings of the Christian faith?

Answer: I do so confess and accept, by the grace of God.

4. Will you be faithful in prayer, in the reading and study of the Holy Scriptures, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, continually rekindle the gift of God that is in you?

Answer: I will, with the help of God.

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. Deacons express their ministry under the guidance and authority of an elder, being faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ as they participate in the life and work of the church. Will you do this gladly and willingly?

Answer: I will do so, the Lord being my helper.

7. Will you be loyal to The Free Methodist Church, accepting its polity, doctrine and discipline?

Answer: I will, with the help of God.

May God, who has given you the will to do these things, give you grace to perform them, that the work begun in you may be brought to completion. Amen.

Laying on of Hands and Prayer

The superintendent says to the congregation:

As this person is/these persons are consecrated by God and the Church for the ministry of deacon, to which we believe he/she/they have been called by the Holy Spirit, let us silently pray for him/her/them as they kneel before God.

The candidates kneel.

The people pray for them in silence.

The superintendent addresses the candidate(s):

My brother/sister/brothers and sisters, from the time of the apostles persons with suitable gifts and graces have been set apart by the laying on of hands and prayer for a ministry of service in the Church of Jesus Christ

our Lord. We trust that the Spirit of God has called you to the ministry of deacon. As earnest prayer is made for the fulfillment of the Spirit's gift in you, your Church now calls you to receive the laying on of hands as the seal of your vocation by the Spirit.

The superintendent (and other elders, as well as consecrated deacons who may be present), laying hands upon the head of each candidate in turn, shall say:

Take authority to execute the office of a deacon in this congregation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

After all have received the laying on of hands, the superintendent facing the candidates, with both hands extended over them, says:

Let us pray. We give thanks to you, Lord God, that in your great love you sent Jesus Christ, your only begotten, to take the form of a servant for the sake of us all, becoming obedient even to death on the cross. We praise you that you have highly exalted Jesus Christ your servant whom you have made to be Lord of all, and that you have taught us, by his word and example, that whoever would be great among us must be servant of all. Increase within the lives of these your servants the gift of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ your Son, for the ministry of a deacon in your Church. Give them grace to be faithful to their promises, constant in their discipleship and always ready for the works of loving service. Make them modest and humble, gentle and strong that, having the assurance of faith and rejoicing in hope, they may be rooted and grounded in love. Give them a share in the ministry of Jesus Christ, who came not to be served but to serve; who now lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Recognition and a Bible or other gift may be given to each deacon.

The superintendent addresses the deacon:

We now welcome you to your ministry as Deacon. You have given assurance of your faith and Christian ex-

perience. You have confirmed the vows of your consecration and committed yourself to uphold faithfully the Free Methodist Church. We rejoice that you have been called to serve among us, and pray that the Spirit of God may guide your ministry.

Presenting each deacon with his or her credentials, the superintendent says:

_____ (name), We now recognize you as a deacon in the _____ (name of church), a Free Methodist Congregation.

Benediction

Dedication of Churches

¶8600 After the congregation has assembled, an appropriate hymn shall be sung. This is to be followed by an extemporaneous prayer and scripture readings.

Old Testament scripture Psalm 84.
New Testament scripture Hebrews 10:19-25.

An appropriate hymn may be sung.
The pastor shall deliver a sermon suitable to the occasion.
An offering may be received.

One of the trustees shall say to the pastor:

We present unto you this building, to be dedicated as a church for the service and worship of Almighty God.

The pastor shall request the congregation to stand, as he/she repeats this 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.

A dedicatory prayer will be offered.

Ministerial Membership

Local Ministerial Candidate

¶8700

A. Questions for a local ministerial candidate before the Local Board of Administration:

1. When and how did you come to know Christ as Savior and Lord?
2. Describe your life as it relates to the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
3. Describe the call of God in your life to full-time ministry.
4. What preparations and plans are you making in order to follow God's will for your life?
5. What do you see as your primary spiritual gifts?
6. In what ways do you plan to witness and minister as a local ministerial candidate?

B. Questions for a local ministerial candidate before the congregation:

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 Local Board of Administration in order to fulfill these goals?

Answer: I will.

- C. The pastor will present a certificate to the local ministerial candidate.

Conference Ministerial Candidate

¶8710 *At an appropriate time the 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 ministerial education and guidance board 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 pastoral ministry. That you may fix your eyes more clearly upon your goal we ask you the following questions:

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. Will you seek and accept the guidance of your superintendent and the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board to fulfill these goals?

Answer: I will.

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

Member of the Annual Conference

¶8720 *The conference ministerial candidate seeking to become a full member of the annual conference shall answer these questions:*

1. Have you faith in Christ?

Answer: I do

2. Have you present assurance that your sins are forgiven?

Answer: I do

3. Do you experience purity of heart and life and empowerment for service, through the fullness of the Spirit, and will you continue to grow in this experience and so lead your people?

Answer: Yes.

4. Are you resolved to devote yourself to God and the work to which He calls you, expressing Christian love?

Answer: As God is my helper, I am so resolved.

5. Will you partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper when it is offered?

Answer: I will.

6. Will you endeavor to effectively communicate the gospel?

Answer: I will, God being my helper.

7. Will you see that all people under your care are disciplined to be obedient followers of Jesus Christ?

Answer: I will.

8. Will you visit, ministering to those within and without the church?

Answer: I will.

9. Will you recommend fasting and prayer, both by teaching and example?

Answer: I will.

10. Will you endeavor to fulfill the mission and vision of the Free Methodist Church and its ministries in building the kingdom of God?

Answer: I will, God being my helper.

Lay Membership

Adult Membership

¶8800 *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 ap-

proved by the local board of administration, 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.

Addressing those seeking admission, the pastor shall say:

Beloved in the Lord, you have been baptized into Christ and come now to be received into membership in the Free Methodist Church. We rejoice with you in all God's mercies that have brought you to this hour; and we join our prayers with yours as you make this sacred undertaking.

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

Answer: I do.

2. Do you believe the Bible is God's written Word, uniquely inspired by the Holy Spirit and do you accept its authority for what you must believe and how you must live?

Answer: I do.

3. Do you here resolve, by God's grace, to be Christlike in heart and life, opening yourself fully to the cleansing and empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit, the guidance of the Scriptures, and the nurture and fellowship of the church?

Answer: By God's enabling grace, I do resolve.

4. Do you accept *The Book of Discipline of The Free Methodist Church*, with its Articles of Religion, Membership Covenant and its principles for the lives of its members and the governance of the church?

Answer: Trusting God's power to aid me, I do.

5. As a follower of Jesus Christ, will you embrace the mission of the Free Methodist Church within and beyond this congregation and will you join us in giving sacrificially of your time, talents and resources to help us carry out that mission?

Answer: With God's help, I will.

6. I offer you the right hand of fellowship. I welcome you into The Free Methodist Church. May the experience of membership in this body enrich your life and the life of our church; and may your contribution to its life strengthen both you and all of us.

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.)

The pastor may offer an extemporaneous prayer.

(Optional) 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.

The pastor shall 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.

Preparatory Membership

¶8810 Instructions related to the optional use of preparatory membership are found in the *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual*.

Youth Membership

¶8820 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: Yes.

2. Have you received Christian baptism? If not, are you willing to be baptized?

Answer: Yes.

3. Will you attend classes of instruction on living the Christian life and serving God through your church?

Answer: Yes.

4. Can the Free Methodist Church count on you? Will you pray for the church, attend regularly, give to your church and help wherever you can?

Answer: Yes.

5. Will you show your friends by the way you live what it means to be a Christian and will you try to win them to Christ?

Answer: Yes.

*The pastor may offer an extemporaneous prayer. (Optional)
Those to be received as youth members shall kneel, and the pastor, 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."

Membership by Transfer

¶8830 *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.

The pastor shall lead in an extemporaneous prayer.

The pastor will welcome each new member.

Members transferring from another evangelical denomination must previously have met the requirements of ¶6110.

Chapter 9 Appendixes*

Articles of Incorporation of the Free Methodist Church of North America

¶9000 Under the Laws of California** Office of the Secretary of State

Know All Men By These Presents:

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:

1. That the name of the corporation shall be **The Free Methodist Church of North America.**

*The *1999 Book of Discipline* Appendixes included several forms (Application for Permission to Sell or Mortgage Church Property, Declaration of Trust, Suggested Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws and several ministerial and lay licenses, etc.) that may now be found in the *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual*. The historical documents on the Free Methodist Church including the historical Constitution of the Free Methodist Church of North America, General Rules, and The Ministry, may be found in previous Free Methodist Church of North America *Books of Discipline* and on the Web site: freemethodistchurch.org.

**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.

2. 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 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.

3. 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.
4. That the term for which said corporation is to exist is perpetual.
5. 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.
6. 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.

7. 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.

****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.*

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.

8. 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:

<i>Names</i>	<i>Addresses</i>
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 by-law 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

¶19100

Bylaws of the Free Methodist Church of North America

Article I – Members

1. The 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.

2. All meetings of members shall be held according to the bylaws, as directed by the corporation or by its board of directors.
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 its board of directors.

4. Written notice of the annual meeting of members shall be given to the members at least two weeks before the meeting.
5. Special meetings of the members may be called at any time for any purpose, by the president, board of directors, or three or more members.
6. Written notice of special meetings of the members, stating the time and in general terms the purpose or purposes shall be given to the members at least one week prior to the date of the special meeting.
7. When all the members are present at a meeting, however called or notified, and sign a written consent, or when the members present, and the members not present at the meeting, give their written consent, and the written consent is made a part of the records of the meeting, the proceedings 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 to the *Book of Discipline* duly adopted by the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America.

8. At any meeting of the members, a majority of the members shall constitute a quorum to transact business.
9. Any regular or special meeting of the members may adjourn from time to time, without further notice, until a quorum is present.
10. The president, or, in his/her absence, the vice president, or, in the absence of the president and vice president, a chairman elected by the members present shall serve as the presiding officer.
11. The secretary of the corporation shall act as secretary at all meetings of the members, and in his/her absence the presiding officer may appoint any person to act as secretary.
12. At the regular annual meeting of the members following the meeting of the General Conference of The Free Methodist Church of North America, the members of the corporation shall elect by ballot a Board of Directors as constituted by these bylaws and the articles of incorporation of this corporation.

Article II – Directors

1. The corporate powers, business, and affairs of the corporation shall be exercised, conducted, and controlled by a Board of Directors of five members.
2. No person shall be elected a director unless he/she 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/she shall cease to be a director, but this shall not invalidate any act of the corporation, its officers or directors. Directors shall be members of the Board of Administration of The Free Methodist Church of North America.
3. Each director shall hold office for eight years or for a

shorter period as elected until his/her successor has been elected.

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. The newly elected director shall hold office until a successor is elected at the next annual meeting, or at a special meeting called for that purpose.

When one or more of the directors gives notice of his/her/their resignation to the board, the board shall have the power to fill the vacancy/vacancies. Each director so elected shall hold office during the remainder of the term of office of the resigning director(s), or until a successor(s) is elected.

5. Immediately after the election of directors at the annual meeting of the members, following the meeting of the General Conference of The Free Methodist Church of North America, the directors shall meet to organize, elect officers, and transact other business.
6. The annual meeting of the board of directors shall be determined by the board of directors with the date fixed by them in connection with the annual meeting of the corporation.
7. 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 or more directors.
8. Written notice of special meetings of the board of directors, stating the time and purpose of the meeting, shall be mailed or sent electronically, not later than ten days before the meeting. If all the directors shall be present at any directors' meeting, however called or

noticed, and sign a written consent that is entered on the record of the 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 holding the meeting and the waiver filed with the secretary of the corporation, and entered on the record of the meeting, any business transacted at the meeting shall be as valid as if the meeting had been regularly called and noticed.

9. A majority of the 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 and duly assembled, shall be valid as the act of the board of directors. The directors may adjourn from time to time until a quorum is present.
10. 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.
11. The directors of this corporation shall serve without compensation except for their actual expenses.
12. The board of directors may appoint an executive committee and may delegate to the committee any of the

powers and authority of the board of directors, except the power to adopt, amend, or repeal the bylaws. The 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.

13. The business of the board of directors may be conducted by mail or electronically. 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

1. The executive officers of the corporation shall be the president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.
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

1. The president shall be the chief executive officer of the corporation. He/she shall preside at all meetings of the corporation and of the board of directors. He/she 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.
2. The president shall have any other powers and perform any other duties as may be assigned to him/her by the board of directors.

Article V – Vice President

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.

2. The vice president shall have any other powers and perform any other duties as may be assigned to him/her by the board of directors.

Article VI – Secretary

1. The secretary shall keep minutes of all meetings of the corporation and of the board of directors. He/she shall provide notices of all meetings to the members and of the board of directors. The secretary 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/she 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. The secretary shall keep and have charge of the minutes of the meetings of the corporation and board of directors, the bylaws, and other papers as the board of directors may direct. He/she shall, in general, perform all the duties incident to the office of secretary, subject to the control of the Board of Directors. (The secretary shall perform the duties of the treasurer in case of the absence or disability of the treasurer.)
2. In case of the absence or disability of the secretary, or his/her refusal or neglect to act, notices may be provided by the president, vice president, or a person authorized by the president, vice president, or the board of directors.

Article VII – Treasurer

The treasurer shall ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept. He/she 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. The treasurer 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/she shall provide the president of the board of directors and to the members, whenever they may require, accounts of all his/her transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the corporation. He/she 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

1. All persons who are directors or officers of the corporation, or members of its pension board, shall be indemnified by the corporation against all costs and expenses (including counsel fees) actually and necessarily incurred by or imposed upon them in connection with or resulting from any action, suit, or proceeding of whatever nature to which they are or shall be made a party by reason of their being or having been a director or officer of the corporation or member of such committee or board (whether or not they are a director or officer of the corporation or member of such committee or board at the time they are made a party to such action, suit, or proceeding, or at the time such costs or expenses are incurred by or imposed upon them, except in relation to matters as to which they shall be adjudged in such action, suit, or proceeding to be liable for negligence or misconduct in the performance of their 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. All persons shall be entitled, without demand by them upon the corporation, or any action of the corporation, to enforce their right to such indemnity in an action at law against the corporation.

2. The right of indemnification provided above 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/her favor, against the corporation or otherwise, his/her costs and expenses incurred therein or in connection therewith or any part thereof.

Article IX – Seal

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

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

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.

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