

STUDY TEAM REPORT

Careful Thinking About God's Truth



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**REPORT OF THE
“CAREFUL THINKING ABOUT GOD’S TRUTH”
STUDY TEAM
(The Study Commission on Doctrine)**

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1. Recommendation from the Study Commission on Doctrine

**Recommendation #1 - 2014 General Conference Resolution #1
(Reform of Prostitution Laws of Canada): (see page 13 and
Appendix A)**

Motion: That Resolution #1 (Reform of Prostitution Laws of Canada) be adopted by the 2014 General Conference of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

Passed Defeated *Referred to:* _____

2. Introduction

The “Careful Thinking About God’s Truth” Study Team report has been prepared by the Study Commission on Doctrine (SCOD), a standing committee of the General Conference whose mandate is “to provide a forum for the debate and discussion of issues related to doctrine, membership and ritual and to serve as the editorial board for *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada*.”

3. Assignment of Resolution to the 2014 General Conference

Only one Resolution was received. It was assigned by SCOD as follows – see page 15 and Appendix A:

- **Resolution #1: Reform of Prostitution Laws of Canada**
- **Action:** Referred to SCOD
- **Rationale:** This is a social action issue

4. Response to 2011 General Conference Resolution # 2 (Membership)

Resolution 2: Membership Submitted by Rice Road Community Church, Matthew Wiley

Whereas, the word “accept” or “acceptance” is employed within section 151 and 161 as it pertains to the ordinance of membership, denoting full compliance by a membership candidate and ...

Whereas, it being clearly obvious that currently within the Kingdom of God worldwide, the traditional denominational paradigm has been unravelling over the past three to five decades and transitioning towards a focus for Christian groupings on core confessional creeds of the Christian faith and...

Whereas, the local congregation is increasingly comprised of Christians from various backgrounds and persuasions and...

Whereas, the whole tenure of Romans 14 implores believers to not be divided over second tier theological issues.

Whereas, authentic believers of noble character but who have a diverse perspective on a second tier, non-creedal theological issue, may with a clear conscience and complete integrity enter into a membership covenant with a local Free Methodist congregation. The word “honour” will be used

within this context to imply a general deferring to the Free Methodist position as outlined in the Articles of Religion and a commitment to refrain from all theologically subversive behaviour.

Therefore, be it resolved that the term “acceptance” in section 151 be replaced with the word “honouring” and similarly in section 161, the Pastor would use the word “honour” in place of the word “accept” in the fourth membership question.

As promised, SCOD prepared the following response to Resolution # 2 (Membership)

**Response to GC 2011 Resolution:
REPORT TO GENERAL CONFERENCE REGARDING MEMBERSHIP**

At the last General Conference a resolution to change the wording of the Manual questions for members was discussed and rejected. However, the SCOD presenter did say at that time that SCOD members realized that there is a challenge involved in the fact that what the New Testament sees as requirements for being a member of the Body of Christ (i.e. incorporation into Christ through new birth and baptism, and walking with Christ in the Spirit) is not the same as what is required of those who will be members of the Free Methodist Church (membership in the body of Christ plus acceptance of core doctrine, polity, and discipleship commitments).

Because of some of the reality of life as an institution, the Church has long believed that those who have the power to vote for representatives who can eventually change the Church’s doctrine, polity and discipleship vision need to begin as those who do own the Church’s collective commitments. To grant voting power to new people who do not start “with us” on those matters and already want to “change us” raises serious ethical questions.

The promise was made to the Conference that SCOD would be asked to consider this and report back. However, even before SCOD started working on the assignment, our Department of Church Development was creating new materials and processes for the discipling of new Christians that clearly (and we believe, biblically) portray church membership as “Joining the Ministry Community.” These materials and process are faithful to the Constitution of the Free Methodist Church regarding membership.

SCOD members agreed that there will never be a way of perfectly living out “membership” as we find it in the New Testament at a time when there was apostolic authority in today’s new settings which are much more “democratic” and much less willing to be subject to centralized authority. We are aware that there may always be one or two persons in some of our churches who are deep, earnest members of the Body of Christ, who, for some formational reason, cannot with integrity become members of the Free Methodist Church. We believe that many of their ministry gifts can nonetheless be exercised and that they can be relationally included even though they are not eligible for some leadership roles. Or, in some cases, God may be calling them to another team in his Kingdom.

Thus your Study Commission on Doctrine has no recommendation for changing our polity regarding membership. We also have deep gratitude for the directions which the new “Joining the Ministry Community” process will take us.

5. Additions to *The Manual*

The following additions / revisions to *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada* have been approved by the Board of Administration.

Note: Changes to the paragraphs are shaded. Text in italics is the “principle” of the paragraph and text in non-italics are the “application” section of the statement.

¶620 GENUINE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER – added statement on the “Means of Grace”

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 sometimes become complacent. Therefore, every Christian must ultimately choose between growth and decline. **II Peter 1:3-8**

How does genuine Christian character develop? This section draws upon the scriptures and 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 which Methodists refer to as “Means of Grace.” For John Wesley, the Means of Grace consisted of Acts of Piety and Acts of Mercy. He taught that both were necessary for healthy spiritual development.

This section describes some of these Acts of Piety (prayer, study of the scriptures, life in the church) and Acts of Mercy (service and ministry, love of others). Through the exercise of these and other Means of Grace, growing Christians will be guided by the Holy Spirit, in harmony with the Scriptures, to love God, others and themselves. Growing Christians learn to be alert to the Spirit’s directives, so that they may resist temptation and respond to God’s call to live in the way of Jesus in the world.

¶630.1.3 Divine Healing – expanded the dimensions of healing

All healing, whether of body, mind, or spirit has its ultimate source in God who is “above all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:6). God may heal by the mediation of surgery, medication, change of environment, counseling, corrected attitudes, or through the restorative processes of nature itself. God may heal through one or more of the above in combination with prayer, or by direct intervention in response to prayer. The Scriptures report many cases of the latter kind of healing in connection with the life and ministry of Jesus, the apostles and the early church.

A truly Christian perspective on healing reflects the New Testament view of salvation, which holds together God’s sovereignty, God’s loving goodness, and God’s ultimate wisdom. These divine realities reach beyond what humans can fully grasp. We hold together our confidence that salvation is something that has already happened (e.g. Ephesians 2:4-8) and that it is something that is happening right now (e.g. II Corinthians 2:15), and also that it is something that we still await at the final coming of Christ (e.g. Philippians 3:20-21). Thus there are two erroneous approaches to healing: One is to stress only healing now (because in Jesus, and through the gift of the Spirit, salvation has indeed fully and powerfully come). The other is to expect healing only in the resurrection (because the final redemption will come only when Jesus returns). Both perspectives alone are distortions which miss the creative “already/not yet” tension of New Testament thought.

Consistent with the Scriptures, therefore, we urge our pastors and group leaders to help people to seek healing of every sort, be it physical, psychological, emotional, relational, and/or spiritual. We prayerfully and with hope expect healing and, regardless of which form God's healing takes (whether it happens instantaneously, over time, or even only in eternity), we give due praise to God. We make opportunity for the sick, afflicted, and broken to come before God in the fellowship of the body of Christ in confidence that the God and Father of Jesus Christ is both able and willing to heal (James 5:14-16). We recognize that although God's sovereign purposes are good and we are sure that He is working toward a final redemption that assures wholeness to all believers, He may not grant physical healing for all or full healing in this life. We believe that in such cases God still receives glory both now and then through the resurrection to life everlasting.

The ministry of healing is not to be ignored in the church. We do not expect that the emphasis on, or means employed in, the varied ministries of healing will be the same in different churches (or in different small groups, or in individual Christians) or in the same church or group or individual believer at different times. We call the church to both examine and prize our differences in this regard, always aware of the 'already/not yet' scriptural tension outlined above.

To illustrate this dynamic tension in Scripture, we must note that all healing has spiritual implications (Luke 4:18-19, Matthew 11:2-5, Romans 8:18-23, 35-39). In any situation where healing is desired, mature discernment and wisdom are required. In some instances in the New Testament Jesus addresses a physical need through deliverance from demonic influence (Mark 5:15, Matthew 17:14-18). The New Testament, however, also presents us with other occasions of divine healing that occur without any reference to the demonic (John 9:1-7, Acts 3:1-8). As noted above, healing can come through a variety of means. What many would consider a natural remedy (e.g. surgery, medication, or therapy) remains an act of the work and grace of God.

¶630.2.1 Worth of Persons – a statement on the realities underlying slavery, including modern slavery.

We are committed to the worth of all humans regardless of sex, race, colour, 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 5:16-21). Jesus summarized this law as love for God and neighbour (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 must be actively concerned whenever human beings are demeaned, abused, stigmatized, or depersonalized, whether by individuals or institutions (Galatians 3:28; Mark 2:27). We recognize that oppression and exploitation is ultimately rooted in demonic influences operating in the world to control individuals through violence, to exploit them because of greed, and to deprive them of personal freedom. We are committed to give meaning and significance to every person by God's help, including those who endure slavery in its modern forms.

~~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 (Zechariah 7:9-10; Galatians 3:28; I Peter 3:8-9). 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 worth, rights and needs of others (Philippians 2:3-4; James 2:1, 8-9).

¶630.2.2 *Self-Discipline* – integrated “¶630.2.6 *Misuse of Substances*” into this paragraph to address the issue of pleasure and to expand the stand on alcohol to include moderation (See graphic in Appendix B)

One attribute of the Spirit’s indwelling presence is self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). As Christians we believe that life is full, abundant, and free in Jesus Christ (John 8:36; 10:10). We take seriously the words of Jesus to love God, our neighbours and ourselves a (Mark 12:30-31). We also heed the Apostle Paul, when he writes, “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 honour God with your body” (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

Therefore, we commit ourselves to be free from anything that challenges Jesus’ lordship over our lives, that distracts us from joyful participation in His mission in the world and that damages, destroys, or distorts His life within us.

What God has created is good and was created for His pleasure (Revelation 4:11). He created humans with a capacity for enjoying His good creation. But as a consequence of the fall, sinful self-centeredness and intemperance (even with respect to various forms of godly pleasure) became part of the human reality.

Undisciplined seeking after pleasure is a form of idolatry that weakens the will, distracts from participation in the mission of God and models selfishness to others under our influence (Philippians 3:19; Colossians 3:5). Instead, we seek to experience the fullness of life in Christ, which includes enjoying what God has made in ways that honour God and are compatible with His mission in the world. We seek to enjoy a godly, balanced relationship with pleasure that allows us to be free to enjoy them in moderation or to abstain from them out of authentic conviction rooted in past experiences or out of love for a “weaker brother” (Romans 14:13-23).

We accept that, though all things may be allowed, not all things are beneficial (1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23-24). We honestly ask ourselves: Do I exercise godly self-control with respect to pleasure? How does what I invest in various forms of pleasure compare to what I give of my life resources to reach people with the gospel and to alleviate suffering? Does this form of pleasure restore or fatigue me, arouse a craving for more that I then must struggle to master? Is it inherently evil because it exploits or causes unnecessary suffering?

Some pleasures (e.g. that which we ingest, the forms of recreation/relaxation that we pursue, etc.) if used with self-control, restore us. Some of the same pleasures can ultimately destroy us if used selfishly. On the one hand we can become obsessively distracted, even addicted to them. On the other hand, because some legitimate pleasures tempt us to excess, we can react by becoming overly scrupulous and, out of fear, seek to limit the liberty of others by imposing our control-based convictions on them. With respect to this, the Apostle Paul wrote: “Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence” (Colossians 2:20-23).

Pleasures which exploit others (e.g. pornography) or which damage our health (illicit drugs) are inherently evil.

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.

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 believe that work can be a form of pleasure. Overwork causes unhealthy strain on individuals and relationships and should be avoided.

We believe that the inordinate pursuit of leisure is an expression of selfishness and immaturity.

We advocate abstinence from illicit drugs. We believe that various forms of narcotics cause untold damage to people and relationships. Such drugs restrict personal development, damage the body, and reinforce an unrealistic view of life and should be avoided. 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.

We caution our members concerning the use of alcoholic beverages and categorically condemn drunkenness. Alcohol is unpredictably addictive and the destructive effects from its abuse cannot be fully measured. We therefore advocate for either total abstinence or careful responsibility for the sake of health, family, and neighbours.

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 endeavour 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 also acknowledge the struggles associated with overcoming the bondage of addictions, and desire to give whatever help and support are needed while fellow Christians seek full deliverance.

¶630.2.3 Possessions - revised to stimulate awareness of the temptation of greed

As Christians we regard all we possess as the property of God entrusted to us as stewards. We are people who exercise critical judgment about what we acquire and possess. The Scriptures warn against pursuing wealth as an end in itself (I Timothy 6:9-10) therefore we do not make possessions or wealth a priority (Matthew 6:19-20; Luke 12:16-21). Rather, as stewards we are people who give generously, first and foremost as an act of worship and obedience. This meets the needs of others and supports ministry (II Corinthians 8:1-5; 9:6-13).

~~As Christians we refrain from income generation in all forms (through employment, investments, grants/bursaries, etc.) from sources inconsistent with the ethics and practices of our faith.~~

As Christians we seek to generate income (whether through employment, investments, grants/bursaries, etc.) from sources consistent with the ethics and practices of our faith.

Income generated through gambling lacks both the dignity of wages earned and the honour of a gift. Even as entertainment, it excites greed, destroys the initiative of honest toil, exploits a neighbour, and often results in addiction. We refrain from gambling in all its forms for conscience' sake, and as a witness to the faith we have in Christ.

We recognize debt as a form of bondage (Proverbs 22:7) that limits our capacity to be generous. In keeping with Jesus' teaching about serving only one master (Matthew 6:24), as Christians we strive to be free from debt (Romans 13:8).

While customs and community standards change, there are changeless Scriptural principles of moderation and modesty 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 (I Corinthians 10:31-33). We therefore avoid extravagance and apply principles of simplicity of life when we make choices as to the values that we project through our possessions.

¶630.3.1.3 Healing Troubled Marriages - acknowledges the valuable role of social service agencies in helping to bring healing to 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, intimate partner 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).~~

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. Where there are signs of possible violence, these families need to be monitored. Where there are reports or signs of abuse (particularly of children), the intervention of trained social service professionals must be sought and separation may be necessary to ensure safety. In all cases, these family members will need both spiritual and emotional healing.

Separation should not be entered into lightly, or as a matter of convenience. When after counsel with the pastor, it is recognized that a deteriorating situation is destroying the marriage relationship, Christians may separate. In all cases, the way to reconciliation must be kept open (I Corinthians 7:10-11). Even when a marriage is violated by sexual infidelity, the partners are encouraged to work for restoration of the union.

¶711 COMMUNION SERVICES - virtually a complete re-write to address issues raised in the Heart of Free Methodism foundational course

INTRODUCTION

The Lord’s Supper is the one thing Jesus told his followers to do in remembrance of him. It is a central act of Christian worship and a chief means of grace (see ¶620). The Communion service must include, at a minimum, (1) confession of sin and request for forgiveness, (2) a retelling of the biblical story which we are called to remember through the sacrament, and (3) words of consecration/distribution.

*In Communion we look **in** at ourselves and confess the things that have gone wrong. We look **back** to Calvary and praise Jesus for His death for us. We look **up** to His risen presence, longing to nourish us through the bread and cup which He said were His body and blood. We look **around** in love and fellowship with other guests at God’s table. We look **forward** to His return at the end of all history, the marriage supper of the Lamb, of which every Communion is a foretaste. And then we look **out** to a needy world; Communion is battle rations for Christian soldiers. [Adapted slightly from Michael Green, *One to One* (Moorings, 1995) p. 102]*

The Articles of Religion set out our theological understanding of the Sacraments (¶123) and Holy Communion (¶125). This section is intended to clarify accepted practices in the administration of Communion as part of the worship of the church.

Who can participate?

For the Communion meal, we believe that we gather around the Lord’s Table and that it is “open” to all who would turn to Him in faith and newness of life. We do not “fence” the Table, that is, restrict participation to those who are members only, or even those who are (baptized) believers.

Because Christ is really present at the Table through the Holy Spirit, so too are all the pardoning and transforming benefits of Christ’s sacrifice. This means that Communion is a means of prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace – and therefore a converting as well as a confirming sacrament. A person can come to know God for the first time through the taking of the bread and the cup.

If a person carefully listens to the prayers and words of commitment leading up to receiving the elements and finds his/her heart saying “yes” to the repentance, faith, and strong desire for cleansing by Christ that is found in those prayers, then that person would be welcome to partake – even if they were not a believer, or even baptized. (Here is one reason that the ritual/liturgy/prayers of the Communion service are important.)

Communion is a means of grace that can be used at the beginning of the Christian journey, even though we recognize that the full significance of the meal will come to be known only as the believer develops in maturity.

Persons should be reminded of the counsel of 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 as reflected in the general “Invitation” (“*You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins...*”) Anyone who can, with a clear conscience, respond to this invitation are welcome to participate. Those known to be living an immoral life or to be guilty of any disreputable practice should be counselled not to participate until they give satisfactory evidence of repentance.

What about Children?

Children are welcome at the Table provided they want to participate, are mature enough to do so in an appropriate manner, have or want to have a real relationship with Jesus, and understand the basic meaning of the meal.

Parents play a key role in preparing children for participation. Pastors and Sunday school teachers should also take steps to ensure that children are instructed in the meaning of the sacraments. Resources for this purpose are available on the FMCiC website.

Who can administer?

The widespread tradition of the Church, including our own heritage in the Church of England and early Methodism, is that Communion should be administered (that is, the elements consecrated and distribution overseen) only by an ordained minister. The reason for this limitation is to provide the believing community with full assurance that this act is offered in a way thoroughly accountable to the apostolic witness and tradition.

The officiating minister may select lay assistants to help with the distribution of the elements.

We recognize that it may be valuable to celebrate Communion in a setting where an ordained minister is not present (for example, in small group ministry, visitation ministries). In any such situation, those leading should be prepared and aware of maintaining order and integrity of the table in accordance with the teaching of the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 11:23-33) and the practices advocated herein.

Distribution

The traditional, widespread but not exclusive, practice of the early Methodists was to receive the bread and cup according to the custom adopted from the Church of England - that is, by proceeding to the prayer rails before the Communion table and there kneeling while the minister delivered the elements into their hands. Participants would come in groups, as many as would fill the rail together, and then depart as a group, demonstrating the community building and affirming aspect of the sacrament.

The means of distributing the Communion elements is left to the discretion of those administering the sacrament.

Community event

At the Lord's Table, we have communion with Christ and each other. Taking Communion involves a common confession of like-minded, like-believing persons who identify themselves and are given identity through this sacrament. Communion was always part of a fellowship meal in the early church. Private celebrations would have been foreign to the early Christians.

The Apostle Paul speaks of this sacrament as an act to express the unity of the body (1 Cor.10:17). The traditional prayers of the liturgy have a community orientation, particularly the "Prayer of Approach" ("*May Your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one with all the world ...*"). The traditional understanding of the Scriptures and the Church is that the sacraments would be practiced in community – even if just a small community of two or three.

When Communion is observed, all who are present should be invited to participate. So, for example, serving Communion to a wedding couple and not the gathered community is foreign to our understanding of the sacrament.

As an exception, the church has always taken Communion to the sick and shut-in, but even in such situations, those serving share in the elements – and we frame it as something like bringing them part of the feast that they weren't able to attend with the rest of the family.

Frequency

There is no scriptural direction as to how frequently Communion should be celebrated. There is evidence that the early church observed Communion weekly. The early Methodists were urged to celebrate weekly, or as often as they could. (see Wesley's sermon, "The Duty of Constant Communion.")

We encourage celebration at least monthly.

We do not believe that concerns about celebrating too frequently or taking too much time in a worship service should play any role in determining frequency.

The Value of Ritual

The Communion service in early Methodism followed the Order of the Book of Common Prayer, enlarged and enlivened by hymn-singing and extemporaneous prayer.

While there are a variety of rituals available, the use of common, accepted rituals/liturgies has always been a valued part of the celebration of Communion among Methodists. Commonly held prayers, symbols, and actions of common ritual confirm and promote our identity as a community, connecting us with the church catholic through the centuries. Ritual provides structure, familiarity, and order to our experience, and reliable reaffirmation of our beliefs.

Use of a ritual/liturgy doesn't mean that Communion should be an "add-on" to the normal service. A service in which Communion is celebrated should be designed to set a path to Table from the beginning of the service, to prepare participants to meaningfully receive the sacrament.

Principles for Adapting Communion Liturgy

There may be contexts where the use of a traditional Communion ritual would unduly encumber worship (e.g. in a cultural grouping far different from that in which the present services arose). To ensure that the Communion service that is used is faithful to our collective understandings of the Lord's Supper, pastors should consider the following principles:

- Does the service express both great joy and a sense of the presence of Christ (which will, of course, produce the proper "reverence")? If we are faithful to what the Scriptures and church history reveal about Communion in the earliest days, the service will be more a joyful celebration of the living presence of Christ (with awe at the immensity of his love) than it will be primarily a penitential service.
- Does the service tell the story of God's saving acts from the Scriptures of Old and New Testament as happens well in "the Great Thanksgiving" in the first service provided on the next page.
- Does the service contain the various components of deep intimacy (communion) with the holy, saving God: expressions of repentance, desire for cleansing, expressions of thanksgiving?

- Does the service balance the various dimensions of Communion (i.e. looking *in*, looking *back*, looking *up*, looking *around*, looking *forward*, and looking *out* ? (See introduction above.)
- Does the service incorporate the prayers of the church over the years (which have been carefully formulated so as to convey the truth of the sacrament), especially the prayer of approach and the prayers of consecration, and the biblical words of distribution?

Leaders without great experience or education in worship would be wise to interact with seasoned church leaders when making plans to innovate. Two time-tested rituals that are suitable for use in Free Methodist Churches are provided on the following pages.

¶711 Service of Holy Communion (2) - revised to use inclusive language

The General Confession

Let us join together in the prayer of confession:

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all people ~~men~~, we confess that we have sinned, and we are deeply grieved as we remember the wickedness of our past lives. We have sinned against You, Your holiness, and Your love, and we deserve only Your indignation and anger.

¶740 (6th paragraph) – removed erroneous citing of John Wesley

Many years later John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, called people to experience personal salvation through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, while also pursuing social change. He opened a free medical dispensary for the poor. He wrote against bribe taking and smuggling. He supported the rise of education, particularly the Sunday School movement. He fought against the slave trade in every way he could. He supported prison reforms and the improvement of working conditions, and he freely gave his money in support of these various reforms. ~~In his preface to a collection of *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, Wesley wrote:~~

~~“The gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness. ‘Faith working by love’ is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection.”~~

Other:

- a. SCOD discussed the issue of plagiarism and forwarded counsel to MEGaP
- b. In its role as the editing committee of *The Manual*, the SCOD Committee did a number of other wording edits to clarify meanings, change incorrect references, etc. These edits did not change the substance of the original meaning of any content. A list of all of these edits is available from the Bishop’s office.

6. Website Resources – “Topics Worth Thinking About”

The Study Commission on Doctrine is constantly refining and adding resources to its area located in the “Who We Are” section of the FMCiC website found at <http://fmcic.ca/index.php/en/who-we-are/position-papers>. A list of the papers, with a brief description, is provided below in categories for your information and reference. Those that have been added since the 2011 General Conference are marked below as **NEW**. Most of the documents in this section can also be found on our French website.

Communion

- Free Methodist Stance on the Lord’s Supper: *A brief discussion and a sermon on how Free Methodists view Holy Communion.* **NEW** More bibliography added
- Children’s Communion Brochure, Children’s Communion Brochure Leadership Guide, Communion Service for Children: *Resources for teaching children about the Lord’s Supper*
- Communion Bibliography

Ecclesiology

- Ecclesiology Affirmations of the FMCiC: *This document contains nine FMCiC affirmations that address the missional contextualization of church forms and structures that enable ongoing engagement with our changing cultures.*
- **NEW** - Discernment about Support and Partnership: *A resource for discerning whether to support or partner with another organization.*

Evangelism

- Eastern Thought and the Gospel: *An introduction to resources to help Christ-followers to speak into the lives of those no longer familiar with traditional Judeo-Christian concepts or language.*
- Ministry & Evangelism in Contemporary Canadian Society: *A resource to help Christians with the question as to how we speak to others about Christ in a pluralistic context.*

Human Sexuality

- Christian Marriage: *A sermon that explores the topic of mutual submission within the relational dynamics of marriage.*
- HIV/AIDS - Implications for the Local Church: *A practical study that explores biological realities, theological understandings and ministry implications for congregations ministering to people with HIV infection and AIDS.*

Methodism

- **NEW** – A Vision of Holiness for God’s People: *Amy Bratton’s presentation at the 2013 Ministers Conference*
- Defining the Elements of a Methodist Ethos: *A point-form outline of specific doctrinal emphases and behaviour patterns that create the ethos of the Methodist movement.*
- **NEW** – Identifying Ministry & Life That Is Wesleyan: *John Vlainic’s presentation at the 2013 Ministers Conference*
- **NEW** – Justification: “Clean Slate?: *Dale Harris’ presentation at the 2013 Ministers Conference*
- Sanctification – Free Methodist Position: *An **updated** essay on the FMC’s history of seeking to articulate this doctrine.*
- **NEW** – Sanctification: Saved to the Uttermost: *Greg Pulham’s presentation at the 2013 Ministers Conference*

- Seeing the World Through a Wesleyan Lens: *A discussion of seven characteristics of a Wesleyan worldview given in a lecture by Dr. Howard Snyder at his installation as Chair of Wesley Studies at Tyndale Seminary.*
- Seven Steps toward Methodist Renewal: *These are not “quick fixes” but are seven provocative strategies proposed by Dr. Howard Snyder for renewing our movement.*
- The Free Methodist Synthesis: *A helpful discussion by Dr. Howard Snyder of the four traditions (Anglo-Catholic, Anabaptist, Charismatic, Evangelical) that inform the Free Methodist identity.*
- **NEW** – The Story of Christian Perfection: *Amy Bratton’s paper on the Perfection Narrative of George Clark and Other Friends of John Wesley”*
- **NEW** – Wesley’s Means of Grace: *Mary Lee DeWitt’s presentation at the 2011 General Conference*

Ordination

The following is a set of writings on ordination for FMCiC ordinands to read during a time of reflection prior to their ordinations.

- What is the Meaning of Ordination?
- Life and Character of an Ordained Minister
- Dennis Camplin interview on the meaning of ordination
- Tom Gurnick interview on the meaning of ordination
- John Vlainic interview on the meaning of ordination

NEW SECTION Pastoral Ministry Resources

- **NEW** – Membership Covenants: *SCOD’s response to questions raised about local church membership*
- Providing Pastoral Care for Same-Gender-Attracted Individuals: *This is a resource provided by the Christian Reformed Church on this topic. SCOD evaluated New Direction Ministries and finds it to be a valuable resource for ministering to same-gender-attracted persons. (www.newdirection.ca)*
- **NEW** – Service for Miscarriage or Stillbirth: *A helpful resource for people grieving the loss of a baby*
- Suicide: *A helpful resource for preparing a funeral sermon in the event of a suicide*

Science and Ethics

- **NEW** – A Clergy Guide to End of Life Issues – A Book Review
- Cloning, Embryonic Stem Cell Research, and Approach to Bioethics: *Explores issues related to the use of human embryos for embryonic stem cell research, types of cloning and related ethical issues that arise for Christians.*
- End of Life Care: *A one-page collection of statements on “preparation for death” issues.*
- Organ and Tissue Donation: *A one-page exploration of organ donation issues with a brief bibliography.*
- “How to Make Ethical Decisions in a Complex World” (Author: Patrick T. Smith; Copyright 2010 Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary – permission granted): *A brief essay on factors to be considered by Christians as they make ethical decisions.*
- **NEW** – A Theological Framework for Thinking about Technology: *A helpful resource on this topic*
- **NEW** – Mental Health: *A helpful resource on this topic*
- **NEW** – Surrogacy: *An exploration of issues related to surrogate parenting*

Social Issues

- Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy: *A protocol for the prevention of sexual abuse of children is available for each province where the FMCiC has churches through Winning Kids Inc <http://www.winningkidsinc.ca/>*
- Compassion and the Poor: *An introduction to a helpful bibliography on the theology and practice of ministry to the needy through the local church.*
- Human Rights: *This document provides a useful bibliography to explore the question of the role of the Christian in relationship to human rights issues and provides information that can be useful for people at risk.*
- Social Justice: *A discussion of the “both/and” emphasis of personal transformation and participation in social justice that is decidedly Wesleyan.*
- **NEW** – The Environment: *An exploration of the topic of the environment from a Wesleyan perspective. (“Care for the environment is really an expression of true worship of the Creator.”)*

Theological Issues

- **NEW** – Documents to Help Us with Issues of Truth: *An exploration of sources of truth for Free Methodists*
- Baptism and Dedication: *A helpful exploration of infant baptism versus infant dedication*
- Divine Healing: *A posting of the FMCiC statement on divine healing from paragraph 630.1.3 in The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.*
- Open Theism: *This introduces the reader to materials advocating and critiquing Open Theism.*
- The Security of Believers: *A brief Free Methodist perspective on this doctrine.*
- **NEW** – A Theology of Possessions: *A brief resource for thinking about possessions.*

Women in Ministry

- **NEW** – How I Changed My Mind About Women in Ministry – Book review
- Wesleyan Perspectives on Women in Ministry: *An exploration of biblical teaching on women in ministry from a Wesleyan perspective.*
- Women in Ministry (FMCNA, FMCiC): *A brief outline of the FMC’s stance on this issue.*
- Women in Ministry (Reading the Bible as a Whole, I Timothy 2:12): *A sermon by John Vlainic on the topic of women in ministry.*

Papers written by FMCiC authors

A growing number of members of the FMCiC are writing substantial papers on pastoral, theological, biblical and ecclesiological topics (i.e. academic theses which have been approved by an academic institution or papers that have been presented at a recognized public forum). SCOD is collecting a list of titles of these papers to add to the SCOD website resources. To protect the work of these authors from misuse, the FMCiC will forward requests for copies of these papers to their authors.

7. On-going Projects

- The *ConneXion blog – A Free Methodist Theology Blog* at <http://fmcictheology.blogspot.ca/>
- A paper on “Why the Free Methodist Church does not have a statement on The Father” in its Articles of Religion
- A Study on the topic of Divorce
- A Theology of Pleasure
- Mental Health
- Questions for Membership in The FMCiC

- Connecting with the LGBTQ Community
- Alternate Communion Services

8. Recommendation regarding Resolution #1 (Reform of Prostitution Laws of Canada)

MOTION: That Resolution #1 (Reform of Prostitution Laws of Canada) be adopted by the 2014 General Conference of The Free Methodist Church in Canada. [see page 3,Appendix A]

9. Conclusion

The Study Commission on Doctrine’s desire is to serve the Church well. We welcome input and suggestions for projects. We hope that the materials that we develop are a help to those from within our movement who are looking for guidance and resources for the further exploration of issues, and also to those from outside the FMCiC who come to our website seeking to understand dimensions of our movement’s worldview.

**The Free Methodist Church in Canada
GENERAL CONFERENCE RESOLUTION #1**

Reform of prostitution laws of Canada

WHEREAS the Free Methodist movement has an historic commitment to the deep worth of all persons, and has stood squarely for freedom from human slavery and exploitation in all of its forms, everywhere;

WHEREAS the Free Methodist Church in Canada is “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) ... and ... committed to give meaning and significance to every person by God’s help” (§630.2.1, The Manual of the Free Methodist Church in Canada);

WHEREAS we believe that human bodies are not commodities to be bought and sold, but prostitution and commercial sexual services in Canada and globally are highly characterized by slavery and exploitation through human trafficking, manipulation and coercion of services providers, and abuse of relationships of trust;

WHEREAS we understand that prostitution and trafficking victimize vulnerable women and minors in particular, and that such exploitation threatens the welfare and safety of communities across Canada;

WHEREAS the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled in December 2013 that criminal law regarding the operation of a common bawdy house or brothel, living on the avails of prostitution, and communicating for the purposes of prostitution are unconstitutional and has given Parliament one year to approve a new legislative scheme before the old laws lapse;

WHEREAS the federal Government is drafting new prostitution legislation and is inviting public input;

WHEREAS one of the goals of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is the elimination of all forms of sexual exploitation in Canada and to that end has released a comprehensive report proposing fundamental reform to Canada’s prostitution laws, entitled *Out of Business: Prostitution in Canada – Putting an End to Demand* - www.theEFC.ca/OutOfBusiness;

WHEREAS the reform proposed in *Out of Business* has adapted the **Nordic model** of law and policy on prostitution, to work within Canada’s constitutional requirements, with two broad **objectives**: (i) eliminate the “pull factors” that draw people into prostitution—including demand from sex buyers and manipulation by pimps, and (ii) in cooperation with civil society and the charitable sector, provide assistance, such as drug rehabilitation, trauma counseling and job retraining, to help people escape prostitution;

WHEREAS for Canada, this model means that new laws must be established to address the root causes of prostitution and provide help for those leaving prostitution, thus undermining the viability of the trade itself, and whereas Canada’s current laws and policies fall short in reaching these goals, *Out of Business* includes these **key recommendations** in the model of reform:

- Criminalize the purchase and attempted purchase of sex from any person—whether from escort services, in brothels, or on the street, and by any form of payment—as a means to eliminate the demand and the activities of pimps and human traffickers
- Maintain prohibitions against acts of any third party attempting to profit from sexual exploitation including procuring for the purpose of prostitution, operation of brothels, and other organized forms of prostitution
- Amend our laws to reflect the non-criminal nature of individuals who are being prostituted
- Invest in exit programs and support for persons being prostituted or trafficked

RESOLUTION #1 - APPENDIX A**RESOLUTION: Reform of prostitution laws of Canada – Page 2**

- Initiate a public awareness campaign to accompany such a change in the law, designed to help reshape attitudes about prostitution as a manifestation of inequality and violence against women and minors;

WHEREAS the Nordic model, first enacted in Sweden in 1999, is one of the most coherent and successful prostitution policy models ever developed and has proven successful in reducing rates of prostitution and sex trafficking and has been replicated in Norway and Iceland, and whereas The Netherlands, Germany and New Zealand are rethinking their approach of legalization, decriminalization and efforts at regulation, and Israel, Ireland and Scotland are taking steps toward laws targeting the purchase of sex, and France's Parliament has voted in favour of proceeding with legislation that would impose strict fines on individuals who purchase or attempt to purchase sexual services;

WHEREAS the Free Methodist Church in Canada is a longstanding member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and supports EFC's initiatives to gather Evangelicals together for influence, impact and identity in ministry and for ensuring a constructive voice and public witness for biblical principles in life and society; and

WHEREAS the Free Methodist Church in Canada joins with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada in expressing concern for the prostituted based on biblical principles that compel care for the vulnerable and inform the duty of care we owe one another as human beings;

Therefore, be it resolved that:

1. The Free Methodist Church in Canada strongly supports the reform of prostitution law as proposed in "Out of Business: Prostitution in Canada – Putting an End to Demand," a 2013 report of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and the inclusion of a Canadian version of Nordic Model law on prostitution within legislation being introduced to Parliament in 2014;

2. The Free Methodist Church in Canada immediately communicate this Resolution to leaders and offices of the federal Government engaged in conceiving and drafting the legislation, and that the pastor and Board of each local Free Methodist church in Canada immediately communicate and affirm the Resolution to their respective Member of Parliament;

3. The leaders of each local Free Methodist church in Canada commit to dialogue with their local law enforcement service and local victim services agency to learn about the impact of prostitution and human trafficking in their area and how the church congregation and individuals may be supportive of victims of exploitation, abuse and control through measures such as safe houses and programs for physical and spiritual restoration.

4. The Free Methodist Church in Canada establish an ad hoc committee to dialogue and strategize about next steps for further church involvement nationally and locally in the fostering of holistic freedom from slavery and trafficking, and move forward in coordination with existing ministries and services of the church.

5. The Free Methodist Church in Canada and local congregations designate the first Sunday of Lent each year to celebrate Freedom Sunday.

Submitted by: Grant Sigsworth, Whitby Free Methodist Church

Sponsors: Rev Cliff Fletcher, Rev Vic Stonehouse

A Continuum of Responses to Self-Discipline [¶630.2.2] APPENDIX B

