

# **Women in Leadership Task Force**

## **Research Findings and Recommendations**

Reported to the Free Methodist Church in Canada Board of Administration, October 2020

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# Executive Summary

The Free Methodist Church in Canada (FMCiC) position on women in leadership (a fully egalitarian posture), whilst not new, is a counter-cultural position within western evangelical Christianity. Many congregants in our community churches come from different backgrounds and, in the age of the internet, are accustomed to learning and growing in their faith from sources outside our egalitarian teaching, in particular online teaching and social media. When working counter-culturally in any arena, it is vital that one's position be constantly and consistently given voice in as many ways as possible. This task force believes that if we, as a denomination, do not engage in proactive and intentional efforts to support and promote this doctrine, we are likely to continue to see a widening gap between our stated belief and the reality in our denomination.

Going into this project, the task force assumed nothing regarding barriers to women in leadership. This was important so that we could honestly hear the perspectives and stories of women leaders in our surveys and interviews. Even when barriers were articulated, it was often with the clarification that, on balance, their experiences have been positive.

In examining our findings and considering recommendations, we thought it helpful to have a high-level understanding of what is needed to ensure the success of this endeavour. We offer the following principles as key to the preservation and full expression of our Free Methodist doctrine.

1. **Proclaiming** our Free Methodist ethos as it pertains to Women in Leadership
2. **Modelling** our Free Methodist character and beliefs allowing for better pathways and opportunities for Women in Leadership
3. **Sustaining** our unique Free Methodist culture as it relates to Women in Leadership to truly live out our doctrine

## **Proclaiming** our Free Methodist ethos as it pertains to Women in Leadership

Free Methodist founder, B.T. Roberts made his compelling case for female leaders in the early years of the denomination's existence in his powerful 1891 treatise, *Ordaining Women*. He warned that the Church's restrictive teaching on women was wrong, just as its position on slavery had been wrong. In practice, support for women in leadership remained far from unanimous in the Free Methodist Church as many voices, from both within and outside the denomination, describe ordination of women as unbiblical or otherwise hinder women from moving into places of leadership and being fully affirmed in their leadership. Roberts appealed to the Bible to make the case that "there is nothing in the creation of woman or in her condition under the law which proves that no woman should be ordained as a minister of the gospel." Women in leadership has been wrongly cast as a woman's issue. It is, in fact, a pressing matter for God's people worldwide. Roberts captured its importance writing against "cunning contrivances" designed to keep women "in their place." He concluded, "Women suffer as

consequence, but the cause of God suffers most.”

The history and doctrine of the Free Methodist Church are rooted in the original Gospel message that elevated women within human society and created a vision of the law of love and equity extended to all without bias. Again, Roberts put it forcefully: “The church has no right to forbid the free exercise of abilities to do good which God has given. To do so is usurpation and tyranny. Men had better busy themselves in building up the temple of God, instead of employing their time in pushing from the scaffold their sisters, who are both able and willing to work with them side by side.” Proclaiming our Free Methodist ethos reminds and reinforces the foundational teachings of the Free Methodist Church pertaining to women in leadership and facilitates an increasing practice of what we preach. It has been declared - now it is time to proclaim. Responses and stories given to our task force seem to indicate that our people are being influenced by our culture rather than our doctrine – and this is not just within the culture at large, but the culture within Christianity.

## **Modelling** our Free Methodist beliefs and character allowing for better pathways and opportunities for Women in Leadership

According to our FM belief, taught and modelled by Jesus, in terms of the call of leadership with our faith, the mantra should be Gifts over Gender. To effectively model our belief, women need to be recognized in their gifting, mentored along their leadership journey and invited into various areas of leadership across the denomination, locally and at the national level. Several of the women surveyed and interviewed noted in their ministry call narrative, the time they first saw women in pastoral leadership modelled for them. To model our belief, there must be intentional identification, discipling and mentoring programs within the denomination with components stretching across the spectrum of Free Methodist leadership from the National Leadership Team to the local church level.

Dr. Catherine Stonehouse, a distinguished Christian educator and a pioneer herself in breaking through the “glass ceiling” led a 1997 initiative for the FM USA church to look into why more women were not in leadership in our churches. This task force reviewed her findings and recommendations after completing our initial interviews and surveys. We were saddened to see some of the same issues and barriers still prevalent in today’s FM environment. When asked, Dr. Stonehouse commented that even though the survey was redone several years afterwards as a means to measure accountability to the recommendations, the report and its recommendations eventually “fizzled.” This task force fervently believes that without intentionality in the ongoing modelling of our beliefs as regards women in leadership, the same result may ensue. It is critical that better pathways and opportunities, complete with built-in systems and accountability, be open for women called by God.

## **Sustaining** our unique Free Methodist culture as it relates to Women in Leadership to truly live out our doctrine

The women we spoke with felt a strong need to educate our congregations about our FM distinctiveness and a concern that perhaps we are losing that to the larger culture. Once lost, it will be a long road back if that is even possible. In order to sustain our culture for future generations, we must commit to education and training that begins in childhood and is reinforced

throughout the teen and adult years. If our children and youth only learn from the society around them or the complementarian arm of Christianity, then we may find that our adult congregants are having to unlearn things. In addition, we must recognize that many of the new congregants in our churches have not grown up in the FM church and may not only require education in theology but FM doctrinal positions that we hold to be true.

*“Learning is easy, but unlearning is difficult. The last thing we question are things we have no memory of learning.” Dr. Catherine Stonehouse.*

## **The mandate of the Task Force**

*The Canadian Study Commission on Doctrine wholeheartedly affirms the denomination’s position on women in ministry. The Commission further recommends that leaders across the denomination explore the barriers that continue to hinder women and find ways of removing those barriers to release women for more effective leadership and ministry through the Free Methodist Church.*

## **Process/Methodology**

Beginning in 2019, the task force met via video conferencing and online collaboration to outline the questions we are seeking insight into and decided to use a mixed method of surveys and interviews. In the summer of 2019, two initial surveys ([Appendix B](#)) went out to leaders within the FMCiC.

The first survey was to all pastors and delegates to get a feel for their doctrinal and theological positions on this subject, as well as the ethos of the local churches. From the surveys sent to churches, it is clear that they identify very clearly as egalitarian in outlook. It would appear that our church leaders do fully understand and support our doctrinal position.

The second survey went to all the female credentialed and some selected lay leaders within the FMCiC. This survey invited the leaders to give us a bit of their story in response to several open-ended questions. Our intention with this survey was not necessarily to gauge the statistical make up of our female leaders, but rather to cast a broad net from which we can choose a representative group of leaders to interview for more in-depth storytelling.

Both surveys asked for names of other leaders to be invited into the discussion and many were provided, which the team followed up.

From these groups, we selected a cross-section of women to interview one-on-one. All interviews were conducted using the same questions and charting. The interviewers then met to share their impressions and collectively review the trends.

Our interviews were conducted to gather stories to measure how well (or not) we are upholding our Free Methodist doctrine. That is, we know what we believe, now how are we living that out. A compilation of direct quotes from the interviewees can be found in the section titled Suggestions from the field ([page 7 below](#)). This list is provided to highlight some of the raw data that helped inform our recommendations.

The surveys we sent out had two purposes. The first was to gather input from women in ministry in the FMCiC, both pastoral and lay leaders. From this group, we selected a cross-section of women to interview one-on-one. The second purpose was to get a sense of the landscape of our

churches as it relates to the egalitarian to complementarian spectrum (although those words were never used). From the surveys sent to churches, it is clear that they identify very clearly as egalitarian in outlook. Survey results showed that 81% of responding churches supported women in ministry without reservation. In that regard, it would appear that our church leaders do fully understand and support our doctrinal position.

Twenty interviews were conducted using the same questions and charting. The interviewers then met to share their impressions and collectively review the trends.

In addition to our surveys, the annual report submitted by churches in 2020 included a section on leadership involvement in various areas, breaking down the participation of men and women.

## The Numbers

Our surveys do not represent all Canadian Free Methodist Churches, but we did get a sufficient response to see some strong trends. We received 58 responses to the survey to churches, 55 responses from women in leadership roles, noting that some of these responses come from leaders in the same church. In addition, 47 churches reported data on the 2019 Annual report.

While the survey results could be mined for more details, it should be noted that the women leading in our movement are motivated, educated and passionate women who have been serving the Lord and our churches for many years. ***Thank you to all the women who took the time to share their experiences with this task force.***

From the Annual Report data, we found that, on average, Boards of Governors represent gender equality with men as 52% of board members of the 47 reporting churches, and 48% women. Likewise, Pastoral cabinets also on average have 52% men and 48% women.

Unfortunately, that is not the case in terms of pastoral/credentialed leadership. That number is significantly lower - of total credentialed pastoral leaders in the FMCiC, only 14% are women. If you add in those currently tracking, that number is 16%. Of particular note is that 74% of commissioned ministers are female.

Expanding beyond credentialed ministers, of the reporting churches on the Annual Report, 61% of paid pastoral staff are male, while 39% are female. Similarly, unpaid pastoral staff are made up of 60% men and 40% women.

As we move to lay leaders, those churches that reported paid ministry leaders, 21% are men, while 79% are women. Unpaid ministry leaders represent significant ministry involvement in local churches. If those leaders were spread evenly across the reporting churches, on average there are 8.3 leaders per church and they were 37% male and 63% female.

From an open-ended question on the survey to women in leadership, asking what they would like the task force to know, the overwhelming response was that women feel well supported and encouraged to engage in the ministry to which they are called. Twenty-five of the 55 responses explicitly mentioned that they had positive experiences. Even when barriers were articulated, it was often with the clarification that on balance their experience has been positive.

The next most common response to this open-ended question was to share experiences of overt opposition to women in leadership positions, particularly as lead pastors. Of the 55 surveys completed, 23 women shared that they have been explicitly told by peers, congregation members or leaders that they should not be leading where they are leading. Because we did not ask directly if the women had that particular experience, this may not be an exhaustive list of the experiences among our female leaders.

Another observation noted in several surveys of women in leadership is the intersection of other marginalizing demographics such as race, marital status, family obligations, young age in addition to their gender that created resistance to their leadership.

One volunteer leader noted that “Women are accepted in certain areas but if they step into an area that is traditionally male-dominant there is still a lot of pushback from other volunteers.” On our survey to churches, we found it encouraging that women are leading in traditionally male areas such as 88% of reporting churches have women on the governance board. 67% of churches have women leading in teaching. More traditionally female ministries reflect a strong presence of women leading, 89% of reporting churches have women leading in Children’s ministry. In addition, worship, prayer, small groups, women’s ministry all report the presence of women leaders in more than 50% of the reporting churches.

## Findings

Our task force members were deeply impressed with the graciousness and wisdom of the women we interviewed and those that responded to the surveys. Even when some of their stories told of deep wounds inflicted by other leaders and congregational members, they were gracious in speaking of their brothers and sisters in the Lord and wise enough to appreciate what was intentional and what was not. This committee felt that it was important to note this as it speaks to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those called by God and the willingness to work together to “fix” that which needs fixing.

Our committee noted that for the most part, these women leaders do not, personally or overtly, feel **unsupported** by the denomination, but they do feel overlooked – not really seen. This theme presented itself again and again. There needs to be a better way for women to see “open doors” for them to enter into pastoral leadership. There needs to be a better network for women in leadership and mentoring needs to be intentional. Many of these women spoke of a strong mentor (both males and females) in their lives that inspired and encouraged them to seek ordination. On the flip side of that, many spoke of how just one individual almost derailed their journey with comments meant to dissuade and challenge their call.

These women felt a strong need to educate our congregations about our Free Methodist distinctiveness and a concern that perhaps we are losing that to the larger culture. They noted that those who hold board positions at the local level have some influence and so care should be taken to ensure that those individuals understand and agree with our doctrine. Many of the stories we heard involved a single board member who influenced others in ways that were harmful to the female leader and to the greater congregation.

# Major Barriers

## **Egalitarian versus Complementarian Cultural Beliefs**

Responses and stories given to our task force seem to indicate that our people are being influenced by our culture rather than our doctrine – and this is not just within the culture at large, but the varying cultures within Christianity. For example, it was pointed out that the majority of both Marriage and Men’s Ministry material available is strongly complementarian in outlook. This opens the door for this perspective to leak into our congregations under the guise of “biblical marriage” and “biblical leadership training”. If our own FM material does not take precedence and affirm our doctrine, then this perspective becomes legitimized.

Further, it was noted that speakers at our Free Methodist camps and gatherings and even pulpit replacements should be screened for complementarian leanings. Once they are on the platform, it is too late.

## **Commissioned ministers, hiring practices and other inequities**

The overwhelming number of our ordained ministers are men and an overwhelming number of our commissioned ministers are women. However, the role of commissioned minister is designated as “honorary member” at General Conference, meaning they are without a vote. The purpose of this distinction was lost on those we interviewed, but all of the commissioned ministers we spoke with agreed that it needs to be addressed as this means they are not treated as “equals” at the national level, resulting in a two-tiered system.

We did take the initiative and begin to connect with female commissioned ministers to ask their thoughts on ordination, voting and other related concerns. When asked why they did not pursue ordination, the time commitment for the additional study was a common theme. Many women noted that with responsibilities as wives, mothers, church leaders and employees left little time to pursue the further education required for ordination. It should also be noted that many observed that women being invited into churches as the lead pastor was statistically low and so the increased time and cost to acquire ordination may not result in them being able to execute their calling beyond their local church.

Our team also noted that it is unclear what the role of the commissioned minister is when the individual leaves that church, such as for a family move. Are their credentials lost? We also believe that there needs to be some work done to ensure there is gender equity in appointment practices where a married couple are both ordained pastors but are viewed as a “package deal,” resulting in the man being *hired* and the woman viewed as a *volunteer*.

## **Suggestions from the field**

All interviews were conducted using the same questions and charting. The interviewers then met to share their impressions and collectively review the trends. The last question each participant was asked, “what should the FMCiC start, stop and continue to do to engage women in leadership?” This task force thought it would be helpful for the BOA to see those compiled responses (duplicates removed). This will also support some of the recommendations to be put forth by this task force.

- Spotlight women in leadership – history is important.
- Seek ways to identify women leaders with leadership gifts.



- More intentional leadership development at the local level.
- Expand educational opportunities for credentialing to make it easier during family raising years or while in other careers.
- CE requirement for credentialed pastors for ongoing teaching on FM doctrine and distinctiveness.
- Improve membership course for better instruction on women in ministry. Expect FM doctrine to be taught consistently and regularly in our churches.
- Develop a mentoring system and create a space for stories.
- Provide opportunities for FM women leaders to gather regionally and nationally – there is a mentorship gap that needs addressing.
- Commit to FM doctrine.
- Denominational leaders need to be clear and unwavering in regards to upholding the FMCiC stated practice of women in ministry, with compliance expected of all members of Conference.
- Establish online networks to share info and support, such as children's ministry leaders, counsellors etc.
- Ensure any outside speakers at FM events do not reflect complementarian views.
- Consider female speakers equally at FM events such as camps and conferences.
- Attention to language and respect for titles. Model our position with our language.
- Advocate – not just affirm.
- Provide resources to inform the defence of women in leadership.
- Church teaching on FM doctrine as well as egalitarianism and what it means in the church and at home.
- More women on the National Leadership Team and national committees such as BOA, SCOD, MEGaP. Women are seriously underrepresented in positions of higher leadership.
- Gifts need to take precedence over gender.
- Make this matter of women in leadership a sustained prayer at every level.

## Conclusion

An investigation into the higher than average fatality rate for women over men in car crashes of equal severity concluded that everything from the positioning of seatbelts and airbags, along with the crash test dummy research was designed exclusively using male driver dimensions, and therefore was not protecting women as drivers nor passengers. This was not an intentional oversight, but likely the result of male-dominated perspectives in car safety manufacturing. We wonder if a similar perspective has led to our current FM environment regarding women in ministry.

Clearly, women are in leadership in our local churches in many capacities, but for those, now and in the future, to hear and respond to the call to pastoral leadership, the process may be in need of some adjustments to better serve our sisters in the Lord to fulfill that call.

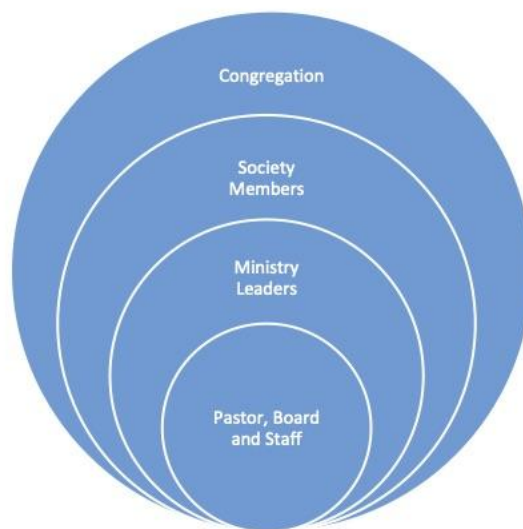
In conclusion, as we consider the recommendations this task force is making, it should be noted that almost everything we heard, analyzed, digested and are proposing will benefit all leaders in our denomination, not just the women, and will make us stronger. We would like to further note that it was the leaders we interviewed who made this point!

# Recommendations

In presenting these recommendations, we have attempted to assign them as they relate to the various departments and committees with the denominations. We felt that this would make them more actionable. However, we recognize that our understanding of the responsibilities of these various departments is limited and therefore trust that the recommendations will go to the appropriate committee or department. Further, you may note that some recommendations seem to appear under more than one heading. We feel that there will need to be a level of collaboration and did not know which department should take lead.

## **Narrative:**

It is paramount that in order to sustain our uniqueness within our local churches, we must mandate that the closer congregants are to the centre of leadership, the more critical it is that they understand, support and proclaim our doctrine. This must be understood as a responsibility of one's rising leadership authority and one of the key benchmarks to be invited into leadership, at whatever level.



## **Recommendations to the National Leadership Team (NLT)**

1. **Proclaim** our doctrine and ethos by encouraging and developing educational materials for all ages of church life:
  - Produce a short video on what it means to be an egalitarian denomination – to be shown in local Sunday services for a unified, clear proclamation.

- Encourage teaching from the pulpit on FM doctrine on women and egalitarianism, what it means in the church and at home. Develop a recommended basic sermon outline for pastors to consider fleshing out the video message more - in a short series or single message.
- Create a helpful, concise, resource ("Local Church Action Steps for Proclaiming, Modeling & Sustaining our FM Doctrine on Women in Leadership") for church leaders to begin to:
  - teach the doctrine clearly at all age levels;
  - seek ways to identify and recruit women leaders with leadership gifts, proactively checking in and cheering on these leaders;
  - review their practices and plan for Leadership development at the local level.

2. **Model** our doctrine by increasing and safeguarding opportunities for women to be invited to speak:

- Develop a database of leaders and speakers available from within the FM denomination, with links to their CV to help inform those opening doors for not only male, but more female speakers at FM events. Such a database would be helpful to highlight all of our FM leaders, not only women.
- Develop or amend standard speaker contracts at FM events to include a clause on the support of the Free Methodist egalitarian view.

3. **Sustain** our FM culture on this issue by developing systems and accountability:

- Develop a mentoring system and create a space for stories - opportunities at the National level, for pastors, and the Regional level for the gathering of all female leaders. Establish online networks to share info and support.
- Develop a system of accountability for local churches to report the implementation of any recommended strategies.
- Appoint more women to the NLT and national committees as women are significantly underrepresented in positions of higher leadership, the optics of which are in contrast to our doctrinal position. Ways to make this happen include attention to hiring practices and opening the door to consider a commissioned or even laywoman, which would increase the pool of candidates who have the time, experience and gifts to serve. Adding lay representatives at the national level would also honour the large demographic who are serving as gifted, volunteer leaders across the denomination.
- Develop an ongoing national oversight team that will ensure these recommendations are addressed

**Recommendations to the Study Commission on Doctrine (SCOD)**

- Develop a robust articulation of the place of women in leadership in the FMCiC Manual. Currently, it is outlined that women are welcomed into leadership. The index, as well as a search on the word "women," shows that there is only [a short reference in ¶800](#). SCOD could address and amplify women in leadership in our written documents, such as the manual, to proclaim and model full inclusion of women in leading in the FMCiC. Following this development in the manual, create a section on Women in Leadership for local churches to use in membership classes.
- Develop training for search committees on our doctrinal position, in the form of a video teaching, designed for a Pastoral Leadership Task Force (PLTF) team to view together and

discuss ways to implement inclusion of women in the pastoral search. Include questions of concern to encourage open conversations and unity going into the PLTF process.

- Help develop new training and chapters on women in leadership to be added to pastoral education in FM foundational course material. Dr. Karen Strand-Winslow (one of the authors cited in Appendix A) has created a full course curriculum on this subject, an electronic copy of which we can make available to SCOD. Work with MEGaP to consider a CEU for all existing pastors so that all ministers are on the same page.
- Proactively seek out women, both lay and ordained, to recommend for service on the SCOD in the future. Mentoring young female leaders and encouraging lay engagement in theology will help to widen the pool of candidates.

### **Recommendations to MEGaP**

- Require that all credentialed ministers of the FMCiC formally affirm to MEGaP their support of the Free Methodist position on women in leadership.
- Require that tracking-for-ordination in the FMCiC include, as part of the required foundational courses, a module specifically addressing the Free Methodist position (doctrine and practice) on women in leadership.
- Conduct a thorough review of the history, rationale and consequences of commissioned ministers not having a vote at the Conference – especially as the vast majority of our commissioned ministers are women.
- When conducting candidate interviews include questions around the candidate's personal thoughts and experience of:
  - being under or in leadership with women;
  - how they would manage issues of disagreement within their church leadership and congregation regarding this key FM doctrine; and
  - how, as a pastor, they will proactively identify leaders and mentor leaders who are their opposite gender.

### **Recommendations to Local Churches and Pastors**

- Screen all current and future Ministry Leaders and Board Members, most thoroughly the board chair, for complementarian views (as noted in the diagram with the narrative above). Amend your board orientation to include information on the Free Methodist ethos on women in leadership.
- Offer one or more lay workshops, sermons, youth classes and Sunday school lessons on women in leadership: the scriptural support, the history in our FM context, and tapping into any new NLT resources or those already on the FMCiC website.
- Ensure that all educational material used in your church be screened for complementarian slant. Develop or find resources for Children, Youth, Men's, Women's and Marriage Ministries to begin to intentionally teach these truths, in the direct content and views expressed between the lines.
- Plan for ongoing identification, opportunities and mentoring of men & women who may be called to various forms of leadership, particularly women to ordination.

# Appendix A

## **Suggested resources for education and training**

It is of note that there are several articles on the [FMCiC website](#) on the issue of Women in Leadership that have been prepared and collected by SCOD. We would like to introduce some other excellent resources for consideration and to enhance our library.

## **Recommended for Required Reading in “Heart of Canadian Free Methodism” Course**

Kendall, David. *Follow Her Lead*. Indianapolis: Light & Life Publishing, 2019. The author is Bishop Emeritus of the Free Methodist Church USA.

Roberts, B.T. *Ordaining Women*. Edited by Ben Wayman. New Edition with Introduction and Notes. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015.

## **For Further Study**

Cowles, C. S. *A Woman’s Place? Leadership in the Church*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1993.

Ferder, Fran and John Heagle. *Partnership: Women and Men in Ministry*. Notre Dame: Ava Maria Press, 1989.

Frost, Michael. “Brotopia: Breaking Up the Church’s Boys’ Club,” 2019. Online

<https://mikefrost.net/brotopia-breaking-up-the-churchs-boys-club/>

Gundry, Patricia. *Woman, Be Free*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Neither Slave nor Free: Helping Women Answer the Call to Church Leadership*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Jewett, Paul K. *The Ordination of Women: An Essay on the Office of Christian Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.

Kendall, David W. “Women in Ministry: Some Hermeneutical Reflections,” 2005.

Online

<https://scod.fmcusa.org/women-in-ministry-some-hermeneutical-reflections/>

Kroeger, Catherine and Richard. *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Tim. 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992.

LaCelle-Peterson, Kristina. *Liberating Tradition: Women’s Identity and Vocation in Christian Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.

McKnight, Scot. “Hazing Women,” 2019. Online

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/2019/11/12/hazing-women/>

McLaren, Scott. “The Disappearing Daughters of Jerusalem: Erasing Women from Early Canadian Methodist History.” Online <https://earlycanadianhistory.ca/2020/09/16/the-disappearing-daughters-of-jerusalem-erasing-women-from-early-canadian-methodist-history/>

Ruether, Rosemary Radford and Katie Geneva Cannon eds. et al. *Inheriting Our Mother’s Gardens: Feminist Theology in Third World Perspective*. Louisville: Westminster, 1988.

Snyder, Howard A. *B.T. and Ellen Roberts and the First Free Methodists*. Abridged edition by Daniel V. Runyon. Indianapolis: Light & Life Publishing, 2011.

Winslow, Karen Strand. “Wesleyan Perspectives on Women in Ministry,” 2005. Online

<https://www.fmcic.ca/wesleyan-perspectives-on-women-in-ministry/>

\_\_\_\_\_. *Imagining Equity: The Gifts of Christian Feminist Theology*. Nashville: GBHEM Publishing, forthcoming 2020. See especially Chapter 4, “Wesleyan Perspectives on Women in Ministry.”

Wolfe, Mary-Elsie. *Becoming His Story: Inspiring Women to Leadership*. Burlington, ON: Castle Quay Books, 2017.

## **Ongoing Online Resources**

*The Junia Project* <http://www.juniaproject.com/>

*Marg Mowczko: Exploring the Biblical Theology of Christian Egalitarianism* <https://margmowczko.com/>

## **Appendix B**

Surveys (attached PDF)

## **Appendix C**

Theological Positions Cheat Sheet (attached PDF)

# Survey for the FMCiC Study Commission on Women in Leadership

Dear Church Leader,

The Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church in Canada (FMCiC) has commissioned a Study Commission to explore further the recommendations below:

"The Study Commission on Doctrine recommends that leaders across the denomination explore the barriers that continue to hinder women, and find ways of removing those barriers to release women for more effective leadership and ministry through the Free Methodist Church. Because God gifts both men and women for ministry and leadership, as stewards of his grace, we recommend the increased involvement of women in all ministries of the church (e.g. pastoral leadership, denominational leadership, worship leadership, governing board membership, small group leadership, etc.)."

This survey is for women in leadership in the church and is part of assessing the reality of leadership in Canadian Free Methodist Churches in an attempt to understand if there are hindrances that keep reality from aligning with the doctrinal position articulated above. In addition to this survey, select interviews will also be used to map the terrain of the FMCiC.

Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences with this study commission. This survey should take 5-15 minutes of your time. Your answers are confidential.

\* Required

1. Name \*

Tell us a bit about yourself

We are looking for a little bit more about you to help us understand the diversity of responses across the country regarding your experiences in church leadership. In addition, these will help us select a diverse cross-section of women to follow up with interviews. The demographic questions below are optional.

2. Number of years in leadership in the church

3. Age

---

4. What best describes your marital status and family situation

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Single without dependents
- ☐ Single parent with children (or dependents) at home
- ☐ Married without children (or dependents) at home
- ☐ Married with children (or dependents) at home
- ☐ Would rather not say

5. Your ethnicity

---

6. Where do you live?

---

7. Home church?

---

8. Have you pursued credentialing (ordination) with the Free Methodist Church in Canada? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No     *Skip to question 12*



For credentialed and tracking ministers

9. Are you an ordained minister? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Ordained Minister with the FMC
- ☐ Ordained with another denomination
- ☐ Commissioned Minister with the FMC
- ☐ Ministerial Candidate with the FMC
- ☐ Licensed Lay Preacher with FMC
- ☐ I was tracking or ordained at one time, but am not at this time.
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Level of education attained, degree and institution details are also helpful

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11. Select the statement which best describes your current involvement in leadership in the church. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Full-time paid employment in church leadership.
- ☐ Part-time paid employment in church leadership.
- ☐ Full-time unpaid employment in church leadership.
- ☐ Full-time employment in church leadership with part-time pay.
- ☐ Part-time volunteer church leadership while in school.
- ☐ Part-time volunteer church leadership while working another full-time or part-time job or retired.
- ☐ Part-time volunteer church leadership and full-time caring for family and home.
- ☐ Full-time or part-time employment in a non-church related job which I consider to be a ministry.

*Skip to question 13*

For Lay Leaders (not ordained)

12. Select the statement which best describes your current involvement in leadership in the church. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Full-time paid employment in church leadership.
- ☐ Part-time paid employment in church leadership.
- ☐ Full-time unpaid employment in church leadership.
- ☐ Full-time employment in church leadership with part-time pay.
- ☐ Part-time volunteer church leadership while in school.
- ☐ Part-time volunteer church leadership while working another full-time or part-time job or retired.
- ☐ Part-time volunteer church leadership and full-time caring for family and home.
- ☐ Full-time or part-time employment in a non-church related job which I consider to be ministry.

13. How long have you been a believer

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ less than 5 years

☐ 5-10 years

☐ 10-20 years

☐ 20+ years

14. How many years have you been involved at a Free Methodist Church?

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ less than 5 years

☐ 5-10 years

☐ 10-20 years

☐ 20+ years

15. Have you been involved in church leadership in other denominations? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ Yes

☐ No     *Skip to question 18*

Other Denominational Influences

16. The support of women in leadership in the church is often experienced on a spectrum. Which answer describes the experience(s) you have had as a woman in leadership in denominations other than FMCIc. (Check all that apply)

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ I have been fully supported and women are preferred over men in roles of leadership.
- ☐ I have been fully supported and welcomed into all levels of leadership.
- ☐ I have been supported and welcomed into all levels of leadership, though I perceived reluctance (in some others) in having a woman in the role
- ☐ I have been supported in my leadership in the church, but not all roles were open to me, as a woman.
- ☐ I have felt like the path was not open for me to follow my call to leadership in the church.
- ☐ I have explicitly been told that my leadership in the church or my call was not allowed because of my gender, especially for theological/biblical reasons.

Other: ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

17. Our formation, formal or implied, often impacts our courage to pursue even the most welcoming leadership opportunities. Is there anything, in particular, you would like to share about your formation and influences in other denominations before ministering in the FMCIc? (stories of your experience are welcome)

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More to share...

18. Are you open to being interviewed to share more of your journey and experiences?

\*

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Unsure, I would like more information.

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

19. Who else should take this survey or be interviewed? (name & contact info)

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20. What would you like the Study Commission on Women in Leadership to know about your experience as a women in leadership in the church (really, anything at all! Stories are more than welcome.) Your response will be confidential.

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21. Relating to the support of women in Leadership, is there anything that you would recommend that the FMCiC should start, stop or continue to do.

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# Survey for the FMCiC Study Commission on Women in Leadership - church survey

Pastors and Local church leaders,

The Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church in Canada (FMCiC) has commissioned a Study Commission to explore further the recommendations below:

"The Study Commission on Doctrine recommends that leaders across the denomination explore the barriers that continue to hinder women, and find ways of removing those barriers to release women for more effective leadership and ministry through the Free Methodist Church. Because God gifts both men and women for ministry and leadership, as stewards of his grace, we recommend the increased involvement of women in all ministries of the church (e.g. pastoral leadership, denominational leadership, worship leadership, governing board membership, small group leadership, etc.)."

This survey is part of assessing the reality of ministry in Canadian Free Methodist Churches in an attempt to understand if there are hindrances that keep reality from aligning with the doctrinal position articulated above. We hope to get a snapshot of our churches to better understand where we are succeeding and where barriers remain. It should only take 5-10 minutes to complete.

Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences and that of your church with this study commission. Your answers are confidential.

\* Required

1. Church Name \*

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2. Your role at the church \*

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ Pastor

☐ Delegate

☐ Other: 

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3. Check all the areas of leadership in which women are currently involved

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Paid Pastoral Leadership
- ☐ Unpaid Pastoral Leadership
- ☐ Children's Ministry
- ☐ Women's Ministry
- ☐ Young Adult/Youth Ministry
- ☐ Prayer
- ☐ Worship
- ☐ Small Group Ministry
- ☐ Governance (Board member or chair)
- ☐ Teaching
- ☐ Denominational Leadership

Other: ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

4. How many women are in leadership in your church?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. How many people total are in leadership roles in your church?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. How big is your average Sunday worship attendance

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Under 50
- ☐ 50-100
- ☐ 100-250
- ☐ 250+



7. The support of women in leadership in the church is often experienced on a spectrum. Which answer describes the general temperature of your congregation?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Women are fully supported and women are preferred over men in roles of leadership.
- ☐ Women are fully supported and welcomed into all levels of leadership.
- ☐ Women are supported and welcomed into all levels of leadership, though I perceived reluctance (in some others) in having a woman in leadership roles
- ☐ Women are supported in certain ministries, but not all roles are open to women.
- ☐ The path is not open for women to follow a call to leadership.
- ☐ There are explicit messages that women in leadership is not allowed for theological/biblical reasons.

8. What is your personal position regarding women in leadership in the church?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Women should be fully supported and women are preferred over men in roles of leadership.
- ☐ Women should be supported and welcomed into all levels of leadership.
- ☐ Women should be supported and welcomed into all levels of leadership, though I perceived reluctance (in some others) in having a woman in leadership roles
- ☐ Women should be supported in certain ministries, but not all roles are open to women.
- ☐ The path should not be open for women to follow a call to leadership.
- ☐ Women in leadership in the church is not allowed for theological/biblical reasons.

9. Tell us more about your church and the role of women in leadership (anything at all, stories are welcome!)

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10. Who in your congregation, would you refer to us to fill out a survey about her experience as a woman in leadership in the church

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THEOLOGICAL CHEAT SHEET:

# Understanding the 7 Viewpoints

*about Women in Church Leadership*

## Hey there!

When it comes to understanding what the Bible teaches about women leading in the church, it can be, well... *complicated*. We all come from such rich and diverse backgrounds, and because this is not spelled out clearly in black and white in Scripture, there is a lot of disagreement, controversy, and strong emotions connected around this topic. Even in my own experience as a church leader for over twenty years, it seems like there were different rules in every church setting, even though they often had the same theology! What I've begun to understand, however, is that although many discuss this topic as if there are two opposing theological views, I believe there are actually 7 different ways this plays out in day to day ministry life.

I go into a lot more detail about this in my book, *Developing Female Leaders* (Harper-Collins, 2019), but this Theological Cheat Sheet will help guide and resource you to better understanding the environment in which you serve, as well as your own personal theology.

This outline is not intended to be prescriptive in any way, but simply descriptive so we can better understand and open up a healthier dialogue with one another. I have had wonderful, loving, and supportive experiences in many of these theological settings, and even in some that don't fit squarely in just one category. Since there is no way to fully represent all cultural practices in one chart, my hope is that I have represented everyone equally and with the love and respect I feel for my fellow brothers and sisters across the theological spectrum.

Enjoy!  
Kadi Cole

[BUY THE BOOK](#)

	EXTREME FEMINISM/ MATRIARCHAL	STRONG EGALITARIAN (ALSO CALLED EVANGELICAL FEMINISM)	MILD EGALITARIAN	COMPLEMENTARIAN/ EGALITARIAN CROSSOVER	MILD COMPLEMENTARIAN	STRONG COMPLEMENTARIAN	PATRIARCHAL
BIBLICAL VIEWPOINT	Scriptures are often distorted, ignored, or used out of context.	Egalitarian with a sense of advocating for women's rights of places of leadership because of past male-domination	Egalitarian	Combination of Egalitarian & Complementarian viewpoints and practices	Hierarchical for home and church where there is spiritual authority	Hierachical	Scriptures are often distorted, ignored, or used out of context.
BASIC BELIEFS ABOUT GENDER ROLES	Women are superior to men, smarter, and more caring, and therefore should hold higher levels of leadership in home, church, work, and communities/ polities.	Men and women are fully equal in value and leadership opportunities based on individual gifting and calling.	Men and women are equal partners in home, church, and work.	Men and women are equal and have individual giftings that tend to be connected to gender, but there is space for differences. A preference for final male leadership or authority is common.	Men and women are equal in value but have different primary roles; although there is more freedom in secondary roles. Home and Church operate differently than work.	Men and women are equal in value but different their roles. The man is considered the "head" and the woman is the "helpmate."	Men are superior to women and should lead in all areas of life. There are biological, psychological, and intellectual differences between genders that make each suitable for their role.
AT HOME	Women are strong (even aggressive) in their leadership at home. Husbands tend to be passive.	Men and women are equals with an emphasis on mutual submission and partnership. Roles are collaboratively decided based on giftedness and preference. It would be common for either a man or woman to stay home with small children or for both to work.	Roles are based on personal giftedness and preference. There is a high sense of teamwork and supporting one another equally in both home life, parenting and career opportunities. There is shared decision-making with an emphasis on compromise. It would be common for a man to make dinner every night because he enjoys cooking, and a woman to pay the bills because she is good with finances.	Roles are similar and are usually based on giftedness and preference. There is a high sense of teamwork but most women choose to prioritize children over career and most men choose to be the breadwinner. Decisions are made together although the husband would break a tie (which is rare). There is a sense of husbands and wives completing one another and mutual submission.	Some roles are clearly different while some may be based on ability or preference. Women are homemakers and the primary caregivers to children, men are the primary breadwinners and leaders of the family. The husband is considered the leader and has the final decision-making rights but will often involve his wife in the decision-making process.	A man's primary role is to provide servant leadership and be the breadwinner for his wife and children. A woman's primary role is to be submissive to her husband's leadership and manage the home and children until they are adults. Decisions are solely made by the husband.	Clear roles are based on gender with men in leadership roles in all aspects of home life and women in submissive roles. Women often wear only skirts, no makeup, and let their hair grow. Men often control how women spend their time.
AT CHURCH	Although there aren't many available examples of this, it is assumed this would run similar to a home.	Men and women are equal and able to fulfill all roles of leadership based on the community's validation of one's giftedness and calling. Women are embraced in leadership, including being a senior leader of a congregation.	All roles and leadership positions are open for men and women equally. However, in practice, many churches have more men in leadership roles than women. Women lead on their own merits and are not required to be married to a pastor to have high levels of influence and authority including teaching/preaching.	Most roles can be filled by either a man or a woman based on giftedness and effectiveness although the highest level leadership (Senior Pastor and/or Elders) are reserved or preferred to be men. Women may preach but usually with a male "covering." Women may lead in some high-level organizational leadership roles or because they are married to a man in higher pastoral leadership. Although the majority of leaders will be men, some women may hold the title "pastor" or there may be gender-neutral titles for everyone (ie. Ministry Director).	Formal and high level leadership roles are reserved for men, but women may have several formal or informal leadership roles that do not involve having spiritual authority over a man. Women freely lead other women or children under 18 years old. On occasion, women may be included in team teaching or as a guest speaker with "covering" or approval by the male senior pastor/elders. Pastor's wives tend to be more involved in leadership alongside or as extensions of their husband's authority.	Men hold all roles of leadership and authority including elders, pastors, preachers, deacons and team leaders; the only exception would be women's ministries but those would be under the direction of a male pastoral leader. Women may fill service roles in the church but would not involve any form of leadership over men. Women are not allowed to teach in ministry settings or seminaries.	Men hold all positions of leadership and authority. Ministries and activities are often separated between adult men and women and children. If a woman needs help in her home (for example, her husband is abusing her), she is to come to the church leadership for resolution rather than the authorities such as police or a women's shelter.
AT WORK OR LOCAL COMMUNITY	Women are more capable than men to lead at work or in communities. There is a strong sense of fighting for women to hold more and higher levels of leadership than men.	Men and women are completely equal in the workplace.	Men and women are completely equal in the workplace.	Men and women are equal in the workplace and are encouraged to pursue career success. However, women are encouraged and celebrated when they stay home with young children and value family over career.	There is a clear distinction between roles at home and church and opportunities at work. Women are free and often pursue lifelong careers including leadership roles, although most choose to stay home with small children.	A woman's primary focus is being a homemaker and raising children, although some women work outside the home as long as their family responsibilities are not compromised. However, roles of authority (such as a police officer or holding political office) are not appropriate.	A woman should not work if she is married and especially if she has children. Some may question her need for an education.