

Journeying Through History: A Healing & Reflection Experience

*May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give us the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice we may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ – **From Romans 15:5-6***

Introduction:

Welcome to the History Wall and Ebenezer Stone activity, a sacred space designed to guide our denomination through a reflective and healing journey during the General Conference 2024 & beyond. This exercise invites us to explore our collective history, celebrate achievements, acknowledge challenges, seek reconciliation, and listen to what God is saying to us as a movement.

Rationale:

Our history is a tapestry woven with threads of triumphs, trials, and transitions. It shapes our identity, informs our present, and guides our future. During our Church Health listening tour, we had the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations with pastors, delegates, coaches, leaders, and board chairs from more than 70 churches nationwide. We gained valuable insights that have helped us continue to shape our ministry's direction and enhance our ability to support the health of our churches. As part of efforts towards a healthier FMCiC future, this activity aims to foster a deeper understanding of where we've been, what we've overcome, and what lessons we can carry forward.

About

The History Wall activity: The History Wall serves as a testament to our collective journey, highlighting key milestones, leaders, events, and lessons learned throughout the years. It is not merely about recounting the past but about honouring the sacrifices made, acknowledging our strengths and weaknesses, and seeking God's wisdom and healing. This wall invites prayer, celebration and reflection.

The Ebenezer Stone activity: The Ebenezer Stone activity, alongside the History Wall, is a symbolic act of corporate confession, repentance, and surrender to God's leading. It invites us to reflect on our personal experiences within the denomination, acknowledging both joys and pains and to seek God's guidance for the future.

Goals:

- **Celebrating our History:** Recognize and honour the contributions, sacrifices, and achievements of past leaders, milestones and members.
- **Confession and Repentance:** Prayerfully acknowledge areas where we, as a movement, may need to seek forgiveness or reconciliation.
- **Acknowledging Strengths:** Identify and celebrate the core values and strengths that have sustained us.

Instructions for Engaging with Activities:

- **Engage Reflectively:** Sit before the History Wall for a few moments. Reflect on our journey as a movement, considering both the victories and the struggles. Use the information in the binder and reflection questions provided below as a guide. Write down some of your initial reflections.
- **Seek God's Guidance:** Pray and invite the Holy Spirit to illuminate aspects of our history that may need acknowledgment, healing, or celebration. Use the Scriptures below as a guide.
- **Share Insights (History Wall):** Use sticky notes to write scriptures, reflections, celebrations, prayers, or insights inspired by your reflection. Place them on the History Wall or use the pens provided to write directly on the wall. The goal is to recognize and celebrate what God has done.
- **Ebenezer Stone Activity:** Write down on a stone one word that reflects your emotions, hurts, or gratitude related to our history. Place the stone at the foot of the cross as a symbol of surrender to Christ and prayerful reflection. The goal here is to acknowledge the difficult moments and bring those at the foot of the cross.

Reflection Questions:

- What aspects of our history can we celebrate and draw inspiration from?
- Are there areas where we need to acknowledge past hurts or seek forgiveness as a collective body?
- What recurring challenges or patterns can we learn from as we move forward?
- What is God revealing to us through this journey into our history?
- How can we apply the lessons learned to shape our future endeavours?

Helpful Guidelines

- Use the sample posted notes and messages on the History Wall as a guide for your posting.
- As we engage in this meaningful activity, let us approach with humility, openness, and a willingness to embrace our history in its entirety. May this journey lead us to greater unity, healing, and a renewed vision for the future of our denomination.
- You could use scriptures such as 2 Chronicles 7:14, Jeremiah 33:3, 1 John 1:5-9, and Hebrews 12 to deepen the reflective process and guide any follow-up discussions.
- This activity is not about legacy. It is about honouring and remembering the sacrifices that others made for the movement to be where it is now. It is also primarily about gratitude to God for our movement. It's not about whether we like or agree with any part of history; it's about honouring and celebrating our history in a reflective, prayerful manner.
- After this history wall activity, we plan to collect the common themes and patterns shared to make a list of lessons learned. Compiling this list will be useful for thinking about healthy ways to move forward. These lessons could help us improve our efforts toward maintaining a healthy movement and denomination and identify critical areas of need and or celebration. We will also use these lessons to facilitate group conversations at various levels, including work at the NLT and network levels.

Our History and Bishops

- **Bishop Donald N. Bastian (1974-1994):** Serving for 20 years, Bishop Donald Bastian's term is marked by pioneering leadership. His election as Canada's first Bishop coincided with the

approval of the Canadian Jurisdictional Conference in 1974. Bishop Bastian led the initiative to inaugurate the Canadian General Conference in 1990 as an authoritative and autonomous body within the larger Free Methodist World Fellowship. His recent passing on April 4th, 2024, invites us to reflect even more deeply on his enduring contributions to our denomination.

- **Bishop Gary Walsh (1993-1997):** In his transformative five-year term, Bishop Gary Walsh led a comprehensive review of our denominational structures and procedures. His visionary leadership during the 1993 General Conference initiated significant changes, including the restructuring of superintendents and other key roles. His collaborative efforts with consultants and legal experts reshaped our current organizational framework, reminding us of the importance of adaptability and innovation in sustaining our mission. Bishop Walsh stepped down from his role as bishop to become the President & CEO of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.
- **Bishop Keith Elford (1997-2017):** With a remarkable tenure of 20 years, Bishop Keith Elford's leadership brought stability and growth, developing our present Network system, Pastors' Conferences and Regional Gatherings. In 1999, Bishop Elford was elected as the inaugural President of the newly formed World Conference of The Free Methodist Church. Having served as a church planter himself, Bishop Elford was an advocate for church planting in new places and in new forms. Under his oversight, Mission Districts in Sri Lanka and Ghana were birthed. With a strong commitment to intercultural engagement, attention was given to new immigrants, including the planting and growth of ethno-specific churches, particularly in Quebec and Ontario. His dedication and commitment to the denomination laid a strong foundation for future endeavours.
- **Bishop Cliff Fletcher (2017-2024):** Bishop Cliff Fletcher's seven-year term has emphasized the power of prayer, relational depth, and strategic foresight. The FMCiC, under Bishop Cliff Fletcher's leadership, focused on understanding Canada's church needs. They prioritized building relationships with Indigenous communities, engaging with new Canadians through international student ministries, and maintaining global outreach in countries like Sri Lanka, Ghana, and India. His tenure, building upon some efforts of Bishop Elford's term, introduced Regional Coaches for better congregational and pastoral support, formed task forces for racial justice and LGBTQ2S+ relationships, and mobilized churches for family and children's ministry, all with the goal of introducing people to Jesus and addressing injustices worldwide.
- **Bishop Linda Adams (2024-future):** As we look to the future with Bishop Linda Adams, we anticipate continued growth, innovation, and unity within our denomination. Bishop Adams comes to us with a breadth of experience in pastoral leadership, international ministry, and executive responsibility. Having previously served as a Bishop for the Free Methodist Church in the US, her leadership promises to build upon the rich legacy of those who have come before, fostering a community grounded in faith, resilience, and shared purpose.









