THE MANUAL OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN CANADA™

(BOOK OF DISCIPLINE)

"Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that He obtained with the blood of His own Son."

Acts 20:28

Revised November 2024

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FOREWORD

At the close of each General Conference that has taken place throughout the history of The Free Methodist Church, a *Book of Discipline* has been published that reflects the changes that were made at the recent conference.

The 1999 edition of *The Book of Discipline* underwent significant change. The title was changed to *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada* in order to more accurately communicate its purpose and function to people who are new to our church and to the people we are trying to reach.

Even more far reaching was a second significant improvement. Former *Books of Discipline* contained a mixture of elements including denominational requirements, explanation of principles, teaching materials, sample documents, and other resource materials. Distinctions between elements were not clear and nothing could be changed or added between meetings of the General Conference. This new edition contains this same mixture of materials, but clear distinctions have been made among the types of material.

The former editions of the *Book of Discipline* were often perceived as "law," placing limitations on freedom, rather than as resources to empower churches and leaders. That was not the intention, but having all of its material arranged in by-law form tended to give the impression of a set of laws to be obeyed, rather than counsel given to guide the church. Of course both kinds of literature are necessary. So, on the one hand, parts of this new format will contain words that should be seen as denominational requirements while, on the other hand, there are significant sections of this book that offer only guidance and advice, and trust local churches and their leaders to be creative and wise in their application.

The Manual's loose-leaf format was chosen for several important reasons. Up until this change in format, approximately every four years the denomination had to publish a new *Book of Discipline* to reflect the changes dictated by decisions made at the most recent General Conference. The Free Methodist Church in Canada has chosen to meet in a General Conference approximately every three years, rather than four, believing that this greater frequency keeps the church better "connected." But if the church were to publish an entire new *Book of Discipline* every time it meets, the cost in time, energy and money would be an abuse of wise stewardship. Accordingly, the new manual is "bound" in a more useful form. Much of this book comes "loose-leaf" to enable the church to revise only those pages where changes need to be made. At the close of each subsequent General Conference we shall quickly re-publish those pages that need revision, and make them available to all Manual owners for inclusion in their copies of *The Manual.*

It should be noted that the first two chapters of *The Manual* contain the Constitution of The Free Methodist Church. This material appears in every *Book of Discipline* or *Manual* in every General Conference around the world. No General Conference of The Free Methodist Church anywhere in the world has power to change the Constitution. These chapters are to be considered foundational for all Free Methodist Churches and the major articulation of the connectedness of all Free Methodist Churches.

Primarily this book is a resource for the empowerment of churches across Canada. In this one volume, the best of the former *Book of Discipline*, and the *Pastor's Handbook* have been combined. Because it is loose leaf, other materials may be added to *The Manual* from time to time. Denominational leaders may forward additional resources that have value to all churches, for inclusion in this book. The "8½ by 11" format of each page will make it easier to insert

materials that are created in the more standard form. We also expect that as local churches create vision and mission statements, and the policies that guide the life of their own congregations, these too may be added into *The Manual* in the appropriate sections.

This loose-leaf format may tempt some people to throw out what they do not like and retain only the things with which they agree. That is far from the intention of this form. To clarify this matter an "authority code" has been included at the bottom of each page, identifying the body that initiated the material on that particular page and holds the authority to revise the material.

This is what those codes mean:

*WC	World Conference of the Free Methodist Church.
*CGC	Canadian General Conference.
*BOA	Board of Administration of The Free Methodist Church in Canada
*MEGaP	National Ministerial Education, Guidance, and Placement Committee

Editorial Committee: The Study Commission on Doctrine acts as the editorial committee to ensure that this document is kept up to date as changes are authorized by the various bodies having responsibility for making changes to its chapters. The dates of updates are noted at the bottom of the pages. Should you wish to verify that you have received all updates, a master file of all changes to *The Manual* is kept in the bishop's office and you can contact the bishop's administrative assistant for a list of changes.

THE INTRODUCTION

OUR FOUNDATIONS

1. Our Purpose

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

2. Our Vision

It is the vision of The Free Methodist Church in Canada to see a healthy church within the reach of all people in Canada and beyond.

3. Our Mission in Canada

Our Mission:
Following God's activity in our "Jerusalems, Judeas, Samarias and beyond," The Free Methodist Church in Canada (FMCIC) will….

- **Find** ways to engage unreached people and unreached communities with the gospel
- **Mature** congregations through developing healthy pastoral and lay leaders
- **Commission** prepared people to purposeful service
- **Interpret** life theologically through intentional reflection
- **Invest** human and financial resources strategically
- **Communicate** and celebrate through listening to and inspiring one another.

4. Our Core Values

Persons
- All persons are made in the image of God and possess intrinsic worth.
- All persons have a need to know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.
- All persons can be saved and begin a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.
- All persons have their own gifts to contribute to the kingdom.

Church
- The Christian community is the foundation for the growth of the Kingdom of God on earth.
- The Christian community is the primary context for developing believers.
- The Christian community is to minister in Jesus' name to all people.
- The Christian community is to worship and serve God.

Team

- Teamwork demonstrates the diversity of spiritual gifts and personal competencies within the church.
- Teamwork recognizes our dependence on God and each other.
- Teamwork maximizes the leadership resources of the church.
- Teamwork builds Christian community.

Connectionalism

- Free Methodists share a common theology, membership covenant, and leadership system.
- Free Methodists co-operate with other parts of the Christian church in redemptive endeavours and political response.
- Free Methodists build healthy inter-congregational cooperation, celebration and support.
- Free Methodists affirm diverse approaches to accomplish our common vision and mission.

Integrity

- Integrity is grounded in the character of God.
- Integrity establishes a framework for all relationships.
- Integrity guides all strategies, actions and programs.
- Integrity ensures the appropriate use of time, money, and energy.

Learning

- Learning leads to excellence.
- Learning leads to creativity.
- Learning leads to faithfulness to biblical essentials.
- Learning increases skill.

Growth

- The Scriptures call for every church to grow.
- The Scriptures call for the evangelization of the unreached.
- The Scriptures call for every Christian to grow in grace and knowledge of Christ.
- The Scriptures call for every Christian to participate in the growth of the church.

Generosity

- God is generous to all. Becoming more like Him, we extend God's love through generosity to others.
- Generosity is grace-enabled as we trust God in all circumstances.
- Generosity is a source of joy and blessing as we join God in His ministry.
- Generosity glorifies God.

THE HISTORY OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH

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

1. Biblical Concept of the Church

It is clear from Scripture that the church is of God and for people. It is His creation. Christ is its head. The church is the people of God chosen for a purposeful partnership in accomplishing the will of God on earth. More than eighty word pictures relating to the church appear in the New Testament.

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

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

The New Testament reminds us that the church visible is not the church ideal. Because the church is a divine-human partnership, sharing not only in the holy love of its founder but in the blemishes of its humanity, it is ever in need of renewal. God takes the same risk with the church in redemption as He did when He granted humans freedom in creation.

2. Historical Heritage and Perspective

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

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

The lineage of The Free Methodist Church begins with the people of God in the Old and New Testaments. It is continued in the great Councils and Patristic writings and teachings of the early Church Fathers. It also includes influences and contributions from the multitude of renewal movements in western Christianity: Wycliffe and the German Moravians (from whom Wesley learned the concept of "the witness of the Spirit"); the sixteenth century Reformation with its many counterbalancing renewal movements, not the least of which were the Arminian correctives (which taught that Christ's salvation was for all mankind without limit, but that it must be freely

chosen); the Catholic-Anglican tradition; the English Puritan influence; the Methodist tradition; and the nineteenth century holiness movement. God has used these and others across the ages to make the unchanging Christian gospel known more clearly. In summary, Free Methodists identify with the flow of history of the Christian church while maintaining distinctive evangelical and spiritual emphases.

The contributions from church history may be detailed as follows:

The Free Methodist Church reflects historic Christian orthodoxy in that its roots are solidly fastened to the time tested statements put forth in the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, The Formula of Chalcedon, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion in the Church of England; and the Twenty-five Articles of the Methodist Episcopal Church of 1784.

The Reformation heritage is reflected in the commitment to the Bible as the supreme rule of faith and life and to salvation by grace through faith. Desire for church order and appreciation for liturgical form reveals the Catholic-Anglican influence. The emphasis on the essentials of the faith allows for openness towards differing views on such subjects as modes of baptism and the millennium.

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

Theologically, The Free Methodist Church is committed to the Wesleyan-Arminian affirmation of the saving love of God in Christ. Through prevenient grace He seeks to bring every individual to Himself but grants to each the responsibility of accepting or rejecting that salvation. Salvation is a living relationship with God in Jesus Christ, giving the believer a legal position of righteousness, and therefore affirming the security of all who continue in fellowship with Him. Along with the Arminian emphasis on the universal offer of salvation, John Wesley rediscovered the principle of assurance through the witness of the Holy Spirit. He declared a scriptural confidence in a God who is able to cleanse the hearts of believers from sin here and now by faith, fill them with the Holy Spirit, and empower them for carrying out His mission in the world.

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

Born at a time when representative government was being developed by free societies, The Free Methodist founders reaffirmed the biblical principle of lay ministry. Free Methodists recognize and license unordained persons for particular ministries. They mandate lay representation in numbers equal to clergy in the councils of the church.

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

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

Between 1858 and 1860, a number of these leaders were excluded from the Methodist Episcopal Church on various charges and allegations. In reality, the primary issue was their proclamation of the basic principles of Methodism, especially the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification. Appeals made to the General Conference of May 1860 were denied. On August 23 of that year, they met in an apple orchard in Sanborn, New York, to form The Free Methodist Church. Today, Centenary Park marks the approximate location of that historic event.

"Free" was chosen as an adjective in the name to signify their belief that slaves should go free, pews should be free of rent to any who wished to attend church, members should be free from oaths of secrecy in secret societies, and the freedom of the Spirit should be acknowledged in public worship. The body that began inauspiciously in an orchard in western New York is now at work in 50 countries of the world, one of which is Canada.

3. Methodism in Canada

Prior to the emergence of The Free Methodist Church in Canada, Methodism had already had a long history in Canadian society. Methodism came to Canada through the influence of Paul and Barbara Heck. Originating in Germany, the Hecks had emigrated first to Ireland, where Barbara was converted at the age of 28 under Methodist preaching, possibly that of John Wesley himself. In the early sixties of the 18th century, they sailed for New York, along with Barbara's cousin Philip Embury and his family. During the time of the American Revolution, Paul and Barbara Heck and Philip Embury's widow, Mary, and their son, fled to the Prescott area of Upper Canada. Remembering gratefully the protection they had received under the British Crown when they had fled from Germany to Ireland, they now joined the movement into Canada of thousands of United Empire Loyalists whose loyalties to Britain would not allow them to join the rebel cause in the colonies. So it was that Paul Heck was present when the first Canadian Methodist circuit was organized in 1791, the year of John Wesley's death.

The Methodist cause spread rapidly in Canada. Within ninety years, and after two mergers, there were five different non-ethnic branches: The Methodist Church of Canada, Methodist Episcopal Church, Primitive Methodist Church, Bible Christian Church and the infant Free Methodist Church. The first four merged into one Methodist body in 1883. This body later merged with Congregationalists and a significant number of Presbyterians to become the United Church of Canada in 1925.

4. Free Methodism in Canada

In the fall of 1873 and winter of 1874 General Superintendent, B. T. Roberts visited the area just north and east of the city of Toronto, now Scarborough, on the invitation of Robert Loveless, a Primitive Methodist layman. Later, in 1876 while presiding over the very young North Michigan Conference, he read conference appointments that assigned C.H. Sage his field of labour—Canada!

Reluctantly, Sage came to southwestern Ontario. He was well received by disaffected Methodists, unhappy with the direction in which the larger Methodist bodies were moving. He preached a gospel calling men and women to conversion and the unconverted responded in encouraging numbers. His preaching took him as far north as the Muskoka region. By 1880, the Canada Conference consisted of two districts, 11 societies, 13 preaching points and 324 members.

In the early years, the work grew rapidly. Churches were formed in eastern Ontario. By the early twentieth century it had spread to the prairies of western Canada. By 1920, there was an impetus to consolidate as a distinctly Canadian body. The result was the All Canada Conference—a gathering of western and eastern leaders in Sarnia, Ontario. It was a landmark event of praying, planning and dreaming. Out of that meeting came such results as the formation of a Canadian Executive Board to manage distinctly Canadian matters, the launching of the *Canadian Free Methodist Herald*, and the establishment of Lorne Park College in Port Credit, Ontario. The passing of a Federal Act of Incorporation in 1927 was also largely traceable to the All Canada Conference in Sarnia. In 1940, Aldersgate College was founded in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, another result of the vision generated at the All Canada Conference.

The Free Methodist Church in Canada was further strengthened in 1959 by a merger with the Holiness Movement Church. This latter denomination was the product of revivals in the Methodist churches of the Ottawa Valley under Ralph Horner during the waning years of the nineteenth century. This union, brought about by the labour of strong leaders in both bodies enlarged the world vision of the Canadian church by adding missionary concerns in Egypt, Brazil and Northern Ireland, fields the Holiness Movement Church had established.

In the early nineteen-seventies Canadian Free Methodist leaders applied to the Free Methodist Church of North America requesting authorization for the Canadian Church to become a general conference in its own right. Consultation resulted in the establishment of a Canadian Jurisdictional Conference, a halfway step, which came into being in August of 1974. At the General Conference of 1989, held in Seattle, Washington, the Canadian Jurisdictional Conference was authorized to form as a General Conference. On August 6, 1990, the Canadian General Conference was inaugurated in Mississauga, Ontario. At the Second General Conference of The Free Methodist Church in Canada, held in 1993, the British Columbia District of the Pacific Northwest Conference became a part of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

<u>The Bishops of The Free Methodist Church in Canada</u>

Donald N. Bastian	1974-1993
Gary R. Walsh	1993-1997
Keith A. Elford	1997- 2017
Cliff Fletcher	2017- 2024
Linda Adams	2024 -

CHAPTER 1:

THE COMMON CONSTITUTION OF FREE METHODISM:

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CHAPTER 1: THE COMMON CONSTITUTION OF FREE METHODISM: DOCTRINE AND MEMBERSHIP

¶100 PREAMBLE

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

THE ARTICLES OF RELIGION

GOD

¶101 *THE HOLY TRINITY*

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

THE SON

¶103 *HIS INCARNATION*

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

For us the Son of God suffered, was crucified, dead and buried. He poured out His life as a blameless sacrifice for our sin and transgressions. We gratefully acknowledge that He is our Saviour, the one perfect mediator between God and us.

¶104 *HIS RESURRECTION AND EXALTATION*

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

THE HOLY SPIRIT

¶105 *HIS PERSON*

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. Proceeding from the Father and the Son, He is one with them, the eternal Godhead; equal in deity, majesty, and power. He is God effective in creation, in life, and in the church. The incarnation and ministry of Jesus Christ were accomplished by the Holy Spirit. He continues to reveal, interpret, and glorify the Son.

¶106 *HIS WORK IN SALVATION*

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

¶107 *HIS RELATION TO THE CHURCH*

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

THE SCRIPTURES

¶108 *AUTHORITY*

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

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

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

¶109 *AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT*

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

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

¶110 *AUTHORITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT*

The New Testament fulfills and interprets the Old Testament. It is the record of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is God's final word regarding humankind, sin, and salvation, the world and its destiny.

The books of the New Testament are Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, I Peter, II Peter, I John, II John, III John, Jude, Revelation.

HUMANKIND

¶111 *A FREE MORAL PERSON*

God created human beings in His own image, innocent, morally free and responsible to choose between good and evil, right and wrong. By the sin of Adam, humans as the offspring of Adam are corrupted in their very nature so that from birth they are inclined to sin. They are unable by their own strength and work to restore themselves in right relationship with God and to merit eternal salvation. God, the Omnipotent, provides all the resources of the Trinity to make it possible for humans to respond to His grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. By God's grace and help, people are enabled to do good works with a free will.

¶112 *LAW OF LIFE AND LOVE*

God's law for all human life, personal and social, is expressed in two divine commands: Love the Lord God with all your heart, and love your neighbour as yourself. These commands reveal what is best for persons in their relationships with God, others, and society. They set forth the principles of human duty in both individual and social action. They recognize God as the only Sovereign. All people as created by Him and in His image have the same inherent rights regardless of sex, race, or colour. All should therefore give God absolute obedience in their individual, social, and political acts. They should strive to secure to everyone respect for their person, their rights, and their greatest happiness in the possession and exercise of the right within the moral law.

¶113 *GOOD WORKS*

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

SALVATION

¶114 *CHRIST'S SACRIFICE*

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

¶115 *THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST*

A new life and a right relationship with God are made possible through the redemptive acts of God in Jesus Christ. God, by His Spirit, acts to impart new life and put people into a relationship with Himself as they repent and their faith responds to His grace. Justification, regeneration, adoption, sanctification and restoration speak significantly to entrance into and continuance in the new life.

***World Conference**
Revised - Par 115 was put into referendum and declared approved March 31, 2010

¶116 *JUSTIFICATION*

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

¶117 *REGENERATION*

Regeneration is a biological term which illustrates that by a new relationship in Christ one does in fact have a new life and a new spiritual nature capable of faith, love, and obedience to Christ Jesus as Lord. The believer is born again and is a new creation. The old life is past; a new life is begun.

¶118 *ADOPTION*

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

¶119 *SANCTIFICATION*

Sanctification is that saving work of God beginning with new life in Christ whereby the Holy Spirit renews His people after the likeness of God, changing them through crisis and process, from one degree of glory to another, and conforming them to the image of Christ.

As believers surrender to God in faith and die to self through full consecration, the Holy Spirit fills them with love and purifies them from sin. This sanctifying relationship with God remedies the divided mind, redirects the heart to God, and empowers believers to please and serve God in their daily lives.

Thus, God sets His people free to love Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love their neighbor as themselves.

¶120 *RESTORATION*

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

Christians can sin willfully and sever their relationship with Christ. Even so by repentance before God, forgiveness is granted and the relationship with Christ restored, for not every sin is the sin against the Holy Spirit and unpardonable. God's grace is sufficient for those who truly repent and, by His enabling, amend their lives. However, forgiveness does not give the believer liberty to sin and escape the consequences of sinning. God has given responsibility and power to the church to restore a penitent believer through loving reproof, counsel, and acceptance.

THE CHURCH

¶121 *THE CHURCH*

The church is created by God; it is the people of God. Christ Jesus is its Lord and Head; the Holy Spirit is its life and power. It is both divine and human, heavenly and earthly, ideal and imperfect. It is an organism, not an unchanging institution. It exists to fulfill the purposes of God in Christ. It redemptively ministers to persons. Christ loved the church and gave Himself

for it that it should be holy and without blemish. The church is a fellowship of the redeemed and the redeeming, preaching the Word of God and administering the sacraments according to Christ's instruction. The Free Methodist Church purposes to be representative of what the church of Jesus Christ should be on earth. It therefore requires specific commitment regarding the faith and life of its members. In its requirements it seeks to honour Christ and obey the written Word of God.

¶122 *THE LANGUAGE OF WORSHIP*

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

¶123 *THE HOLY SACRAMENTS*

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

¶124 *BAPTISM*

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

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

¶125 *THE LORD'S SUPPER*

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

Christ, according to His promise, is really present in the sacrament. But His body is given, taken, and eaten only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. No change is effected in the element; the bread and wine are not literally the body and blood of Christ. Nor is the body and blood of Christ literally present with the elements. The elements are never to be considered objects of worship. The body of Christ is received and eaten in faith.

LAST THINGS

¶126 *THE KINGDOM OF GOD*

The kingdom of God is a prominent Bible theme providing Christians with both their tasks and hope. Jesus announced its presence. The kingdom is realized now as God's reign is established in the hearts and lives of believers.

The church by its prayers, example, and proclamation of the Gospel, is the appointed and appropriate instrument of God in building His kingdom. But the kingdom is also future and is related to the return of Christ when judgment will fall upon the present order. The enemies of Christ will be subdued; the reign of God will be established; a total cosmic renewal which is both material and moral shall occur; and the hope of the redeemed will be fully realized.

¶127 *THE RETURN OF CHRIST*

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

¶128 *RESURRECTION*

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

¶129 *JUDGMENT*

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

¶130 *FINAL DESTINY*

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

¶131 SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

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

1. *GOD*

1.1. *Holy Trinity*
Genesis 1:1-2; Exodus 3:13-15; Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1-3; 5:19-23; 8:58; 14:9-11; 15:26; 16:13-15; II Corinthians 13:14.

1.2. *Son*

1.2.1. *His Incarnation* - Matthew 1:21; 20:28; 26:27-28; Luke 1:35; 19:10; John 1:1,10,14; II Corinthians 5:18-19; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 2:17; 9:14-15.

1.2.2. *His Resurrection and Exaltation* - Matthew 25:31-32; Luke 24:1-7; 24:39; John 20:19; Acts 1:9-11; 2:24; Romans 8:33-34; II Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:1-4.

1.3. *Holy Spirit*

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

1.3.2. *His Work in Salvation* - John 16:7-8; Acts 15:8-9; Romans 8:9,14-16; I Corinthians 3:16; II Corinthians 3:17-18; Galatians 4:6.

1.3.3. *His Relation to the Church* - Acts 5:3-4; Romans 8:14; I Corinthians 12:4-7; II Peter 1:21.

2. *THE SCRIPTURES*

2.1. *Authority* - Deuteronomy 4:2; 28:9; Psalm 19:7-11; John 14:26; 17:17; Romans 15:4; II Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 4:12; James 1:21.

2.2. *Authority of the Old Testament* - Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 10:25-28; John 5:39,46-47; Acts 10:43; Galatians 5:3-4; I Peter 1:10-12.

2.3. *Authority of the New Testament* - Matthew 24:35; Mark 8:38; John 14:24; Hebrews 2:1-4; II Peter 1:16-21; I John 2:2-6; Revelation 21:5; 22:19.

3. *HUMANKIND*

3.1. *A Free Moral Person* - Genesis 1:27; Psalm 51:5; 130:3; Romans 5:17-19; Ephesians 2:8-10.

3.2. *Law of Life and Love* - Matthew 22:35-40; John 15:17; Galatians 3:28; I John 4:19-21.

3.3. *Good Works* - Matthew 5:16; 7:16-20; Romans 3:27,28; Ephesians 2:10; II Timothy 1:8-9; Titus 3:5.

4. *SALVATION*

4.1. *Christ's Sacrifice* - Luke 24:46-48; John 3:16; Acts 4:12; Romans 5:8-11; Galatians 2:16; 3:2-3; Ephesians 1:7-8; 2:13; Hebrews 9:11-14,25-26; 10:8-14.

4.2. *The New Life in Christ* - John 1:12-13; 3:3-8; Acts 13:38-39; Romans 8:15-17; Ephesians 2:8-9; Colossians 3:9-10.

4.2.1. *Justification* - Psalm 32:1-2; Acts 10:43; Romans 3:21-26,28; 4:2-25; 5:8-9; I Corinthians 6:11; Philippians 3:9.

4.2.2. *Regeneration* - Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 5:24; Romans 6:4; II Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10; Titus 3:4-5; I Peter 1:23.

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

4.3. *Sanctification* - Leviticus 20:7-8; John 14:16-17; 17:19; Acts 1:8; 2:4; 15:8-9; Romans 5:3-5; 8:12-17; 12:1-2; I Corinthians 6:11; 12:4-11; Galatians 5:22-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; I Thessalonians 4:7; 5:23-24; II Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 10:14.

4.4. *Restoration* - Matthew 12:31-32; 18:21-22; Romans 6:1-2; Galatians 6:1; I John 1:9; 2:1-2; 5:16-17; Revelation 2:5; 3:19-20.

5. *THE CHURCH*

5.1. *The Church* - Matthew 16:15-18; 18:17; Acts 2:41-47; 9:31; 12:5; 14:23-26; 15:22; 20:28; I Corinthians 1:2; 11:23; 12:28; 16:1; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:9-10; 5:22-23; Colossians 1:18; I Timothy 3:14-15.

5.2. *The Language of Worship* - Nehemiah 8:5,6,8; Matthew 6:7; I Corinthians 14:6-9; I Corinthians 14:23-25.

5.3. *The Holy Sacraments* - Matthew 26:26-29; 28:19; Acts 22:16; Romans 4:11; I Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:23-26; Galatians 3:27.

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

5.3.2. *The Lord's Supper* - Mark 14:22-24; John 6:53-58; Acts 2:46; I Corinthians 5:7-8; 10:16; 11:20,23-29.

6. *LAST THINGS*

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

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

6.3. *Resurrection* - John 5:28-29; I Corinthians 15:20,51-57; II Corinthians 4:13-14.

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

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

***World Conference**

MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

¶150 MEMBERSHIP

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

¶151 THE REQUIREMENTS OF MEMBERSHIP ARE:

1. Christian baptism, confession of a personal experience in regeneration, and a pledge to seek diligently until sanctified wholly if that experience has not been attained.
2. Acceptance of the Articles of Religion, the Membership Covenant, the goals for Christian conduct, and matters of church government as written in the *Book of Discipline* or its equivalent *(The Manual).*
3. A covenant to support the church, to live in fellowship with the member thereof, to be an active participant in the ministry of the church, and to seek God's glory in all things.
4. Approval of membership by the official board and the candidate's public declaration of membership vows.

¶152 THE RIGHTS OF MEMBERSHIP ARE:

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

¶153 CHURCH MEMBERSHIP MAY BE TERMINATED ONLY BY:

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

¶154 PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY

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

***World Conference**
Revised – Sao Paulo – 11/8/07. Paragraphs 151.3 and 153.4 were put into referendum and declared approved at the 2007 meetings of the World Conference.

¶155 MEMBERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY

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

¶156 MEMBERSHIP CONFESSION, COMMITMENT AND COVENANT

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

THE MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

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

¶157 AS REGARDS GOD

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

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

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

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

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

¶158 AS REGARDS OURSELVES AND OTHERS

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

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

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

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

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

***World Conference**

¶159 AS REGARDS THE INSTITUTIONS OF GOD

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

We commit ourselves to honour the sanctity of marriage, as the union of one male and one female in holy love, and the family they form;

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

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

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

¶160 AS REGARDS THE CHURCH

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

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

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

We commit ourselves to go into our world and make disciples.

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

***World Conference**
Revised – Rwanda – October 2023. Paragraph 159 was put into referendum and declared approved at the 2023 meetings of the World Conference.

¶161 THE QUESTIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP/PARTNERSHIP *

(In the Free Methodist Church in Canada, the term partnership may be used instead of the term membership with respect to those coming into or living in a covenant relationship with a FMCiC congregation.)

Pastor: Friends, you have been baptized into the life of Jesus Christ and are now part of the family of God. This morning you are indicating your desire to become a partner/member of this congregation of the Free Methodist Church. We're glad that God's mercy has brought you to this point in your journey; and we're joining our prayers with yours as you take this step**.**

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

Candidate: **I do.**

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

Candidate: **I do**.

Pastor: 3. Do you intend by God's grace, to be like Jesus in heart and life, to be fully open to the cleansing and empowering activity of the Holy Spirit, and to be guided by the Scriptures, and by the nurture and fellowship of this faith community?

Candidate: I do, by God's enabling grace, with the help of this community.

Pastor: 4. Will you accept and endeavor to live in harmony with the foundational principles of the Free Methodist Church, including the Articles of Religion, the Membership Covenant and the goals for Christian conduct, and be guided by the leadership structures of the Free Methodist Church?

Candidate: I will do so, trusting God's power to help me.

Pastor: 5. As a follower of Jesus Christ, will you partner with our faith community and the Free Methodist movement as we actively participate in the mission of God in this world; and will you joyfully join us in giving sacrificially of your time, talents and resources to help carry out that mission?

Candidate: With God's help, I will.

Pastor: We welcome you into our faith community and the wider Free Methodist Church. May the experience of partnership/membership in this body not only enrich your life and the life of our church; but also advance God's desires for our community and world.

- * Paragraphs 161-164 are a uniquely Canadian re-arrangement of materials. They are not part of the actual Constitution of the World Free Methodist Church, but are placed here together for convenience of reference with respect to membership matters.
- Full members are those who have reached the age of majority for their province.

¶162 YOUTH MEMBERSHIP *

1. All members under the age of majority as defined by applicable provincial or federal legislation shall be known as youth members. They are not eligible to vote in business meetings.

2. The official board shall review the names of youth members at least once each year. Upon reaching the age of majority, youth members may be approved by the Official Board for adult membership. To be admitted to the voting membership they must answer satisfactorily the questions of adult membership.

¶163 QUESTIONS FOR YOUTH MEMBERSHIP *

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

Candidate: Yes.

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

Candidate: Yes.

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

Candidate: Yes.

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

Candidate: Yes.

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

Candidate: Yes.

- * Paragraphs 161-164 are a uniquely Canadian re-arrangement of materials. They are not part of the actual Constitution of the World Free Methodist Church, but are placed here together for convenience of reference with respect to membership matters.
- Full members are those who have reached the age of majority for their province.

¶164 TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP*

1. Only a member desiring to move to another society or to unite with another evangelical church is entitled to a letter of transfer, and if in good standing, shall receive it upon request.

2. A member wishing to transfer to another society must have a letter of transfer from the pastor. (See Local Church in ¶380.) Without such letter, no one shall be transferred into membership in another place.

   When pastors give such a letter of transfer, they shall at once give notice of the fact to the pastor of the society to which the letter is addressed. The letter of transfer is valid for one year.

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

   It shall be the duty of the pastor receiving the letter to notify the pastor who gave it. (See Local Church in ¶380.)

3 A letter may be given to a member of the church who wishes to unite with another evangelical denomination. (See Local Church in ¶380.)

4. A youth member may be transferred to another society by the pastor's giving of a letter of transfer. (See Local Church in ¶380.)

5. Members received by transfer shall be introduced to the congregation.

- Paragraphs 161-164 are a uniquely Canadian re-arrangement of materials. They are not part of the actual Constitution of the World Free Methodist Church, but are placed here together for convenience of reference with respect to membership matters.
- Full members are those who have reached the age of majority for their province.

***CGC**

CHAPTER 2

THE COMMON CONSTITUTION OF FREE METHODISM: ORGANIZATION

¶200 General Organization

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

¶220 General Conference

¶221 Provisional General Conferences

¶222 New General Conferences

¶230 The World Conference

¶240 The Council of Bishops

¶250 Articles of Organization and Government Specific to a General Conference

***or its equivalent**

WC - Revised – Sao Paulo – 11/8/07. Chapter 2 was put into referendum and declared approved at the 2007 meetings of the World Conference.

THE COMMON CONSTITUTION OF FREE METHODISM: ORGANIZATION

¶200 GENERAL ORGANIZATION

1. Annual Conferences

Annual conferences are the normative Free Methodist organization at the regional level that provides for reasonable spans of care for ministers and congregations, as well as the structure for effective kingdom expansion. Each annual conference in the Free Methodist Church shall be a member of a general conference.

2. General Conferences

The general conferences are the governing bodies of the Free Methodist Church. Each general conference shall consist of at least one annual conference or may, when necessary, make alternative provision for caring for annual conference functions as provided for in ¶220.2. (See details in ¶¶220-222).

3. World Conference

The Free Methodist World Conference exists to co-ordinate the visions of the general conferences by facilitating communication and harmonious relationships among the leaders of the general conferences. It also facilitates the resolution of constitutional issues. (See details in ¶230). Additionally, the World Conference encourages its member general conferences to work together with neighboring annual and/or general conferences to partner in ways that fulfil the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations.

4. Council of Bishops

The Council of Bishops constituted of the bishops of the general and provisional general conferences exists for the purpose of fellowship, mutual counsel and accountability and the extension of the kingdom of God through Free Methodist ministries as outlined in ¶240.

¶210 RESTRICTIVE RULES AND METHODS OF AMENDMENT OF THE COMMON CONSTITUTION OF FREE METHODISM

The Preamble, Articles of Religion, Membership Covenant, General Organization, Restrictive Rules and Methods of Amendment of the Common Constitution of Free Methodism (¶¶100-240) together constitute the Common Constitution of Free Methodism. This Common Constitution of Free Methodism shall be binding upon all general conferences and shall be part of each *Book of Discipline.**

These provisions may be translated into various languages and dialects, including colloquial and idiomatic English, provided the meaning is not changed. Paragraphs 100 to 240 inclusive, except for ¶213 may be altered, changed, or revoked only by concurrent approval of two-thirds of the aggregate votes cast thereon in all the general conferences as provided for in ¶230.2. Paragraph 213 may not be amended or changed in any way.

***or its equivalent**

WC - Revised – Sao Paulo – 11/8/07. Chapter 2 was put into referendum and declared approved at the 2007 meetings of the World Conference.

¶211

Proposals to amend ¶¶100-212 and ¶¶220-240, whether by a two-thirds majority vote of a general conference or by a two-thirds majority vote of the Free Methodist World Conference, are provided for in ¶230.2. Proposals shall be referred to the World Conference Executive Committee. It shall then supervise the referendum voting on the proposed amendment(s) in all the general conferences according to the provisions of ¶230.2.

¶212

No general conference of the Free Methodist Church may enact on its own, either by vote of the general conference or by concurrent vote of its general and annual conferences, any order, policy, or legislation that conflicts with, changes, subtracts from, or adds to:

1. The Articles of Religion, the Membership Covenant, any condition or standard of membership, any standard or rule of doctrine, as set forth in ¶¶100-160, or
2. Any part of ¶¶220-240 or any rule of government so as to do away with substantially equal (meaning within one) lay and ministerial representation on boards and committees (except for the Council of Bishops), or to do away with an itinerant (conference appointed) ministry, or the general superintendency; but
3. Any such change as designated in 1 and 2 preceding may be made only by the procedures set forth in ¶¶210-211 above.

¶213

No general conference of the Free Methodist Church nor all of the general conferences of Free Methodism by any procedure or method whatever (including deletion or amendment of this paragraph, number 213), shall have the power to deprive ministerial or lay members under discipline of the right of trial by an impartial committee, or the right of appeal.

¶220 GENERAL CONFERENCES

1. Guiding Principles

The Free Methodist Church recognizes the need to preserve unity in faith and fellowship, yet allow for the distinctive characteristics of nation, language, and culture. Therefore it provides for the Free Methodist churches of one or more nations to be organized into a general conference provided that the requirements of ¶222.1 are met and maintained. When ongoing spiritual, political, economic or cultural realities make the formation of a general conference inadvisable, these areas may continue as annual conferences or provisional general conferences.

A general conference may encompass more than one nation, but there shall be no more than one general conference in a nation. Any exception to this principle requires approval by the World Conference.

When it becomes necessary for a general conference to elect more than one bishop, the bishops, once elected shall be formed into a board of bishops. Each bishop shall then be assigned to a region and where applicable, each shall be granted legal representative status for the assigned region according to the laws of the nation and the bylaws of the general conference.

***or its equivalent**

WC - Revised – Sao Paulo – 11/8/07. Chapter 2 was put into referendum and declared approved at the 2007 meetings of the World Conference.

2. Status

Existing general conferences must continue to meet the requirements of ¶222 to retain general conference status.

2.1 Existing general conferences experiencing a serious threat to viability due to physical or moral calamity, to war or to economic crisis, may propose interventions or substantial organizational adjustments. The World Conference Executive Committee is authorized to make interim rulings on such proposals. These rulings shall then be submitted to the World Conference for confirmation.

2.2 In the event that it is reported to the World Conference Executive Committee that a general conference no longer fulfills the requirements of ¶222, the World Conference Executive Committee shall arrange for an assessment of the situation and may use members of the Council of Bishops to make the assessment.

2.2.1 If the assessment does not sustain the need for action the matter shall be dropped.
2.2.2 In the event that action is required, the World Conference Executive Committee shall provide counsel and may use members of the Council of Bishops to assist the general conference in remediation.
2.2.3 If remediation is successful the matter shall be dropped.
2.2.4 In cases of persistent inability to meet the requisite conditions, the general conference may request, upon a majority vote of the general conference, to be returned to provisional general conference status or annual conference status in which case the World Conference Executive Committee shall take action on the request and make assignment to a general conference. Should the general conference not take appropriate actions as above, the World Conference Executive Committee shall submit the matter, with recommendation, to the World Conference for vote.

3. Amendments

Proposals to amend the Common Constitution of Free Methodism as defined in ¶210 may be initiated by a general conference as provided for in ¶230.2.

4. Relationship to the World Conference

Each general conference shall recognize the role of the Free Methodist World Conference as set out in ¶230.

4.1 Each general conference shall be represented in the World Conference as defined in ¶230.4.1.

4.2 Each general conference shall ensure that the World Conference president has a copy of its current *Book of Discipline** containing all its legislation, orders, and policies. If a question should arise concerning the agreement of any item therein with the Common Constitution of Free Methodism, the procedures of ¶230.3 shall be applied.

4.3 A general conference or its board of administration may refer to the World Conference Executive Committee, as a representative coordinating body, any problem that may arise with another general conference involving boundaries, recognition of credentials, and

***or its equivalent**

WC - Revised – Sao Paulo – 11/8/07. Chapter 2 was put into referendum and declared approved at the 2007 meetings of the World Conference.

other inter-jurisdictional matters. The World Conference Executive Committee shall limit its involvement to the giving of counsel and assistance with mediation. If no solution satisfactory to both general conferences is reached, the matter shall be referred to the next sitting of the World Conference and its ruling shall prevail.

4.4 The board of administration of a general conference may appeal to the World Conference Executive Committee (see ¶230.7) for counsel to assist with the resolution of conflicts within its general conference, or, if the World Conference Executive Committee is convinced of a general conference's non-compliance with the Common Constitution, the World Conference Executive Committee may initiate assistance, counsel and mediation. The World Conference Executive Committee shall limit its involvement to the giving of counsel and assistance with mediation. If no solution satisfactory to the conflict is reached, the matter shall be referred to the next sitting of the World Conference and its ruling shall prevail.

4.5 A general conference may not, under any circumstances, vote to leave the denomination and/or join another denomination. It may not vote to change its name with the intention of becoming a new denomination. Any action to do either of the above shall be deemed illegal and shall result in action by the World Conference to suspend the general conference, to re-organize the loyal elements within the area of that general conference, to declare all other ministers and members to be withdrawn from the Free Methodist Church and to ensure that assets are retained by the Free Methodist Church.

4.6 Where possible, general conferences shall work together with neighboring annual and/or general conferences and/or Free Methodist mission agencies to develop groups such as area fellowships.* Their purpose is to provide inspiration, spiritual counsel, mutual encouragement, vision casting and strategic planning to better reach the world with the gospel through Free Methodist ministries.

These partnership organizations shall operate under constitutions suited to their particular vision and mission. These constitutions and any changes thereto must be approved by the World Conference Executive Committee and ratified by the World Conference. Such World Conference approved entities shall be granted one honorary seat at the regular sitting of the World Conference.

5. Church name

No church or other organization may use the name "Free Methodist" without the express permission of the Free Methodist World Conference, a general conference, or authorized Mission agencies/associations of a general conference. Wherever the use of the name "Free Methodist Church" is impossible or impractical, a general conference, or in the interim of its sessions, its board of administration, may authorize an adaptation of the church's name, subject to the approval of the World Conference.

¶221 Provisional General Conferences

1. One or more annual conferences may petition the general conference to which they belong for status as a provisional general conference. This intermediate developmental stage provides for the mentoring of indigenous leaders who appreciate the interdependent nature of the international church with its systems of mutual dependence and accountability and who

***or its equivalent**

WC - Revised – Rwanda – October 2023. Paragraph 220.4.4 was put into referendum and declared approved at the 2023 meetings of the World Conference.

will grow by exercising gifts, graces and authority under the leadership of the sponsoring general conference and its bishop.

A provisional general conference receives a measure of jurisdictional authority and autonomy to develop unique mission and vision statements, and to interpret and apply the *Book of Discipline** within its culture under the leadership of its suffragan bishop as it carries out the mission of the church.

Achieving the following standards will allow the board of administration of the sponsoring general conference to authorize the formation of the requested provisional general conference:

1.1 Evidence of spiritual depth and maturity in integrity and leadership.
1.2 A membership growth pattern spanning several years.
1.3 Evidence of being both an evangelistic and a sending church with plans to reach to a different tribe or people group.
1.4 Demonstrated loyalty to the doctrines and practices of the Free Methodist Church as set forth in its *Book of Discipline**.
1.5 Evidence of ability to understand, articulate and commit to the biblical and theological tenets of the Wesleyan-Arminian doctrine.
1.6 Development of its own draft of a *Book of Discipline** including the Common Constitution of Free Methodism and organizational structures essential to their culture and size, according to guidelines set forth by the general conference to which it belongs.
1.7 Adequate financial strength and stability with annual audits.
1.8 Normally, a minimum of 3000 adult members and 20 elders.
1.9 Nomination of a suffragan bishop who shall be mentored by a bishop from the sponsoring general conference

2. Contractual agreements with any Free Methodist mission agency or association with regard to mission personnel and properties shall remain in force until renegotiated with the mission agency or association and/or its sponsoring general conference.

3. When it can be demonstrated that the above prerequisites are met, a formal petition may be presented to the board of administration of the sponsoring general conference. It shall have the power to authorize the formation of a provisional general conference, approve the draft of the *Book of Discipline** and elect a suffragan bishop. The/a bishop from the sponsoring general conference shall consecrate the new suffragan bishop at a mutually agreeable time.

4. A provisional general conference may continue in this status indefinitely, as approved by the board of administration of the sponsoring general conference.

5. Provisional general conference status may be withdrawn by the board of administration of the sponsoring general conference due to any significant regression from these established standards or due to a failure of adequate leadership for any reason.

¶222 New General Conferences

1. A new general conference may be authorized by the sponsoring general conference when the provisional general conference seeking such status has adopted the provisions of the Common Constitution of Free Methodism which are binding for all general conferences as defined in ¶210, as a part of its constitution and *Book of Discipline** and has been

***or its equivalent**

recommended by the board of the sponsoring general conference on the grounds that the following standards are satisfied:

1.1 An effective, financially sustainable organizational structure at all levels;
1.2 A systemic plan to mentor pastors in the discipleship of new converts, in the nurture and development of healthy church members and in the equipping of lay workers;
1.3 A systemic plan to discover and train ordained ministers (deacons and elders or their equivalents);
1.4 Normally, a minimum of 5000 adult members and 30 elders;
1.5 A systemic plan to multiply churches locally and globally (or at least to new people groups);
1.6 Refinement of the draft of the *Book of Discipline** for approval by the board of the sponsoring general conference, including mission and vision statements with published copies available to all clergy and all local churches;
1.7 Communication capabilities across the provisional general conference;
1.8 Evidence of responsible stewardship of life and possessions including the proper management of funds and annual audits and reporting to their own board of administration or provisional general conference;
1.9 The existence of a property-holding body or bodies as required by local laws;

2. Contractual agreements with any Free Methodist mission agency or association with regard to missions personnel and properties shall be re-negotiated to reflect the new relationship between the new general conference and the mission agency or association and/or the sponsoring general conference.

3. When it can be demonstrated by a committee composed of the supervising bishop, the suffragan bishop and two lay members of the provisional general conference board of administration that the above prerequisites are met, a formal petition may be presented to the sponsoring general conference. It shall have the power to authorize the formation of a new general conference and the election of a bishop or bishops.

4. Autonomy of the new general conference from the sponsoring general conference is final following a ceremony led by a bishop of the sponsoring general conference at a duly called sitting of the provisional general conference. Following this ceremony, while the delegates are assembled, the new general conference may convene to conduct important or urgent business as an autonomous member of the World Conference.

¶230 THE WORLD CONFERENCE

1. Purpose

The Free Methodist World Conference exists to facilitate communication and harmonious relationships among the leaders of the general conferences and the area fellowships* and the resolution of constitutional issues.

In harmony with this purpose its responsibilities shall be:

1.1 To provide for worldwide fellowship among Free Methodist bodies and regularly convene a global assembly of representatives of the Free Methodists bodies for coordination and planning of worldwide ministries;

***or its equivalent**

1.2 To encourage the expansion of the Kingdom of God by the Free Methodist Church in existing conferences and in new fields through evangelism that is in harmony with Wesleyan doctrine and practices;

1.3 To assume legislative and judicial authority in matters relating to the Free Methodist Constitution as defined below;

1.4 To monitor the integrity of every Free Methodist institution under the provisions of the Common Constitution of Free Methodism (see ¶210) and of the *Book of Discipline** of the institution's general conference;

1.5 To maintain and administer an international scholarship fund for the development of Free Methodist leaders grounded in biblical theology and Wesleyan doctrine.

2. Legislative Authority

The World Conference has the authority to supervise the voting of the general conferences on all matters pertaining to referenda according to the following provisions:

2.1 Proposals to amend the constitution (except for ¶213) may be initiated by a two-thirds majority vote of a general conference or by a two-thirds majority vote of the Free Methodist World Conference when it is meeting in session. Proposals shall then be circulated as referenda under the supervision of the World Conference Executive Committee to be voted on by all general conferences. If a resolution initiated by a general conference goes into referendum unchanged by the World Conference, the initiating general conference shall not need to vote again during the referendum period. Instead, it shall report the results of the original vote taken to propose the amendment.

A two-thirds aggregate vote of all general conferences shall be required for approval of referenda. If a general conference has a structure not constituted of the equivalent of one ministerial and one lay member for every six hundred full members, its vote results shall be adjusted to have the weight of two votes per 600 members.

2.2 When a general conference can not assemble to vote and report back to the World Conference Executive Committee within four years of the time the World Conference Executive Committee has circulated a referendum, rather than surrendering its right to vote on the said issue, its board of administration may vote in its place. Votes taken by a board of administration shall be reported as the corresponding proportional number of votes of its general conference. The two-thirds aggregate vote shall be based on the votes reported within the four years allowed.

2.3 When the voting has been completed, the World Conference Executive Committee shall officially declare the results of the vote to all the general conferences by written notice and it shall be in effect as of that date.

3. Judicial Authority

***or its equivalent**

WC - Revised – Sao Paulo – 11/8/07. Chapter 2 was put into referendum and declared approved at the 2007 meetings of the World Conference.
WC – Revised – Durban, South Africa 10/2017

The Free Methodist World Conference shall be responsible for maintaining compliance with the provisions of the Common Constitution of Free Methodism which are binding for all general conferences as defined in ¶210, and with deciding inter-jurisdictional matters between general conferences, and internal conflicts within a general conference as defined in ¶220.4.4 and ¶220.4.5.

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

3.1 `To review, through its Executive Committee, the legislation, orders, and policies of all the general conferences and to investigate all actions that are alleged to not be in compliance with the provisions of the Common Constitution of Free Methodism which are for all general conferences as defined in ¶210.

3.1.1 When the World Conference Executive Committee determines that an action of a general conference is in conflict with the Common Constitution of Free Methodism, the general conference shall upon receiving written notice, discontinue the action in question.

3.1.2 Upon written request, if so authorized by a two-thirds vote of the general conference or its board of administration, an appeal may be made to the World Conference within one year of the written notice being received.

3.1.3 The delegates and bishop(s)of a general conference or general conferences, whose case or cases come before the World Conference shall, after having presented their evidence, refrain from voting on the issue in which they have direct interest.

3.1.4 If the appeal is upheld by a simple majority of the votes of the World Conference, the general conference may resume the action.

3.1.5 In the event the appeal is denied by a simple majority of the votes of the World Conference, the action by the general conference found in violation must be permanently discontinued and its effects shall be considered null and void.

3.1.6 If upon written notice, the general conference whose action has been called into question should refuse to abide initially by the World Conference Executive Committee's ruling to discontinue an action as provided for in 230.3.1.1 or later by a World Conference decision to permanently discontinue an action as provided for in 230.3.1.5, the World Conference or its Executive Committee shall be empowered to suspend the general conference and to provide, at its discretion, for the reorganization of the loyal elements of the Free Methodist Church within the area of that general conference, and to declare all other ministers and members to be withdrawn from the Free Methodist Church.

3.2 To decide any matter that may arise between general conferences involving boundaries, recognition of credentials, and other inter-jurisdictional matters according to the provisions of ¶220.4.3.

***or its equivalent**

WC - Revised – Sao Paulo – 11/8/07. Chapter 2 was put into referendum and declared approved at the 2007 meetings of the World Conference.
WC – Revised – Durban, South Africa 10/2017

3.3 To assist with the resolution of conflicts within a general conference according to the provisions of ¶220.4.4.

4. Organization and Structure

4.1 Voting delegates

Voting delegates to the World Conference shall form a body of substantially equal representation of lay and ministerial members according to the following formula:

4.1.1 All bishops of general and provisional general conferences shall be delegates. One lay delegate shall be elected for each bishop.

4.1.2 A general conference with one bishop and 50,000 members shall be entitled to one additional ministerial delegate and one additional lay delegate.
A general conference with one bishop and 100,000 members shall be entitled to two additional ministerial delegates and two additional lay delegates.
A general conference shall have no more than six delegates unless it has more than three bishops.

4.2 Honorary delegates

4.2.1 Each area fellowship* may send one representative.

4.2.2 Directors of Free Methodist mission agencies and associations and representatives of area fellowships* shall be honorary members with a voice but no vote.

4.3 The World Conference shall meet at least once every four years. Special meetings may be called by a two-thirds majority of the World Conference Executive Committee. It may authorize a vote on this or on any executive matter by mail, telephone conference call or other electronic means.

4.4 The World Conference Executive Committee shall be elected by the World Conference when it meets in session. A nominating committee composed of one representative from each general conference shall be elected by the World Conference in the first session of its meetings to submit nominations for officers of the World Conference and also members at large of the World Conference Executive Committee. The nominating committee shall include substantially equal lay and ministerial representation.

4.5 The Commissions of the World Conference shall be:

a) Global Impact: Mission to every tongue and tribe, nation and people (Rev. 7:9)
b) Special Ministries: Development, Medical and Relief
c) Leadership Development: Theological Education, Scholarships & Leadership Training
d) Constitutional Matters: Area Fellowship Constitutions, Referendums, World Conference Constitutions, Constitutional Compliance

5. Officers of the World Conference

The officers shall be President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

5.1 The officers shall be members of the World Conference Executive Committee.

***or its equivalent**

WC - Revised – Rwanda – October 2023. Paragraph 230.4.5 was put into referendum and declared approved at the 2023 meetings of the World Conference.

5.2 Officers may serve for two terms. A term is defined as the period between regularly scheduled meetings of the World Conference.

6. The World Conference Executive Committee

The World Conference Executive Committee shall meet at least every two years (preferably in conjunction with the meetings of the Council of Bishops and the World Conference) and shall be composed as follows: President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer Secretary, Treasurer and three members at large, including the outgoing president. These members shall be elected so as to allow equitable representation worldwide and to provide substantially equal representation of lay and ministerial members on the Executive Committee.

6.1 The President shall be the chairperson.

6.2 The World Conference Executive Committee shall present a budget, including a schedule of conference allocations, to the World Conference for approval.

6.3 The World Conference Executive Committee is amenable for its actions to the World Conference. If a vacancy occurs on the World Conference Executive Committee, the remaining members may elect a person, preferably a delegate to the prior World Conference, to fill the vacant position until the next meeting of the World Conference the Council of Bishops shall act as a Nominating Committee to nominate a replacement for an officer(s) or member(s) to be elected by the World Conference Executive Committee to fill the term of the vacancy until the next meeting of the World Conference. If the vacancy is the President, the current Vice President shall assume the Presidency.

6.4 A designated World Conference Executive Committee member may represent the World Conference at each area fellowship.*

7. Relationship to General Conference Boards of Administration

7.1 All negotiations between the World Conference (or the World Conference Executive Committee) and a general conference (or any provisional general conference which the general conference is sponsoring) shall be done by the general conference board of administration.

7.2 The chairperson of each general conference board of administration shall be responsible for official correspondence with the World Conference. It shall be the duty of the chairperson to keep the board of administration of his/her general conference fully informed of the proceedings of the World Conference.

7.3 Copies of all official correspondence between the World Conference and any general and/or provisional conference or the respective board of administration shall be properly filed and available to the bishop(s) or highest administrative officer(s) of the general conference and to the board of administration.

¶240 Council of Bishops

***or its equivalent**

WC - Revised – Sao Paulo – 11/8/07. Chapter 2 was put into referendum and declared approved at the 2007 meetings of the World Conference.
WC – Revised – Durban, South Africa 10/2017

1. The bishops of the general and provisional general conferences shall together constitute a Council of Bishops for the purpose of fellowship, mutual counsel and accountability and the extension of the kingdom of God through Free Methodist ministries. The council shall normally meet every four years, with its meetings being near the midpoint of the interim between the meetings of the World Conference.

2. The Council of Bishops shall elect its own executive composed of a president, vice president, and secretary who shall be responsible for overseeing its activities.

3. Where a general conference has only one bishop, the executive of the Council of Bishops shall assign another bishop to attend the sittings of that general conference to serve as counsel to the presiding bishop. If the assigned bishop observes irregularities in procedure or policy in the general conference, the assigned bishop shall draw this to the attention of the presiding bishop and note this within a report to the World Conference Executive Committee. The assigned bishop shall also preside over the episcopal election.

4. If a general conference board of administration receives evidence of violation of ordination vows in reference to a bishop of its general conference, the Executive Committee of the Council of Bishops must be notified immediately. The Executive Committee of the Council of Bishops may appoint a representative to monitor and assist with the hearing process as defined by that general conference's *Book of Discipline.**

   A ruling that a violation has occurred, and the related discipline, may be appealed to the Executive Committee of the World Conference only on the basis that the process provided in the *Book of Discipline** has not been followed. The Executive Committee of the World Conference may remand the ruling to the general conference or rule that the process was appropriately followed, and that ruling is final.

***or its equivalent**

WC - Revised – Sao Paulo – 11/8/07. Chapter 2 was put into referendum and declared approved at the 2007 meetings of the World Conference.
WC – Revised – Durban, South Africa 10/2017

¶250 ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN CANADA*

1. PREAMBLE

At a December 1994 adjourned sitting, the Canadian General Conference approved recommendations for re-organization. Under this re-organization the four existing annual conferences and their districts were merged with the Canadian General Conference to form one conference. The roles and responsibilities of the annual conferences were assumed by the Canadian General Conference. After subsequent reviews of this legislative action by the Constitutional Council, the Canadian General Conference agreed that it would take steps to re-instate some form of annual conference structure when growth permits. The following applies until such time as annual conference structures are re-instated. Amendments to some sections will be required at that point. The general conference will function as a single annual conference as regards ministerial membership until such time as annual conference structures are formed.

2. THE CANADIAN GENERAL CONFERENCE

2.1 *MEMBERSHIP*

The society is the fundamental organizational unit of a fully organized local Free Methodist Church and is composed of its members.

The membership of the Canadian General Conference of The Free Methodist Church in Canada shall consist of the ministerial members and lay delegates elected by the local societies.

2.1.1 MINISTERIAL

All ordained ministers of The Free Methodist Church in Canada, not being members of any local society, shall be voting members of the Canadian General Conference. Ministerial candidates and appointed supply pastors shall be honourary members with voice but without vote.

2.1.2 LAY DELEGATES

Each society shall be entitled to elect one or more lay delegates to the Canadian General Conference. The number and qualifications of lay delegates are defined in ¶320.3. Free Methodist fellowships and church plantings are entitled to send official observers who shall be received as honourary members with voice but without vote.

***¶250** is uniquely Canadian and may be changed by action of the Canadian General Conference, in agreement with the World Conference.

2.1.3 CREDENTIALS

The secretary of the general conference shall receive signed certificates of election from the societies as credentials for the admission of lay delegates to the Canadian General Conference. (See ¶465)

2.2 *AUTHORITY*

The Canadian General Conference operating under the Constitution of The Free Methodist Church shall have general organizational and supervisory powers over all activities of the church in Canada. It shall be the only law-making body. It shall have the power to determine the number of its officers, their qualifications for office, and the manner of their selection.

The Canadian General Conference shall be empowered to establish a board of administration, to determine its powers, and to define the qualifications of its members and the manner of their selection.

2.3 *PRESIDING OFFICER*

The Canadian General Conference shall elect one ordained minister to the office of bishop who shall serve as president of the Conference. The election shall be by ballot. The bishop shall preside at the sittings of the Canadian General Conference. The term of office of the bishops shall begin at the close of the general conference session at which they are elected.

The board of administration shall name a lay person or invite a bishop from another general conference to temporarily serve as chair during the process of election of the bishop.

2.4 *SESSIONS*

The normal interval between general conference sessions shall be approximately three years as defined in ¶410.2. The bishop, or, if there is none, the secretary of the general conference, shall call an extra session of the Canadian General Conference when two-thirds of the societies request such a session, by action of their official boards.

2.5 *QUORUM*

Two-thirds of the total members seated (ministerial and lay delegates) shall constitute a quorum.

2.6. *VOTING*

The members of the Canadian General Conference shall normally deliberate and vote as one body. Nevertheless, on the call of one-quarter of the members present and voting, the house shall divide; and it shall require a majority of the ministerial members and of the lay delegates to pass a motion.

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CHAPTER 3: LOCAL CHURCH ORGANIZATION

¶300 INTRODUCTION

The local church is the growing edge of the denomination. It exists for the nurture of saints and the conversion of sinners. It also exists to be a servant people, showing the compassion of Christ in practical ways. The greatest single resource for the faithful carrying out of the church's mission is the evidence of the love of Christ in its communal life. This gives credibility to its formal and informal witness in the community.

¶301 NAME

1. The Free Methodist Church in Canada is the creator and owner of the following trademark: *The Free Methodist Church in Canada*™.

   Any local church, new congregation (church plant) project, affiliated church shall obtain a Trade-Mark License Agreement and an Association Agreement from The Free Methodist Church in Canada, specifying the terms and conditions under which it may use "Free Methodist Church" or "The Free Methodist Church in Canada".

2. In legal or contractual matters, local churches, new congregation (church plant) projects, or affiliated churches shall use a legal name of the form "(Name) Church, a congregation of The Free Methodist Church in Canada™."

¶305 FORMATION OF NEW CHURCHES

1. Kingdom growth not only requires the development of larger local churches, but also more and varied local churches. Church growth research tells us that new churches are often the most effective at reaching the lost for Christ.

2. During their various stages of development, new Free Methodist churches are known as *new congregation (church plant) projects, or affiliated churches* in preparation for society status. The term, Free Methodist Church may be used in public reference by groups in any of these categories. The following guidelines provide a consistent policy framework, while allowing for flexibility in the strategy for multiplying local churches. For more information on the formation stages of new churches, please see ¶370 Introduction (The Local Church Handbook).

3. New churches are most effectively formed when they are mothered or sponsored by one or more churches. Occasionally, new churches will be established through other arrangements. In any case, new churches will normally be sponsored by an existing church or organization (such as the conference) during its initial development.

4. **New Congregation (Church Plant) Projects**

   A New Congregation (Church Plant) Project is the first phase in the formation of new congregations.

4.1 Each new congregation (church plant) project must have a sponsoring organization. This may be a local church, a group of local churches, or the conference.

4.2 The pastor or lay leader of the new congregation (church plant) project shall be accountable to the sponsoring organization. The sponsoring organization shall provide support in the form of consultation, personnel, materials and/or finances.

4.3 The pastor or lay leader of a new congregation (church plant) project is responsible for preparing persons to become members. Free Methodists participating in the project may retain membership in their home church until the new project becomes established.

4.4 Full self-support should be reached as early as possible. The project may hold and disburse its own funds. Until a new congregation has been approved by Canada Revenue Agency as a Registered Charity, the sponsoring organization must supervise all financial transactions, and be responsible for preparing a financial review of the accounts and issuing charitable donation receipts. New congregation (church plant) projects may not hold real property.

4.5 The pastor or lay leader of the project may appoint a ministry committee to provide counsel and direction, under guidance from the sponsoring organization.

4.6 New congregation (church plant) projects are encouraged to move to society status as soon as possible. Only under exceptional circumstances, approved by the sponsoring organization and/or the board of administration, should a new congregation continue for more than three years without moving to society status.

4.7 A leader of a new congregation (church plant) project shall have an honorary seat in the conference, with a voice but without a vote.

4.8 The new congregation (church plant) project shall obtain Trade-Mark License/Association Agreements from The Free Methodist Church in Canada. (See ¶301.1)

5. SOCIETY STATUS

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

5.1 The director of church planting, in consultation with the board of administration, may authorize a church plant to become a Free Methodist society when:

- A job description performance appraisal (JDPAS) process resulting in the development of a mission statement and ministry plan has been completed.
- The congregation is able to demonstrate that it is self-propagating (growing), self-governing (an active official board), self-supporting (financially viable, see ¶375.3.3).

5.2 The board of administration may provide a phased plan to bring the new society into full participation in all conference and denominational financial responsibilities as soon as possible. (See ¶375.3.3).

¶306 AFFILIATION STATUS

Congregations that have formed outside of Free Methodist Church sponsorship and wish to become part of the denomination may enter as affiliated churches. The board of administration or a nearby Free Methodist Church will serve as their sponsoring agency.

1. The director of church planting, with the concurrence of the board of administration, may recognize a congregation as an affiliated church when:

   - The congregation applying for affiliation has completed a diagnostic viability study.
   - At least 12 members of the congregation have been adequately prepared through membership instruction to become members of the Free Methodist Church.
   - These members of the congregation give joint public assent to the adoption of *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada* and answer the questions for membership individually. (See questions in ¶384A.)
   - A certificate of agreement prepared by The Free Methodist Church in Canada has been signed by the pastor, the members of the congregation, the bishop (or a designee) as a representative of the board of administration. This document shall indicate that the pastor(s) and members of the affiliating congregation have given joint public assent to the adoption of *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada*. The board of administration may enter into any legal agreements that are deemed necessary to facilitate the affiliation. (See certificate sample in ¶384B.)
   - The affiliating church has been approved by Canada Revenue Agency as a charitable organization under the terms of the Income Tax Act.
   - The affiliating church shall obtain Trade-Mark License/Association Agreements from The Free Methodist Church in Canada. (See ¶301.1)

2. The pastor or lay leader of the affiliated church shall be accountable to the director of church planting and the conference. Together they shall guide the congregation toward becoming a Free Methodist society. The pastor or lay leader shall provide periodic written reports of progress and needs for further guidance to the director of church planting.

3. The affiliated church may receive adult and youth members

4. The members of the affiliated congregation shall elect an official board of no fewer than three members with officers as outlined in ¶320.2.3 and provide for such additional organizational structures as are needed to administer its ministry programs. (See ¶325 for guidance.)

5. An affiliated congregation shall hold and disburse its own funds. It shall provide the conference with a copy of its annual financial review.

6. An affiliated congregation is encouraged to financially support conference and denominational ministries as a first step toward full participation in these financial responsibilities. (See ¶375.3.2).

7. An affiliated congregation that owns property need not incorporate the denomination's trust clause outlined in ¶385 into its deed until the time of recognition as a society. Any financial assistance provided by the denomination to affiliated congregations for the acquisition or improvement of real property shall be in the form of mortgages or loans repayable immediately if the church does not choose to become a Free Methodist society.

8. Non-Free Methodist pastors of affiliated congregations may not join the denominational pension plan until they are approved by the ministerial education guidance and placement committee to transfer their credentials to the conference. They may then join the benefit program at their discretion, and with the approval of their official board.

9. An affiliated congregation shall be granted an honorary membership in the general conference. Its delegate(s) is entitled to an honorary seat, with a voice, but without a vote.

10. An affiliated congregation shall remain in this relationship for no longer than three years without the consent of the board of administration.

11. If the congregation wishes to withdraw from its relationship with The Free Methodist Church in Canada, it may do so after providing appropriately for:
    - Transfer of its members into a newly organized congregation or provision of letters of membership transfer to any members wishing to withdraw.
    - Documentation cancelling any affiliation or other legal agreements with The Free Methodist Church in Canada, and termination of any Trademark License Agreement granted to it.

12. **SOCIETY STATUS**
    12.1. The director of church planting, in consultation with the board of administration, may recognize an affiliated congregation as a Free Methodist society when:
        - It has developed a mission statement and plan that is in harmony with the denomination.
        - It has sufficient members, maturity and financial stability to function in this relationship.
        - Its members have given approval to join with The Free Methodist Church as a society.

    12.2. At the time of becoming a society, the affiliated congregation must revise its deeds to real property to include the denomination's trust clause provided in ¶385.

    12.3. The board of administration may provide a phased plan to bring new societies into full participation in conference and denominational financial responsibilities as soon as possible. (See 375.3.3)

¶307 MERGERS

Occasionally a denomination or group of related established churches may wish to merge with The Free Methodist Church in Canada. Mergers require extensive negotiations, and the development of related legal agreements.

1. When another denomination or group of churches with a polity and doctrine compatible with the Free Methodist Church has an interest in merging with The Free Methodist Church in Canada, the board of administration may establish a committee to enter into exploratory merger discussions.

2. If these discussions provide a favourable indication that a merger is feasible, the board of administration may authorise further detailed discussion to define the draft terms of merger, and the development of draft legal merger agreements.

3. The board of administration is empowered to conclude and approve a final merger agreement with another denomination or group of churches if:

   - The denomination or group is willing to adopt *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.*

   - Appropriate legal merger agreements are developed and approved by appropriate bodies within both denominations. These agreements must indemnify The Free Methodist Church in Canada from any financial or legal liabilities, present or past, of the merging denomination or its congregations.

   - The merger will have no impact on the Free Methodist Church outside of Canada.

   - The ordained ministers of the merging denomination are willing to meet the qualifications for acceptance into ordination in the Free Methodist Church.

4. If any of the above conditions cannot be met, the merger must be approved by a full session of the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church. If the merger will have impact outside of Canada, the merger shall be negotiated as needed with other General Conferences and the World Conference.

¶308 THE CLOSURE OF CHURCHES

The closing of a church (church plant or society) requires that due process be followed. The following are steps to guide this process.

1. The initiative to begin the process may come from either the official board of the church or the conference. This shall come in the form of a formal, written recommendation to the congregation.

2. A letter is to be sent to the members and adherents of the congregation to inform them of the recommendation and to invite them to a duly called (See ¶315.3) special meeting of the church to discuss the recommendation to close.

3. If it is the will of the church to discontinue ministry and close, the following motions will need to be passed by majority vote of the members at the duly called meeting of the church:

   3.1 It is recommended to the Board of Administration of The Free Methodist Church in Canada that ministry at _____ Church cease and that it be closed effective _____.
   (Date)

   3.2 It is recommended that the Trustees of the _____ Church be empowered to distribute or dispose of any equipment or building contents under the direction of the Director of Administrative Services of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

   3.3 It is recommended that any real estate owned by the church be disposed of according to the provisions of ¶350.3 of *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.*

4. The pastor is to provide letters of transfer to all members and is to ensure that the records of the church are sent to the ministry centre.

¶310 SOCIETY

1. The society (a Methodist term for the members of a local church) is the fundamental unit of organization of a fully organized local Free Methodist church. For further detail on local church organization, see ¶¶370-376.

2. **Membership:** A Free Methodist society shall be composed of all members of the local church. Members under the age of majority, as defined by provincial legislation, are youth members without vote. The requirements for membership are defined in ¶150ff.

3. **Authority:** The ongoing business of the local church is generally carried out by the official board that is elected by the society. The official board and all committees, groups or organizations functioning within the church are ultimately amenable to the society. The society has authority in the following areas:

   3.1 Final approval of the organization plan for the official board committees and service positions of the church.

   3.2 Officials to be elected at the annual meeting
   - 3.2.1 Officers which must be elected:
     - official board (¶320.2.1)
     - nominating committee (¶320.5.2.3)
   - 3.2.2 Unless otherwise approved according to the applicable provisions of ¶320.2 (i.e., by the official board), the following must be elected:
     - secretary and treasurer (¶320.2.3)
     - delegates and reserve delegates (¶320.3)
     - auditor and other financial officers (¶320.4)
     - the trustees (¶320.5.2.1**)**
     - the pastor's cabinet (See ¶320.5.2.2)

   3.3 Final approval of all major decisions, such as:
   - a recommendation to plant another church
   - a recommendation to purchase, mortgage or otherwise encumber, or sell real property, erect a building or undertake major renovations, lease property, or to relocate (subject to conference approval).

   3.4 Recommendations regarding the addition of full-time, paid ministerial positions.

¶315 SOCIETY MEETINGS

1. The society shall meet at least annually at a time and place to be determined by the society or official board. The annual meeting shall be announced at least 30 days in advance. Absentee voting is not permitted.

2. The pastor (or, in his/her absence or refusal to do so, the majority of the official board) may call a special meeting of the society when in their judgment the interests of the church require it.

3. Special meetings shall be announced at least 30 days in advance, except in emergency situations. A special meeting may only consider the limited list of agenda items specified in the announcement.

4. Either the pastor (without vote) or the chairperson of the official board may chair the society meeting. In the absence of the pastor, or the board chairperson, members present may elect a chairperson pro-tem by ballot.

5. Minutes of society meetings shall be kept in the minute book of the official board.

6. Robert's Rules of Order in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure. Unless otherwise specified, "elect" or "election" in this chapter means a simple majority vote (50% plus one) by show of hands, voice, ballot or other manner determined by the local church. Tellers may be appointed to distribute materials and count ballots.
7. When The Manual gives the society the option to elect personnel or to empower the official board to do so, the society may so empower the official board by action taken annually or by standing policy.

¶320 THE ANNUAL MEETING

1. During the annual meeting, the society will elect members to the official board and, based on the organization plan and policies approved by the society, other committees and personnel to staff the various service positions of the church (See ¶325.1). Leaders in the church should meet the leadership qualifications of ¶630.3.3.

2. **OFFICIAL BOARD**

2.1 The society shall elect an official board of no less than three and no more than 15 members. (See ¶325.1)

2.2 No office shall be filled by the same person for more than six consecutive years. (In the case of delegates, see ¶320.3.5.) Where the nominating committee recommends that a longer term is necessary, the election shall be by at least a two-thirds majority. It is recommended that the members of committees and the board serve on rotating terms to provide some continuity along with change.

2.3 **Officers of the Society and Official Board:** The society will elect persons to serve as secretary and treasurer of the society and official board, or grant authority to the official board to appoint such officers.

3. **DELEGATES**

3.1 The delegates serve a number of functions. They serve as the ongoing liaison between the local church and the conference and its national leadership team. They will also serve on the Pastoral Leadership Task Force if the local church enters into a pastoral transition (change of pastors) during their term of office. They also serve as the voting representatives of the local church during conference sittings. A delegate's job description is found in ¶375.5.

3.2 Reserve delegates will serve in the place of delegates at the conference sitting if delegates are not able to serve.

3.3 The number of lay delegates elected by a local church is as follows:

a. A local church without a pastor elects one lay delegate.

b. A local church with at least one appointed pastor (ordained, commissioned, ministerial candidate) will elect one lay delegate, and may elect additional delegates according to the greater of:

i. one additional lay delegate for each appointed ordained minister (beyond the lead pastor) serving at least half-time.

OR

ii. one lay delegate for every 75 members (that is, 1-75 members entitles the society to one lay delegate; 76-150 members entitles to two delegates; 151-225 members entitles to three delegates, etc.)

3.3 The number of delegates to be elected shall be according to the number of appointed pastors/and members at the time of the deadline set by the conference for submitting the names of delegate(s).

3.5 The delegate(s) and reserve delegate(s) may be elected by the society or the society may choose to empower the official board to elect delegates from among its members. In order for delegates to have one year of service prior to attending general conference, and then to have two years to work with the pastor to implement the actions of the general conference, they may be elected at a society/official board meeting a year prior to the sitting of the general conference, and will serve until the next such election. **(See ¶315.6-7)**

The delegates should normally serve for a maximum of three consecutive terms.

Delegates to be elected for additional consecutive terms must be elected by at least a two-thirds majority.

3.6 The delegate, or where more than one is elected, the first delegate elected, shall serve on the official board. The role of delegate and board chair should not normally be filled by the same person. It may be advisable for all delegates to serve on the official board if this does not unduly increase the size of the board.

4. OTHER OFFICERS

4.1 **Signing Officers (financial):** The society, or in its place, the official board, shall elect financial signing officers who will have the authority to sign cheques, and other financial documents.

4.2 **Auditors:** The society, or in its place, the official board, shall elect an auditor who will have the responsibility of conducting a financial review of the accounts of all organizations or groups within the local church. The auditor shall report in writing to the annual meeting of the society. External auditors may be used.

4.3 **Financial Tellers:** The society, or in its place, the official board, shall elect financial tellers who shall assist the treasurer to count offerings and complete signed offering reports stating the date and the amount of the offering.

4.4 **Financial Secretary:** A financial secretary may be elected by the society, or in its place, the official board, to assist the treasurer in the keeping of financial accounts.

5. COMMITTEES OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

5.1 The society shall elect the members of local church committees, unless otherwise provided for by local policy adopted by the society.

5.2 The following committees shall be elected: **Trustees:** The trustees shall be elected by the society by ballot vote. There shall be no fewer than three trustees, two thirds of which shall be members of the local church. The society may optionally elect to have the official board serve as the trustees of the society for legal and financial matters and make provision for another committee to care for maintenance and other property matters.

5.2.1 **Pastor's Cabinet:** In many of our local churches, the Board serves the functions of the traditional Pastor's Cabinet; however, should the board desire to create a Pastor's Cabinet, the following directions should be followed:

- The Purposes of the Pastor's Cabinet will be clearly communicated to the whole church so as to avoid any misunderstanding or overlap between Board and Pastor's Cabinet;
- The Pastor's Cabinet will assist the pastor by meeting with the pastor as a prayer cabinet, receiving recommendations and concerns arising from the congregation and reflecting on them with the pastor, and receiving recommendations and concerns from the pastor and offering support and counsel to the pastor;
- Candidates for the Pastor's Cabinet are to selected by the Pastor but will be approved and appointed by the board;
- The members of the Pastor's Cabinet are to be mature, trustworthy individuals who have a healthy participation in the life of the local church and can be trusted with sensitive and confidential information. The majority of members of the Pastor's Cabinet must be local church members, and should include at least one board member;
- The Pastor's Cabinet shall be no more than 6 members.

5.2.2 **Nominating Committee:** The nominating committee shall be elected from among the members of the church by the society by ballot. The senior pastor is an ex officio member.

5.3 Local churches are encouraged to ensure that at least a majority, preferably two-thirds of the members of church committees, are members of the local church.

6. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Where a member of the Official Board has an interest in a material contract or transaction or a proposed material contract or transaction with the local church, such member shall disclose such interest in writing or request that such disclosure be recorded in the minutes of the meeting of the Official Board. Where a church is federally incorporated, the member shall comply, in all respects, with section 141 of the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act and may be required by the Official Board to withdraw from any discussion with respect to same. Such member shall not vote on the matter being considered. If the material contract or transaction is retained or awarded where a member has an interest, the member shall resign from the Official Board. The member shall comply with all provincial laws which protect charitable property within the province of the local church.

¶325 OFFICIAL BOARD

1. **MEMBERSHIP:**

The official board (see ¶320.2) shall include the officers of the society, and one or more of the delegates. If so provided in the organization plan, the society may also include additional members-at-large or representatives of various ministry areas of the local church. All members of the official board shall be members of the local church, and be of the age of majority and meet the leadership qualifications of ¶630.3.3. At the discretion of the senior pastor, other pastoral staff may attend official board meetings.

To ensure that the local church does not become classified by Canada Revenue Agency as a private foundation, more than 50% of the members of the official board must be "at arm's length."

2. **OFFICERS OF THE OFFICIAL BOARD:**

2.1 **Chair and Vice-Chair**: The official board shall elect its chair and vice-chair from among its lay members. The chair is a facilitator of the group process of the board when it meets and should consult in advance of meetings with the senior pastor to facilitate the creation of effective, prioritized agendas. The senior pastor shall receive notification of all board meetings and minutes, and shall be entitled to be present and to participate fully without vote in all board discussions except for those held in an executive session of the board.

2.2 **Secretary:** The secretary serves as the recording officer, and is responsible for keeping the minutes and other records of the society and official board.

2.3 **Treasurer:** The treasurer is the "chief financial officer" of the society. The treasurer is entrusted with administration of the financial resources of the church according to the directions of the official board. The treasurer also provides periodic reporting of the financial status to the official board and society.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITY**:**

The official board is responsible for the general supervision of the ongoing operation of the local church and all of its ministries. The official board is at all times amenable to the directions of the society. This includes the responsibility to:

3.1 Plan for the organization and development of the church and its ministries. The official board shall meet at least once each year for the purpose of developing/refining the church's ministry plan. This plan should include measurable goals for each of the ministry areas of the local church.

3.2 The official board also has responsibility to:

- approve admission to lay membership in the local church;
- approve a recommendation from the membership care committee that a lay member be allowed to withdraw, or that membership be terminated (see ¶915);
- approve licenses for lay ministers and recommend lay ministers deemed suitable for ministerial candidacy to the conference ministerial education guidance and placement committee;
- elect members of local church ministry committees if so provided in local by-laws;
- after receiving nominations from the nominating committee, elect replacement official board or committee members if a position becomes vacant in the interim between annual society meetings;
- approve recommendations for any expenditures not covered in the approved budget. (Recommendations for major changes in expenditures should be approved by the society);
- develop and approve changes to the ministry plan and organization plan of the church that are within the general direction of the previously approved plans.

And authority to recommend to the society:

- proposals for major changes to the ministry plan and organization plan of the church;
- proposed annual budgets or major changes to the budget;
- proposals to purchase, mortgage or otherwise encumber, or sell real property, erect a building or undertake major renovations, lease property and to relocate (subject to conference approval);
- the parenting of a new congregation.

4. MEETINGS

4.1 The official board shall meet regularly. The interval between meetings should not exceed two months.

4.2 Members who are unable to attend should notify the chair in advance. Members who attend less than 50% of the meetings within any 12 month period may be replaced.

4.3 Robert's Rules of Order in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure. The official board may adopt standing rules provided that they are not in conflict with Robert's Rules of Order.

¶330 COMMITTEES

Various committees serve within the local church to administer the ministries of the church. The pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all church committees. Where there is more than one appointed pastor, the senior pastor may designate who will serve as the pastoral representative on each committee. All committees are ultimately accountable to the official board.

¶335 PASTORAL EVALUATION

The official board will ensure that an annual performance evaluation of the lead pastor (and other appointed staff) is done according to guidelines provided by the Director of Leadership Development and Church Health office (see par 374.5) The evaluation is to be based on the pastor's current official board-approved job description (built locally and reflecting the congregation's current vision and stated mission).

If the 360 performance appraisal is used and results in an overall average score below 5.5, the results will be referred to the bishop and the ministerial education, guidance and placement committee (MEGaP) who will consult with the pastor and church.

¶340 PASTORAL TRANSITIONS

1. From time-to-time the conference ministerial education guidance and placement (MEGaP) committee will approve changes in pastoral appointments. The related process is called a "pastoral transition". The bias of the committee is toward long tenures.

2. An overview of the process for a pastoral transition is described briefly in ¶875 and in detail in the "*Transitions Handbook*" which is available from the Director of Leadership Development and Church Health office or may be downloaded from the FMCIC website.

3. A pastoral transition is announced by a letter sent by the bishop. It may be initiated in a number of ways:

   - by a signed letter of request jointly from the board and pastor to the bishop
   - by a signed letter of request from the pastor to the bishop
   - as a result of a performance appraisal which indicates to the MEGaP committee a need for a pastoral transition
   - by a signed letter of request to the bishop from the chair of the official board and delegate indicating that a strong majority (75%) of the official board has expressed in a recorded vote at a duly called meeting (see ¶325.4) that they have lost confidence in the pastor's capacity to lead the congregation. Prior to the board's request being sent, if necessary, a pastoral vote can be taken as provided for below.
   - by a decision of the MEGaP committee that a transition is necessary for the health of either the local church or the pastor
   - by a decision of the MEGaP committee to appoint the pastor to another charge
   - due to disciplinary action which necessitates a change in pastoral leadership

4. Situations where a pastoral vote may be requested are:
   - a pastor needs a formal indication of the congregation's level of support.
   - a division in the congregation is challenging the leadership of the pastor

- the pastor's relationship with the official board and/or congregation has seriously deteriorated.

5. In these instances, the official board and/or pastor may request the bishop's permission to conduct a vote of confidence with respect to the pastor's leadership at a duly called special meeting of the society (see ¶315.3). The bishop may also request that a vote be taken. Only those who have attained the age of majority may participate. If non-members and inactive members vote, their ballots shall be of a different colour. (For the purposes of this vote, inactive members means those who have intentionally withdrawn from fellowship with the church and have not complied with the requirements of their membership commitment including: failing to attend the church for at least 3 months and not supporting the church with their resources.)

   The chair of the meeting (appointed by the bishop) and the secretary of the official board shall count the ballots privately, but the results of the vote shall be kept confidential. The tally and the ballots will be sent to the bishop who shall verify the count and then confer with the pastor and official board.

   The vote of the active members will be regarded as the direction of the congregation. The votes of adherents and inactive members will be regarded as opinion to be considered by leaders when the results of the vote are known.

   A ballot shall typically say: "I agree that Pastor ___continue as pastor of this church." Yes___ No____

   If the affirmative vote of the membership is less than seventy-five percent, the bishop and/or Director of Leadership Development and Church Health may begin to work with the official board and pastor to arrange for the church to go into transition.

   If there is a discrepancy between the results of the vote and the pastor's preference, normally the vote of the members will take precedence.

6. The *Handbook on Local Church Organization* provides additional guidance to the pastor and official board on this process. (See ¶374)

7. The pastor or local church shall normally receive a minimum of 60 days notice of an approved pastoral transition, except for transitions resulting from disciplinary action. This period of notice may be waived if a written agreement is approved and signed by the Director of Leadership Development and Church Health, the pastor and the delegate (acting on behalf of and with the knowledge of the official board). The 60-day period begins on the date that the request for a transition is approved by the bishop or by MEGaP decision. It ends with the termination of the pastoral appointment and related pastoral duties.

¶350 PROPERTY

1. INCORPORATION AND DEEDS

Before an annual conference, district conference, a pastoral charge, or a society purchases real estate, a lawyer should be consulted and given a copy of *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada* for reference, and wherever the civil laws will permit, proceed to incorporate. The articles of incorporation, wherever the law will permit, should provide that the corporation

shall be subject to the rules, regulations, doctrines, and *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church* incorporated as "The Free Methodist Church in Canada," as from time to time adopted by the general conference of that church insofar as they do not contravene the civil laws, and that the secular affairs of the corporation shall be managed by trustees elected according to the provisions of this chapter. When incorporation is complete, the deed shall be made out directly to the owning body in its corporate name and shall without exception contain the trust clause given in the following paragraph.

1.1 Trust Clause
The Free Methodist Church in Canada was incorporated by an Act of Incorporation assented to on July 8, 1959, by the Parliament of Canada.

In provinces where the law requires church property to be held by trustees, and where incorporation is not secured as provided for in the above paragraph, all deeds shall be made to the trustees, naming them and their successors.

The deed should be drawn up by a lawyer, and contain a trust clause drawn in harmony with the Second Schedule of the Act of Incorporation of The Free Methodist Church in Canada. A copy of this schedule may be obtained from the Ministry Centre.

The deed shall also include a clause indicating that in the event of dissolution of the local society or other organization, for whatever reason, the trustees shall convey the net proceeds of sale of local properties to The Free Methodist Church in Canada, or if no trustees remain, that titles of all properties shall be transferred to The Free Methodist Church in Canada, in accordance with ¶350 of *The Manual*.

All property, whether real or mixed, acquired by any local society, pastoral charge, conference or other body, whether incorporated or unincorporated, shall be held subject to the foregoing trust as set forth in section 2 whether appearing in the evidence of title, or whether left out of such evidence of title, by mistake, inadvertence, willfully, or otherwise; and can only be released pursuant to the provisions outlined below….

2. Real Property and Trustees

2.1 The trustees (See ¶320.5.2.1) of the local society shall hold in trust all real property (buildings and lands) for the use and benefit of the society. They shall ensure that titles are in order; that deeds are drawn-up in accordance with the civil law; and that the trust clause given in ¶385 is included in all deeds.

2.2 The Free Methodist Church in Canada was incorporated by an Act of Incorporation assented to on July 8, 1959 by the Parliament of Canada. The Second Schedule of this Act defines in detail the permitted uses of real property and the scope of authority of the trustees. Trustees shall acquaint themselves with the Act (which can be ordered from the Ministry Centre of The Free Methodist Church in Canada), and ensure that their actions are in keeping with it.

A. In keeping with the Act of Incorporation:

- The trustees shall obey all lawful directions of the official board, society and conference. They shall be subject to direction by the society through the official board.
- The trustees shall have the power to mortgage, lease or sell property, with the consent of the society and the management committee of the conference.

- The church or parsonage property shall not be sold, mortgaged or encumbered for current expenses.

3. **OTHER PROPERTY**

3.1 All other property (equipment, supplies, money, and investments; i.e. property other than real property) shall be held in trust by the official board and its treasurer for the use and benefit of the society. The treasurer shall have charge of all monies and investments, subject to local by-laws regarding signing authority.

3.2 The Act of Incorporation requires investments made by The Free Methodist Church in Canada to be made in securities authorized under the federal *Insurance Companies Act, Dec. 1991*). All investments made by local churches shall also be in securities authorized under this act. Any investment of funds or change in investments must be approved by the official board. Funds shall be invested prudently and with due diligence for the security of the principal funds. (See the accompanying *Handbook on Local Church Administration* (¶370) for more details).

3.3 Funds (donations, bequests or endowments) designated for specific projects (e.g. building fund, missions, etc.) may not be used to pay operating expenses. If real property is sold, the principal received may not be used for operating expenses. With the permission of the management committee of the conference board of administration, the interest received from money received from the sale of property may be used to pay operating expenses.

4. **DISSOLUTION**

Whenever a local society ceases to exist due to local action, or it is so declared by duly authorized action of the conference, the local trustees and official board, if they remain, shall sell all real and personal property of the society, and transfer the net proceeds, after clearing all local debts, to the conference, or convey the title to all real and personal property to the conference. If no trustees or official board remain, the titles to all real and personal properties of the former society shall transfer to the conference, for the benefit of The Free Methodist Church in Canada. The conference board of administration may authorise the management committee to sell the real and personal properties. The proceeds may be used as directed by the conference board of administration, provided that they are first applied to clearing any remaining debts of the former society.

¶360 FUNDRAISING

It is a long held conviction of The Free Methodist Church that the Lord's work should be supported by the tithes, offerings and gifts of his people. Other methods of fundraising may only be used provided that:

- they are not a substitute for the giving of tithes and offerings;
- they are consistent with the ethics and practices of our faith;
- the church does not become a marketing agency for commercial products.

CHAPTER 3:

HANDBOOK ON LOCAL CHURCH ORGANIZATION AND MULTIPLICATION

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HANDBOOK ON LOCAL CHURCH ORGANIZATION AND MULTIPLICATION

¶370 INTRODUCTION: ORGANIZING FOR THE MULTIPLICATION OF MINISTRIES

In Mark 4: 26-29, Jesus gives a key principle of how God's Kingdom grows. In this little story (see also I Corinthians 3:5-8) Jesus shows how the Kingdom of God grows organically, all by itself. However, "…growth is not unlimited in God's creation. A healthy organism doesn't keep growing indefinitely, but brings forth other organisms, which in their turn also multiply." [1] Kingdom growth not only requires the development of larger local churches, but also more and varied local churches.

Kingdom growth is based on a fundamental concept of MULTIPLICATION as also found in nature. Just as cells, organisms, animals and people reproduce and multiply, so too must individual Christians multiply themselves by witnessing and sharing Christ with those around them (I Peter 3:15 & 16). Good leaders reproduce themselves by developing apprentices (e.g. Paul & Timothy), and healthy small groups multiply themselves. This principle also applies to congregations, ministries and churches. Therefore, it is a natural part of the life cycle of every church to reproduce itself. This is a crucial strategy towards accomplishing our vision as a denomination.

This chapter is a handbook supplementing Chapter 3. Chapter 3 provides the bylaws approved by the general conference, which define the minimum set of denominational requirements for the organization and administration of local churches. This handbook, on the other hand, provides general philosophical guidelines to assist the local church in developing its organizational structure, managing and multiplying its ministries.

Each local church is unique, with its own particular ministry vision, objectives and needs, and members who have their individual Spirit-given gifts and graces. As a result, each church will have its own specific organizational structure. The number of and size of committees, their names and roles may differ from one church to another. At the same time, there are many organizational principles and characteristics that are common to all churches.

The objective of this chapter is to provide guidance on the principles of local church organization and multiplication as they are commonly applied throughout The Free Methodist Church in Canada, while still empowering each church to adapt them to their own local ministry goals, needs and context.

During their life cycles Free Methodist congregations/ministries pass through several stages: the idea stage, core formation stage, new congregation/ministry stage or affiliated (if coming from outside the denomination) stage in preparation for becoming a society. The term, Free Methodist Church, may be used in public reference by groups past the core formation stage. The following guidelines provide a consistent policy framework, while freeing the Holy Spirit to grow His Kingdom in whatever way He chooses. They seek to maintain our responsibility for integrity of faith, functionality of structure, and the health of each individual ministry.

[1] Schwartz, Christian. Natural Church Development. P124.

New churches/ministries are most effectively formed when they are reproduced (sponsored) by one or more churches. Occasionally, new churches will be established through other arrangements. In any case, new ministries will normally be sponsored by an existing church or organization (such as the conference) during its initial development.

370.1 THE IDEA STAGE

Ultimately, the origin of any ministry begins with an idea, a picture, a vision from God given to a person or people. When a person is sufficiently moved by God to approach his/her church about the possibility of bringing this vision to reality, it will be considered an idea. This idea can take an infinite variety of forms. (e.g. a youth ministry that starts a weekly service, a recovery ministry, a drop in centre, any age-specific ministry, a small group that multiplies, etc.)

370. 2 THE CORE FORMATION STAGE

Core formation is the first visible phase in the multiplication of congregations. To move into this stage, several criteria must be met:

When a group of individuals are ready to form a core group, they must have a sponsor. This may be a local church, a network, a group of local churches, or the conference.

The point person(s) (pastor or lay leader) of the core group shall be accountable to the sponsor, a peer network led by a network leader, and a coach. The sponsor shall provide support in the form of consultation, personnel, materials and/or finances.

Once a core group has been formed, it is recommended that it aim to move to the next stage within three years. Only under exceptional circumstances, approved by the sponsor and/or coach and peer network, should a core group continue for more than three years without moving to the new congregation stage.

The point person(s) of the core group is responsible for preparing persons to become members. The memberships of individuals participating in a church multiplication project will be listed in the sponsoring church membership rolls.

The point person(s) of the core group may appoint a leadership team from within the core group to provide counsel and direction, under guidance from the sponsor.

A vision/mission statement, core values and basic ministry plan must be established. Research must begin along various lines (e.g. demographics, structure, methodology, etc.).

The ministry plan must be approved by the sponsor, peer network participants, coach and the director of church planting.

Before applying for Charitable Organization Status with the Canada Revenue Agency, the core group shall obtain Trade-Mark License and Association Agreements from The Free Methodist Church in Canada. (See ¶301.1)

Full self-support should be reached as early as possible. The core group may hold and disburse its own funds. Until a new congregation/ministry has been approved by the Canada Revenue Agency as a Registered Charity, the sponsor must supervise all financial transactions and be responsible for auditing the accounts and issuing charitable donation receipts. Only

societies and affiliated churches may hold real property. If a group at any other stage acquires real property, it will either be held in trust by the sponsor or the conference. (See ¶305.5.7 for further details).

¶370.3 NEW CONGREGATION (CHURCH PLANT) STAGE

The form a new congregation takes, and its relationship to its sponsor, can have infinite variety. However, some key criteria must be met for a core group to be recognized as a new congregation. A congregation, loosely defined, is a group of people with a unique vision for their area, an identified leader(s), worshipping together weekly, with a ministry plan describing their preferred future.

The point person for the new congregation shall continue to be accountable to the sponsor, a peer network led by a network leader, and the director of church planting. The point person of a new congregation shall have an honorary seat in the conference, with a voice but not a vote.

¶370.4 QUESTIONS TO BECOME AN AFFILIATED CONGREGATION

Before a Free Methodist Affiliation Certificate is signed, the bishop (or a designee) shall ask those who are to become charter members, the following questions:

1. Do you today reaffirm your commitment to Jesus Christ to work under His leadership to build His church?
2. Do you today reaffirm your loyalty to the ministry of _____ *(name of local church)* ?
3. Are you now willing to be a Free Methodist Affiliated Congregation of The Free Methodist Church in Canada by agreeing together to adopt *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada,* and are you willing to be guided by it and live in harmony with it as a congregation?

¶371 THE SOCIETY

The primary unit of organization of a local church is the society.

The society consists of all the adult members of the local church. Under the by-laws outlined in Chapter 3, the society must meet at least once a year. This meeting is typically known as the "annual meeting." Other special "society meetings" may be held as needed.

The society has the authority for the direction of the church. All of the officers, the official board and all committees and organizations functioning within the church are ultimately responsible to the society. The society has the authority for approving all major decisions affecting the church. (See ¶310.3.)

¶372 THE OFFICIAL BOARD

The official board is responsible for the general supervision of the ongoing operation of the local church and, as such, establishes the policies that govern the day-to-day operation of the church and its ministries. It may serve as trustees of the society. (See ¶320.5.2.1)

¶372.1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OFFICIAL BOARD

- Plan the development of the vision and mission statements, goals or objectives of the local church, and the steps to reach those goals. This also includes development of an organizational plan, outlining the various committees and positions needed to implement the ministry plan.

- Co-ordinate and facilitate the activities of the various committees and organizations within the local church.

- Monitor progress towards goals at regular intervals with committee and organization chairs.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to reach the stated goals, and recommend changes to the methods used, as appropriate.

- Communicate by keeping the congregation fully informed of the church's ministries, goals and needs.

- Ensure that appropriate records are kept of legal and financial matters, memberships, baptisms/dedications, weddings, and funerals.

¶372.2 OFFICERS OF THE OFFICIAL BOARD

The minimum essential officers in any deliberative assembly are the presiding officer or chair, and the secretary. In addition, the board of a local church needs to have a treasurer, due to its role as the "Board of Directors" of a charitable organization.

It is important that all of the officers of the board be spiritually mature individuals with the ability to see their roles as those of servant-leaders. See ¶630.3.3

¶372.2.1 Chair

As indicated in ¶325.2.1, the official board shall elect a chair and vice-chair from among its lay members. The relationship between the senior pastor and board, and the rationale for having a layperson chair the board, are outlined in more detail below. It must be remembered that in Free Methodism, the senior pastor, appointed by the conference, is to function as the over-all team leader for the leaders of the church.

The primary duties of the chair are to serve the board by preparing the draft agenda for meetings, to preside over the meetings, and to ensure due process, by following and enforcing the appropriate parliamentary procedure. The vice-chair assumes the chair when the chairperson is not able to be present or the chairperson vacates the chair.

When a person is elected by the board to serve as its chair, it is important that he/she has the full confidence and support of the board. A wise chair will recognize that the board may change its chairperson if at any time this confidence is lost. It is very important that the lay chairperson recognizes that his/her role is to be a servant of the board, assisting the whole board in carrying out its task. To preserve the unity of the board, the position carries no authority outside of the role of presiding over board meetings. The chair does not speak for the board, except at the request and direction of the board. The chair is not responsible for supervising or directing the senior pastor or any other staff. The pastor/staff does not report to the chair; they are responsible to the board as a whole.

In developing the board agenda, the lay chair will need to work closely with the senior pastor and committee chairpersons to determine the items that need to be reported or included on the agenda.

¶372.2.2 Secretary

The secretary is the officer of the board responsible for the care and keeping of the official records of the society and board. This includes:

- Keeping accurate, clear minutes of the proceedings of meetings of the society and official board. The minutes should provide a clear record of the date and time of the meeting, the type of meeting, and the members present. They should provide a clear record of all reports presented, and all main motions and their disposition. Recording the names of the movers and seconders and the number of votes pro and con is optional. It is not necessary to record all secondary motions (such as motions to amend, table, postpone) except where necessary for completeness or clarity (e.g. motions to refer). The secretary should ensure that draft minutes are distributed to Board members before the next meeting and that the record, or file copy of the minutes are signed immediately after approval. It is important that all signed record copies be kept in a complete master file.
- Maintaining records of all of the by-laws adopted by the society and policies adopted by the board.
- Keeping a file of official committee reports presented to the board in writing.
- Keeping a file of all official correspondence received by or originated from the board or society.
- Ensuring that the membership records of the society are accurate and current.
- Ensuring that baptismal, marriage and death records are accurate and in a safe place for historical and legal reference.
- Ensuring that all members receive proper notice of annual and special society meetings.

More detailed information on the role of the secretary, and the recording of minutes can be found in Robert's Rules of Order.

¶372.2.3 Treasurer

The treasurer is the officer of the board responsible for the overall administration of the financial assets of the church, as directed by the official board and finance committee. This position should not be confused with that of the bookkeeper or accountant. The treasurer is an officer of the organization, and has the authority to sign legal and business documents relating to financial matters on behalf of the church. For example, the treasurer will be recognized as representing the church in financial matters by Canada Revenue Agency (filing of Income Tax forms, Registered Charity Information Returns, approval of Charitable Tax Receipts) or by financial institutions (signing for various financial transactions).

In many churches, the treasurer will keep the financial records (act as the bookkeeper). In some cases, a church may hire a part-time bookkeeper, or a volunteer may serve as the bookkeeper. In these cases, the treasurer will supervise the bookkeeper, ensuring that board policies are followed, and ensure that overall financial assets are appropriately managed. The treasurer may chair or alternately be an ex-officio member of, the finance committee.

It is important that the treasurer be spiritually mature, with a vision for the ministries of the church. He/she must have the wisdom to understand that the financial assets of the church are only important as tools to further those ministries, and not important in their

Own right. In addition he/she should have good financial management and organizational skills.

Because of the complexities of operating as a charitable organization, it would be wise for the board to ensure that there is only one bookkeeper within the church, and that only one set financial records are kept. The practice of having separate books for various organizations (e.g. youth, women's ministries) should be discouraged. The church has a single registration as a charitable organization with Canada Revenue Agency. Operation with more than one set of books, and more than one bookkeeper, presents risks that may ultimately lead to revocation of the church's charitable registration number.

¶372.2.4 Other Officers

¶372.2.4.1 Signing Officers: The society or board should name the signing officers who may sign cheques and other financial instruments on behalf of the church. The treasurer should normally be one of the signing officers. The society or board may wish to name more than one signing officer, and define signing limits where cheques larger than a pre-defined amount require more than one signature. If the treasurer does not keep the books, the board may wish to authorize the bookkeeper to sign cheques up to this limit and require cheques for larger amounts be co-signed by the treasurer.

¶372.2.4.2 Auditor: ¶320.4.2 requires the society, or in its place, the official board, to appoint an auditor. The society may choose to employ an external licensed public accountant or audit firm, or may use the services of a volunteer auditor (unless federal regulations or incorporation legislation requires the use of an external public accountant or audit firm). This volunteer may be a member of the society, who has accounting or auditing qualifications, or a volunteer with such qualifications from outside the society. If the volunteer is not a licensed public accountant it is important to ensure there is an understanding of the role of the volunteer in regards to an independent and diligent scrutiny of the records and ensure that receipts received and disbursements made are accurately recorded and documented.

It is recommended that when a society or official board asks volunteers to perform a review, that the following steps be considered as part of the review process to be performed by the volunteer:

1. Review year end bank reconciliations and other months on a sample basis.
2. Determine if there is a separation of duties among two or more people who are at arm's length to each other (ie. the person who receives and approves the invoice does not issue the cheques)
3. Review supporting receipts for expense reports to ensure completeness to support the amounts expensed
4. Review cash receipts, cash disbursements, payroll and general ledger transactions for supporting documentation
5. Ensure proper authorization of transactions (eg. Verifying two signatures on cheques. In some societies where only one person signs cheques, consideration of additional testing of disbursements should be made)
6. Ensure all payroll transactions have been recorded properly as per central payroll debit advice

7. Review cash receipts against charitable tax receipts issued and ensure this ties to the financial statements and to what is reported on the annual information return filed with Canada Revenue Agency (T3010)
8. Ensure that the annual information return was completed and forwarded to the Canada Revenue Agency no later than 6 months after the year end (most societies have a calendar year end, so June 30th is the key date)
9. Ensure that insurance coverage is up to date
10. Ensure that Harmonized Sales Tax or Goods and Services Tax recoveries are filed
11. Review bequests received in the year for appropriate designations
12. Review equipment leases (if applicable)
13. Compare expenses (and revenues) with budget and prior year and get explanation for unexpected variances
14. Consider whether an expenditure is a repair and maintenance item or a capital asset to ensure proper accounting treatment
15. Review investments (if applicable), verifying value, treating of income
16. Review designated gifts to ensure they comply with the donor's wishes
17. Search for unrecorded liabilities (ie. this covers services performed or materials received prior to the fiscal year end for which the church has not been invoiced or has been invoiced in the next fiscal year that relates to the prior fiscal year)
18. Review postmark on envelopes for December 31 cut off of donations (Note: for churches that do not receive donations by mail, this step is not applicable)

Findings by the volunteer reviewer should be presented to the annual society meeting.

A full audit is not normally required. A financial review statement is sufficient.

¶372.2.5 Access to Donor Information

To allow them to provide official donation receipts for income tax purposes, local churches must keep accurate, ongoing records of the amounts given by individual donors. These records are normally kept by the treasurer, or a financial secretary/recording secretary (if one is appointed).

The information on the specific amounts contributed by individual donors is confidential, private, personal information. Only the treasurer and/or the financial secretary/recording secretary should have access to this data. Information on the amounts contributed by an individual donor should not be divulged to anyone other than the donor.

Because the giving pattern may reflect an individual's attitudes toward the church, the official board may approve a policy allowing the treasurer or financial secretary/recording secretary to inform the pastor of any dramatic change in an individual's giving pattern (without providing specific information on the amounts donated), to assist the pastor in fulfilling his/her role as spiritual shepherd.

¶373 LOCAL CHURCH COMMITTEES

This section provides a description of the various committees that will be found in a typical local church. It also describes a number of alternative organizational models. The specific organizational structure in your church may be different. For example, the committees and positions in your church may have different names and job descriptions. You will probably find that many of the same functions are needed in your organizational structure.

One of the important roles of the church board is to develop the ministry plan of the church. One of the components of this plan should be an organizational plan, defining, at least in broad terms, the committees and service positions, their roles, and the organizational structure (the reporting structure). This plan should then be approved by the society. The organization plan should directly reflect the ministry goals and programs of the church. As the ministry plan and programs change, the organizational plan may also need to be updated.

¶373.1 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

There are a number of alternative models available for organizing the committees and positions within the local church.

In the representative model, the official board may consist of the chair (who is elected from within the board), the secretary and treasurer, one or more delegates and the chairpersons of the various standing committees of the church. A number of members-at-large may be added to provide the full board roster. The chairpersons of the standing committees represent their committees on the board, provide periodic reports or recommendations from their committee and, along with the pastor, communicate board decisions and directions to their committee.

In larger churches, or churches with a larger number of standing committees, the church may wish to organize on a commission model. Each commission would include a number of committees that have related responsibilities or roles. One representative from each commission would represent that commission on the board. This model may help to provide more co-ordination among related committees. It does however add more hierarchy and possibly bureaucracy to the process.

In another model, a number of the major committees may be formed from the membership of the board. The board members are elected by the society. The newly elected board then divides itself into a set of standing sub-committees of the board. These standing sub-committees will usually be responsible for advising the board on policy and administrative issues that are the direct responsibility of the board (e.g. finances, membership, personnel policies, planning and goal setting). In this model, other committees, with members from outside the board, may be responsible for the implementation of the ministry programs of the church, under board guidance and direction.

In the governance board model, the official board and committees have totally separate memberships, with the senior pastor, in his/her role as the chief administrator of the local church, providing the communications or liaison role between the board and committees.

¶373.2 COMMITTEES OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Every local church must elect a Nominating Committee and Pastor's Cabinet (¶320.5.2). Their duties, and the duties of other potential committees are outlined below. As indicated above, the number of other committees, their names and specific duties may vary from church to church. This list provides an indication of the typical committee names and duties. The members of the committees (other than the Nominating Committee and Pastor's Cabinet) may be appointed by the official board, unless the society provides other directions.

¶373.2.1 Christian Education Committee

The Christian Education Committee is responsible for planning and implementing the children's, youth and adult Christian education programs, providing biblically based education and training, and group activities. The committee may include Directors of Children's Ministries, Youth Ministries and Adult Ministries. With the approval of the society or board, the committee will appoint all staff personnel needed to implement these programs. It will also provide for the required training and supervision of these personnel. The committee should encourage Christian education personnel to adhere to denominational doctrines and standards in the information they present.

In some churches, the Christian education committee may also take responsibility for the planning, implementation and supervision of the small group outreach and discipleship programs of the church.

¶373.2.2 Facilities and Property Committee

The Facilities and Property Committee (formerly trustees, see ¶320.5.2.1) is responsible to routinely inspect the church's building, property and equipment to ensure that all are being maintained adequately, to prioritize maintenance and replacement projects as to urgency within the constraints of the committee's budget. The committee is also to respond appropriately to maintenance requests, organize work days as needed, and ensure that the church facilities are kept clean and tidy.

¶373.2.3 Membership Care Committee

The Membership Care Committee is composed of the pastor and a number of members of the local church elected by the official board. In smaller churches the official board may serve this function. The responsibilities of the committee are to:

- Assist the pastor to identify and recruit individuals as members, assist with the development and provision of membership training and with the pastor recommend new members for approval by the official board.
- Counsel members whose conduct may give cause for concern and assist in bringing reconciliation between persons or groups to avoid chronic unresolved conflict.
- Make recommendations to the official board regarding the membership status of those who have been counselled.
- Recommend to the official board termination of membership for members no longer intending to fulfill their membership commitments.
- Periodically review the membership status of members living at a distance and non-participating members.
- Review the membership roll at least annually to ensure it is accurate and current.

¶373.2.4 Missions Committee

The Missions Committee is responsible for keeping the congregation informed of and promoting interest in Free Methodist missions through an ongoing program with emphasis on personal awareness of missions needs, support of individual missionaries and the mission programs of the denomination through prayer, giving and personal participation in short-term missions teams or VISA assignments. Missions awareness may be enhanced through visits and presentations by career and short-term missionaries.

¶373.2.5 Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is responsible for providing a slate of nominations for positions elected at the annual society meeting, and to the official board for other committee and service position appointments made by the board. The committee may also provide nominations to the board to fill any vacancies that occur between society meetings.

In making its recommendations, the nominating committee should carefully evaluate the spiritual gifts and graces of all members of the congregation. It should help members to recognize and use their particular gifts and skills. The committee should carefully develop a plan for rotation of committee memberships which takes into account the tenure requirement of a maximum of six years in any one position, while at the same time ensuring sufficient continuity of experienced personnel on committees.

It is important that the nominating committee be independent of the official board. The nominating committee is elected by the society from among the members of the church and is accountable to only the society, serving the church membership as a whole. Its recommendations should be presented to the annual society meeting, without prior review by the board. Any board involvement in the nomination process may bring the democratic process involved in society meeting elections into question. In times when there may be differences of opinion on one or more issues within the membership, any board involvement in the nomination process may lead to suspicions about board attempts to ensure the election of those holding a particular opinion or view. In addition, it may lead to suspicions, warranted or not, about attempts by a specific group to centralize power.

During the nomination process the committee should ensure that more than 50% of the board members deal with each other “at arms length,” i.e. unrelated by blood, adoption, marriage or employment. This can be accomplished by limiting or eliminating nominations of members of the same family (spouses, siblings, parents and children) to board positions.

It is also good practice for the nomination process to allow for input by the congregation. Suggestions may be collected from the congregation at the beginning of the process. Once a short list has been developed from these suggestions, these individuals should be interviewed by the nominating committee. When a slate of nominees has been proposed, it is wise to distribute or post the proposed nominations in advance of the society meeting, and provide some process for input from the congregation. This can help to limit the potential problems with “nominations from the floor,” where the proposed nominations may not be well considered or it may not be clear that the nominees have agreed to let their names stand.

¶373.2.6 Pastor's Cabinet

In many of our local churches, the Board serves the functions of the traditional Pastor's Cabinet; however, should the board desire to create a Pastor's Cabinet, the following directions should be followed:

- The Purposes of the Pastor's Cabinet will be clearly communicated to the whole church so as to avoid any misunderstanding or overlap between Board and Pastor's Cabinet;
- The Pastor's Cabinet will assist the pastor by meeting with the pastor as a prayer cabinet, receiving recommendations and concerns arising from the congregation and reflecting on them with the pastor, and receiving recommendations and concerns from the pastor and offering support and counsel to the pastor;
- Candidates for the Pastor's Cabinet are to selected by the Pastor but will be approved and appointed by the board;
- The members of the Pastor's Cabinet are to be mature, trustworthy individuals who have a healthy participation in the life of the local church and can be trusted with sensitive and confidential information. The majority of members of the Pastor's Cabinet must be local church members, and should include at least one board member;
- The Pastor's Cabinet shall be no more than 6 members.

¶374 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PASTOR AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

The relationship between a pastor and a Free Methodist local church is intricate. The local church exists within two worlds; the world of our denomination and the world defined by the "law of the land."

¶374.1 CHURCH POLITY IMPACT

One of our pastors has written, "Methodists are connectional. They do not believe that any one local church has the range of gifts and training to establish doctrine, ordination standards, and other constitutional matters. Instead Methodists do these things collectively, freeing local churches for the work of ministry. Pastors are accountable to their conference for character and conduct and work side-by-side with local church leaders. Independent churches and pastors are not truly Methodist."

In our denominational world, the relationship between the local church and pastor is governed by the polity of The Free Methodist Church as outlined in this *Manual*. The pastor is appointed to a local church by the bishop, with the approval and guidance of the MEGaP committee. They are given responsibility for both the spiritual and temporal leadership of the local church. In those matters that are denominational in scope, including doctrine, standards of personal conduct, and areas of denominational policy, the pastor is guided by our denominational constitution, *The Manual,* the policies defined by the general conference and board of administration and the guidance and direction of the bishop and national leadership team.

Although a senior pastor is employed by the local church, the conference endorses and credentials the pastor, and all ministerial appointments are made through the bishop. Consequently, if there are to be any local church initiated pastoral changes, the local

church may not "fire" a pastor but must request that the bishop or Director of Leadership Development and Church Health assist with the pastoral change to ensure that proper personnel procedures are followed. Similarly, appointed pastors do not resign from the local church, but must make requests of the bishop to be released from their appointments. (The related procedures are outlined in ¶340.)

Within the local church, the pastor provides both spiritual and temporal leadership. In their role as spiritual leaders they are responsible for the preaching and teaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, pastoral care, and the providing of guidance and direction in the evangelistic outreach ministries of the church. As temporal leaders, pastors serve as the primary administrator of the local church. In both these roles the pastor serves side-by-side with his/her local church leadership. Pastors provide leadership to their official boards, but are also accountable to them and subject to their policy direction.

¶374.2 IMPACTS OF THE LAW

In addition to being governed by denominational polity, local churches are also governed by the laws of the country, and of the province in which they are located. Most local Free Methodist churches in Canada are unincorporated associations. They are subjected to many of the laws that apply to corporations, as well as the laws that are applicable to all charitable organizations. Under the law, pastors are considered to be employees of the local church. Local churches are therefore responsible for ensuring that all of the requirements of labour and human rights laws applicable to employer/employee relationships are followed.

¶374.3 OFFICIAL BOARD CHAIR

Under civil law, employees of an organization may not serve as members of its board of directors. This is considered to be a conflict of interest. For example, Ontario case law has confirmed that pastors should not serve as voting members, nor as the chair of church boards. In addition, a pastor who serves as a member or chair of the board is also exposed to the same legal liabilities shared by all board members. In light of these considerations, *The Manual* requires that a layperson be elected to chair the board. (See ¶325.2.1.)

A number of considerations regarding the role of a lay chair are outlined in earlier parts of this chapter. It is important that the senior pastor, as the leader and chief administrator of the local church, be invited to and have a voice in all board and committee meetings. Having a layperson chair the board may give pastors more freedom to participate and express their views as nonvoting leaders in board meetings.

¶374.4 MULTIPLE STAFF CHURCHES

When a local church has determined that it needs additional pastoral staff, both the senior pastor and official board need to have a clear understanding of the relationships between the board, senior pastor and additional pastoral staff. Carefully chosen titles help to define relationships. The titles, assistant pastor and associate pastor communicate different relationships.

An associate pastor is one who, while clearly accountable to the senior pastor, is expected to be the senior pastor, as it were, *in the areas of his/her responsibility.* He/she is not expected to assist the senior pastor with things that will be shaped and directed by the senior pastor. (That is what an assistant does). The associate gives formation to his/her area of church life, while the assistant does tasks in ministries shaped by someone else.

The associate pastor possesses the same kinds of training, experience and high competence for his/her area of responsibility that the senior pastor does for his/her area. In this, they are viewed as equal (in terms of gifts and training and level of responsibility in their own areas) and different (in terms of assigned responsibilities).

Because someone must ultimately be in charge in an organization, that responsibility belongs to the senior pastor. Employing an associate who is clearly an equal in gifts, training and responsibility (except final oversight) does nothing to negate the fact that every organization needs one person who is ultimately responsible.

Whether a pastor is an assistant or an associate is not a simple matter of choice. To a greater or lesser extent, formational and temperamental factors incline most people to be better suited for one role or the other. Some pastors find it difficult to function as assistants; some find it hard to perform as associates; some senior pastors find it hard to manage assistants; some find it hard to work with associates. There are reasons for this.

Some people's temperament and formation make it difficult for them to allow others to have real responsibility in areas they are ultimately responsible for. They tend to strongly prefer what Hersey and Blanchard (*Management of Organizational Behaviour: Utilizing Human Resources,* Prentice-Hall, 1982) call "telling" (high task, low relationship) or "selling" (high task, high relationship) forms of leadership behaviour with followers. They find it hard to "participate" (high relationship, low task) or "delegate" (low relationship, low task). They have too much of a need to stay "hands-on" and to give shape and formation to what they are ultimately responsible for. These persons should probably not hire an associate or ask that their secretary to function as an administrative assistant. They don't work that way.

Other people tend by personality and formation to prefer leadership behaviours that are termed participating or delegating. They have to work hard to give directions (telling or selling) to people working for them. These people should not hire an assistant who needs the high levels of direction and support they find hard to give.

Likewise, some people have such a level of what Hersey and Blanchard call "Job Maturity" (willingness + ability) that they would only be frustrated to be in an assistant role. They are leaders who need to shape their world and create things.

In the same way there are people who need a narrowly defined task to do, and who will do it with distinction under good supervision. Such persons should not be asked to function as pastoral "associates."

From the perspective of our denominational polity, the process for the selection and appointment of an assistant/associate pastor will be the same or very similar to the appointment of a senior pastor. The qualifications and doctrinal position of all appointed pastors must be approved by the conference MEGaP committee. From a legal

perspective, both the senior pastor and assistant/associate pastor are employees of the local church.

Both the senior pastor and the official board (or a locally appointed subcommittee) need to be involved in the process of defining the proposed job descriptions for additional pastoral positions, and in interviewing and recommending a candidate for the position. It is important to recognize that this needs to be a "side-by-side" process. Senior pastors must be involved since they will need to work very closely with the new assistant/associate. The board must be equally involved since they must represent the interests of their congregations as well as approving the position description and related employment conditions.

Local churches with multiple staff may wish to appoint a personnel committee. This committee may be a subcommittee of the board, or the board may serve as the personnel committee. This committee will be responsible for recommending the job descriptions and roles for all pastoral positions and terms of employment, such as salaries and benefits, housing allowances and vacation allowances. It will also be responsible for developing and implementing procedures for periodic performance assessments for all pastoral staff

Official boards need to recognize that assistant/associate pastors are supervised by the senior pastor. This also needs to be recognized clearly by the senior and assistant/associate pastors. The senior pastor is the chief administrative officer, or temporal leader of the local church. The senior and assistant/associate pastors need to work in close co-operation. There will be occasions when, as is the case in any working relationship, someone needs to take the leadership and decision making role. The board's role is to provide the policy framework within which these decisions can be made. It is not in a position to make the day-to-day administrative decisions. Any attempt to do so will ultimately undermine the leadership and supervisory role of the senior pastor.

In practical terms this means that:

- It must be clear to all involved that the assistant/associate is supervised by the senior pastor.
- The assistant/associate pastor may attend official board meetings at the discretion of the senior pastor.
- Directions from the board to staff are in principle made through the senior pastor. The senior pastor is solely responsible to the board for the administration of the local church.

If problems arise between a senior and assistant/associate pastor, and they have not been able to resolve them between themselves, they should refer the matter to the pastor's cabinet or board for review and advice. The senior pastor may recommend a change of assistant/associate pastor, or termination of employment to the official board, for its consideration, if such problems cannot be resolved, or if the performance of the assistant/associate is unsatisfactory, and reasonable attempts to resolve the performance deficiencies are unsuccessful. Disciplinary action by the bishop and ministerial education guidance and placement committee may also be grounds for dismissal. Except in the case of disciplining action, the assistant/associate pastor should be provided with a minimum of 60 days notice, or appropriate compensation in lieu of notice in accordance with provincial labour laws.

Assistants/associates who want a change in appointment should formally inform their senior pastor and board by requesting of the bishop that they be released from their appointment. The 60 day notice applies.

¶374.5 PASTORAL AND STAFF EVALUATION

Every organization should have a formal process for regular evaluation of the performance of its staff. The official board will ensure that an annual performance evaluation of the lead pastor (and other appointed staff) is done according to guidelines provided by the Director of Leadership Development and Church Health office (See ¶335).

The guidelines outline the process for two forms of evaluation that will occur: the 360 performance appraisal (preferred) or any other comprehensive appraisal approved by the Director of Leadership Development and Church Health either of which must be done at least once every three years. An informal review must be done in the year(s) when the 360 performance appraisal or the approved comprehensive appraisal is not done.

The best results from a performance evaluation will be obtained if everyone involved recognizes that the process has a positive objective: the objective of obtaining the best possible performance. Performance areas that have been satisfactory or superior should be acknowledged with positive feedback and documented. Where performance is less than satisfactory, the underlying reasons should be identified, and action plans to improve performance should be clearly identified. The committee should attempt to clarify and document whether the reasons for the unsatisfactory performance lie with the pastor/staff member, the board, or with the overall actions of the local church and its congregation. It is important to remember that in a local church setting, most resources needed to achieve the church's objectives are provided through the efforts of volunteers. The pastor or staff cannot be held totally responsible where the congregation does not have the volunteer participation and co-operation to accomplish its goals

¶374.6 Guidelines for Leaves of Absence Administered by the Local Church

There are times when an appointed pastor requires a short leave of absence that affects the employment arrangement with the local church but does not change the appointment arrangement with the conference. The reasons for the leave may vary from personal health (physical and/or mental) to educational pursuits. If requested by either the pastor or official board, the Director of Leadership Development and Church Health (or a designate) will assist with the planning for the leave.

Generally speaking, a leave of absence granted and managed by the local church should not exceed six months. It is important that the leave serves the original needs that prompted the leave. If there is need for a leave to be extended beyond the original plan, new terms should be negotiated.

Compensation to the pastor may vary from full compensation to no compensation. This is a time for a congregation to express compassion to its pastor. The understanding relating to compensation needs to be clearly outlined in a signed "Letter of Agreement" at the beginning of the leave. The need for accountability and progress reports is important whether or not the church compensates the pastor.

While a pastor is on leave, the church must ensure that his/her ministry responsibilities are cared for. If there are persons on staff, their job descriptions may be revised to cover ministry needs during the time of the pastor's absence. The pastor going on leave needs to know that it will be impossible to step back into leadership in the church at the same point

where he/she stepped out. Longer leaves will result in greater changes in the relationships with the congregation and staff.

If a leave longer than 6 months is required, the MEGaP Committee should be involved as the pastor's appointment may need to be changed. (See ¶853.) The departments of personnel and of administrative services are available to the pastor and local church as a resource in these situations.

If the need for the leave is medical in nature, the best professional resources should be engaged. It is not unreasonable for a board to request permission to receive progress reports from counsellors and medical professionals. The pastor may also qualify for the Long-Term Disability program administered as part of the benefits package for pastors. For more information on this program, go to the FMCIC website.

When a return to work is approved by a qualified medical practitioner/ counsellor, a re-entry consultation will be conducted with the minister (and spouse if applicable) under the following conditions:

- after any length of time, when initiated by the Director of Leadership Development and Church Health or the minister on medical leave
- after a medical leave of 12 months or more, it is mandatory

The re-entry consultation will be conducted by two MEGaP members (one clergy and one lay) and the Director of Leadership Development and Church Health or designate.

If the employment relationship must end, a termination of employment form (see ¶880) must be completed. Guidance for applying for Employment Insurance coverage is available through Service Canada at: 1.800.206-7218 or www.servicecanada.gc.ca/en/common/contactus/index.shtml. If further help is needed, contact the office of the Director of Administrative Services of the FMCIC.

In summary the following issues relating to a leave of absence need to be clearly understood and stated in the "Letter of Agreement" signed by the pastor and a representative of the official board:

- the beginning date, duration, and ending of the agreement;
- the compensation package during the leave;
- the system of accountability expected;
- the need to revise job descriptions and staffing needs (so that the need for a leave does not happen again);
- a plan (if the leave is for medical reasons) that provides for a gradual and progressive return to full-time responsibility, in consultation with the pastor's physician and the Director of Leadership Development and Church Health;
- provision for the conference to advise and assist the church in the interim.

¶375 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE LOCAL CHURCH AND CONFERENCE

¶375.1 PASTORAL TRANSITIONS

The process for a pastoral transition (change of pastor) is outlined in ¶340 and in the "*Transitions Handbook*" available from the Director of Leadership Development and Church Health office. (See ¶875). Pastoral transitions mean change, and change is stressful for both the pastor and board members. The stresses can be reduced if the process is handled well. The process, if not handled well, may potentially lead to a great deal of dissension within the board and ultimately the congregation. The "Transitions Handbook" (par 875) is designed to help create a healthy process. It is extremely important that the process be undertaken in a spirit of loving Christian support. The board decision, and the rationale and background for it should not be discussed with anyone outside of the board (except the Director of Leadership Development and Church Health or bishop).

¶375.2 STAFF ISSUES RELATED TO SENIOR PASTOR TRANSITIONS

A local church will need to consider the tenure of its assistant/associate pastor(s) when there is a change of senior pastor. There is no single policy that will fit all situations. A number of considerations need to be taken into account during this transition. In some cases, the assistant/associate pastor may have been chosen because their ministry skills complement the skills of the senior pastor. This may not be true after a new senior pastor with different skills is appointed. On the other hand, the assistant/associate pastor may have been hired for a particular ministry role, requiring specific skills, which will continue without change after the transition.

There is also the reality that some members of the congregation may develop a strong loyalty to the assistant/associate pastor, particularly if the assistant/associate assumes the full ministry role during the transition period. This loyalty may make it difficult for the incoming senior pastor to gain the respect and loyalty of the entire congregation. This may also make it difficult for the new senior pastor to recommend a change of assistants/associates if necessary.

There are a number of possible solutions.

1. Ask the assistant/associate pastor(s) to submit their requests to the bishop to enter into pastoral transition at the same time that the senior pastor leaves. The major drawback here is the church immediately loses all pastoral leadership and experience at one time.
2. Ask the assistant/associate pastor(s) to submit their requests to the bishop to enter into pastoral transition immediately after the incoming senior pastor is appointed. This allows the incoming senior pastor and board the freedom to arrange for the appointment of new assistants/associates. It also provides for continuity of pastoral staff during the transition.
3. Ask the assistant/associate pastor(s) to be prepared to submit their requests to the bishop to enter into pastoral transition at any point up to a year after the incoming senior pastor is appointed, and enter into pastoral transition if the board approves a recommendation from the senior pastor requesting a change in assistants/associates.

At a minimum, the incoming senior pastor must have the opportunity to evaluate the ministry needs of the church, the ministry skills, graces and performance of the assistant/associate pastor(s), and if necessary, recommend a pastoral transition for the assistant(s) during the first year of their tenure.

The official board may wish to adopt one of these policies when an assistant/associate is appointed. Or it may wish to wait until the bishop has approved a transition for the senior pastor to select one of these options based on the considerations above, and the current circumstances of the church. In either case, the board ***must:***

a) Ensure that assistant/associate pastor(s) are clearly aware that they may be required to submit their requests to the bishop to enter into pastoral transition at any time after a transition for the senior pastor is announced until a year after a new senior pastor is appointed.
b) Ensure that this understanding is clearly documented in a written agreement between the local church and assistant/associate pastor, signed by the assistant and a board officer, before the assistant is appointed.

¶375.3 POLICIES GUIDING CORE AND GIVING STREAMS GIVING

Tithing as a fundamental principle should be understood by the leadership of a core group of a new congregation (church plant) and affiliated church at its formation or in the case of an affiliated church, at the negotiation stage for affiliation. If the infant/child analogy to tithing is applied, parents assume the full responsibility of the child's support. Where tithing is taught as a household principle, children are encouraged to tithe on their allowance, and as they get older, on their part-time and summer jobs. Only when children assume full responsibility for their living expenses do they begin to tithe on their full income. In the case of local churches, this applies to the operations budget (see ¶440.2.2).

¶375.3.1 New Congregation (Church Plant) Projects

Church plants are at the infancy stage of their life, being provided for by a "parent" church, whether a local church, a network of churches, or the conference. Fiscal accountabilities are overseen by the sponsoring church(es) who birthed the project. Provided the principle is understood as a value of the organization and expected with maturity, new congregations are not expected to tithe to the Core or give to Giving Streams programs. At this stage they are in fact a recipient of the system rather than a contributor to it.

¶375.3.2 Churches in Affiliate Status

In both cases, these churches have been approved by Canada Revenue Agency as a charitable organization under the terms of the Income Tax Act and have demonstrated the appropriate signs of viability. In harmony with the expectations of paragraphs 305.5.6 and 306.6 of *The Manual*, the church will demonstrate "an attitude of intention" by moving toward 5% of its general budget receipts (only those receipts coming from parishioners) to The Free Methodist Church in Canada Core ministries program, beginning the first month after it becomes a fellowship or an affiliated organization. This remains consistent with the parent/child analogy above, where young children are only expected to tithe on the income that they earn themselves, not on the other perks or benefits they receive for being part of that family. Therefore churches are not be

expected to tithe on grants, subsidy or gifts that come from Giving Streams, parent churches or otherwise. Prior to applying for society status, a church with affiliate status should be moving toward the 10% participation level and be moving toward full independence from denominational subsidy.

¶375.3.3 Churches Applying for Society Status

When a church applies for society status, there is an expectation that it be within the 5-10% payment of Core from its full operational budget as described in Par 440.2 of *The Manual*. Unless an affiliate has demonstrated faithful support of Core within this range for six months or more, it will not be considered for society status. Churches that are accepted as societies will need to project full participation to tithe at the full 10% of their operations budget. The church will also need to pledge some interest in supporting denominational Giving Streams and be demonstrating some gesture of Giving Stream support in their budgeting process. Both of these intentions will be based on a covenant of good faith with the denomination.

¶375.3.4 Churches Experiencing Financial Challenges Asking for a Period of Grace

Paying pastors and keeping the lights on should always remain the first priority. However, rather than fully omitting the payment of the tithe from a church budget, a board should first strive to send a reduced percentage (e.g. 8, 6 or 4%) and communicate this adjustment to the Management Committee of the BOA, through the Director of Administrative Services, with a clear recognition that this decrease is for a time. When this communication is sent, the board should also include goals for how long a period will be required before returning to the full tithe. The plan can proposes stages for increasing the percentage within a set timeline. This period of grace should never exceed two years. In extreme circumstances, the church may need to completely halt all payment of the tithe to the national church. If a church remains in this state for the duration of a full year, the National Leadership Team will intervene and see what can be done regarding the church's viability.

Churches intending to plant new churches are normally expected to be giving a minimum of 5% to the CORE ministries budget prior to launching a new church.

¶375.4 Policies Guiding Healthy House Church Relationships within the FMCiC

House churches can function effectively within the FMCiC where there is understanding as to how the partnering relationship between the house churches and the FMCiC works; how the roles of approved leaders fit into the current denominational structure; and, how the house churches fit into the larger accountability structure of the FMCiC.

Five unique characteristics of house churches are:

a. These house-sized communities are full functioning churches, not small groups.
b. House churches will focus on Christ centered relationships and might not organize themselves into any form that looks like a "service" or "program."
c. Every approved house church leader is released to be a responsible minister in his/her community.
d. House churches do not intend to own real property or buildings specifically used for church gatherings.
e. House churches intend to grow by multiplying new house churches, not by simply adding to the existing groups.

House churches best multiply through the intentional training and approval of "non-ordained" local leaders. These leaders administer the most important actions in ministry. This includes baptisms, funerals, marriages and serving communion. The weight of these actions is heavy enough that only approved leaders with sufficient training will facilitate these acts. These local leaders accept the overall responsibility for the people within a local house church.

New house church planters are released on the basis of their calling, commitment to training, competence to lead and character (1Timothy 3:2-13; Titus 1:6-9; Galatians 5:22). Even though a new house church might have one or two leaders, small teams of people will be established whenever possible to start new works.

Local Leader Qualifications

Local house church activities happen through the full participation of the people within the house church itself, facilitated by a plurality of local leaders. These leaders are Christian men or women who are approved with consensus from the network (HCN) and the local house church, who have completed or are currently taking house church leadership training and are committed to accountable and consistent relationships within the house church network.

Local Leader Job Description

These local leaders are responsible to:

- Model and encourage biblical church values (Loving God, Living Community, Everyone Growing, Everyone Contributing, Depending on God, Responding back to God, Finding Wholeness, Reaching Out, etc.)
- Actively serve people through tasks like: discipleship, organizing gathering times, hosting (cleaning, cooking, welcoming), teaching, being available, following-up, initiating accountability, communicating values, casting vision for multiplying and encouraging & modeling personal evangelism.
- Take overall responsibility so that sharing together in the Lord's Supper, baptisms, marriages and funerals are administered in a godly and biblical fashion. "Administration" refers to the correct oversight or organization of such events, not necessarily their "hands-on" execution of them.

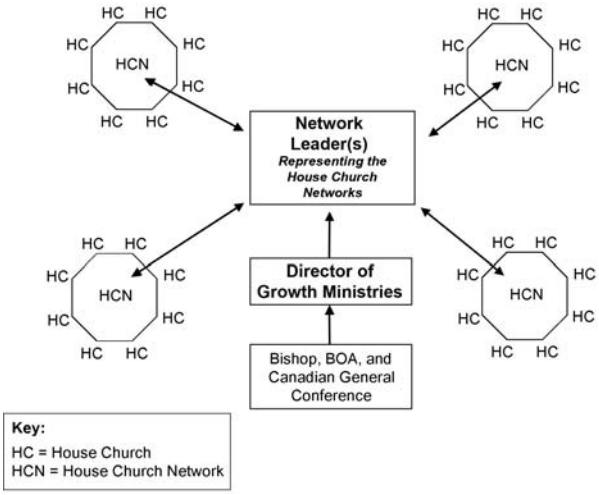
Accountability Structure

Healthy relationships among the local house churches through House Church networks (HCN's) and between the HCN's and the denomination are beneficial. It allows for both freedom at the grass roots and accountability on a larger level.

House Church Networks (HCN) – see diagram below

These networks will consist of the leaders of house churches meeting regularly with other house church leaders for training, encouragement and accountability. They will be tied to one another through relational connections. Most leaders, when first entering a house church network, will work through foundational theological and church practice material. Later, these network meetings may become more relational in nature.

Denominational Connection
Each of these networks will have a reasonable span of care. An HCN is led by a MEGaP-approved network leader from within one of the house church networks. This house church leader is either ordained within the FMCiC or has been given a lay minister's license by the HCN. The HCNs are careful to include the denomination's network values. It is at this HCN level that the house churches pursue society status within the FMCiC.



Accountability of Funds
House Church leaders will be self-supporting and unpaid. From time to time, some financial support may be given to leaders of networks for their time and any costs associated with regional training and networking. For this reason, the gathering and dispersing of donations happens primarily on a house church network level. It is on this level that the appropriate charity status is applied. Like any other Free Methodist society, it is also from this house church network that any financial support is given to the FMCiC.

Guiding Principles for the Accountability Structure

- *Accountable vs. Controlled*
  The house churches and leaders need biblical accountability – people who will walk beside them spiritually, doctrinally and financially. This functions best through clear lines of relationship developed by the house church networks.

- *Relational vs. Positional*
  If the house churches and their leaders know the people to whom they are accountable, they will follow, listen and take guidance. Relationships are key to working well along side denominational and network leaders.

¶375.5 Role of the Local Church Delegate

Delegates are local church members elected to act as liaisons between the local churches and the general conference. The delegates represent the local church at general conference as voting members and communicate important information they receive at general conference to the local congregations by reports and announcements. The delegates, along with the pastors, are the local church contact persons for MEGaP and the national leadership team (NLT). The annual pastoral performance appraisals are organized through the delegates. The delegates report its results to the pastors, the Director of Leadership Development and Church Health and the official boards. The delegates must commit to the term of office that relates directly to the frequency of the general conference.

Here is a checklist of the responsibilities of the delegates:

A. The delegates as local church members:

- Support the pastor and local church by giving of their time, talent, and resources to the local church. (See ¶630.3.3)
- Are persons of prayer.
- Personally model the principles in Matthew 18:15-18 in healthy relationships.

B. The delegates as active board members:

- Understand their own gifting and personality traits by completing Base 3 Ministry SHAPE profile or its equivalent to help the official board and church to make discerning decisions to guide the elections of delegates.
- Commit to the term of office that relates directly to the frequency of the General Conference. (Presently, this is three years.) This commitment to the local church provides the necessary continuity to the vision and ministry of the church.
- Help to initiate, coordinate and communicate the results of the Natural Church Development surveys within their congregation, alongside the pastor and the official board

C. The delegates as liaison with the Conference:

- Provide feedback to the FMCIC on the state of the local church. On behalf of the official boards, they communicate congregational concerns to the Ministry Centre on an ongoing basis as well as any concerns with respect to the senior pastor's ministry.
- Oversee the pastor's annual performance appraisal. They initiate, coordinate and participate in the performance appraisal of the pastor at the local church and communicate that information to the pastor. They also submit a report of the performance appraisal results (Form 5) to the Director of Leadership Development and Church Health office.
- Act as a communication link. With the pastor, they ensure that important information sent to them by email or other means from the Ministry Centre is communicated to the congregation.
- Serve on the pastoral leadership task force (PLTF) during transition. They communicate the activity of the PLTF to the Director of Leadership Development and Church Health or his designate.

D. The delegates as voting members of the General Conference:

- Study the current issues of the Church in order to vote intelligently under God's direction regarding policies and theological and doctrinal issues.
- Attend the general conference sessions as voting members and interact with the issues of the conference
- Provide a report of the general conference to the local church within a reasonable time frame after the end of the conference.

¶376 RESOURCES

Other local church resources are available on The Free Methodist Church in Canada website.

¶380 LOCAL CHURCH FORMS

The following forms are provided at http://fmcic.ca/380-local-church-forms/ on The Free Methodist Church in Canada website:

- ¶380 LOCAL CHURCH FORMS
- ¶381A LAY MINISTER'S LICENSE
  LAY MINISTER'S LICENSE-CHURCH PLANTER
- ¶381B RENEWAL OF LAY MINISTER'S LICENSE
- ¶382A TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP
- ¶382B TRANSFER OF ADULT MEMBERSHIP TO ANOTHER DENOMINATION
- ¶382C TRANSFER OF YOUTH MEMBERSHIP
- ¶383A RESTORATION OF CREDENTIALS
- ¶383B RECOMMENDATION FOR MINISTERIAL CANDIDACY
  RECOMMENDATION FOR MINISTERIAL CANDIDACY– CHURCH PLANTER
- ¶384A QUESTIONS TO BECOME AN AFFILIATED CONGREGATION
- ¶384B FREE METHODIST AFFILIATION CERTIFICATE
- ¶385 INCORPORATION AND DEEDS
- ¶386A APPLICATION TO MORTGAGE PROPERTY OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH
- ¶386B APPLICATION TO PURCHASE PROPERTY FOR THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH
- ¶386C APPLICATION TO SELL PROPERTY OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH

CHAPTER 4

GENERAL CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

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CHAPTER 4: GENERAL CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

¶400 INTRODUCTION

On August 6, 1990 the Canadian General Conference was inaugurated and the evangelical vision of historic Methodism was reaffirmed – to preach the Gospel to the lost, to raise up congregations of deeply committed Christians, to call believers to lives of holiness and devoted service to others. The general conference as a governing body exists to enhance and co-ordinate that vision.

At the December 1994 adjourned sitting, the Canadian General Conference approved recommendations for a re-organization. Under this re-organization the four existing annual conferences and districts were merged, and their roles and responsibilities were assumed by the Canadian General Conference. After subsequent reviews of this legislative action by the international Constitutional Council, the Canadian General Conference agreed that it would take steps to re-instate some form of annual conference structure "when growth permits." The following applies until such time as annual conference structures are re-instated. Amendments to some sections will be required at that point. The general conference will function as a single annual conference as regards ministerial membership until such time as annual conference structures are formed. (Organization Charts are located in ¶460.)

¶405 MEMBERSHIP

1. The membership of the general conference is defined in ¶250.2.1
2. Delegates to the general conference are members when duly seated.
3. The following shall be ex officio members without vote: The non-ordained directors employed by the board of administration, the president of Lorne Park Foundation, and the chair of the board of the *Free Methodist Foundation in Canada.*
4. The board of administration of the Free Methodist Church of North America is invited to send two fraternal delegates, one ministerial, one lay.

¶410 SPECIAL REGULATIONS

1. The general conference is the only legislative body in the church. It shall have full power to make rules and regulations under the limitations and restrictions described in ¶250. Only the general conference has power to submit a resolution for a denominational referendum.
2. The interval between sessions shall be approximately three years, unless otherwise ordered by the general conference. It shall be held at a time and place to be determined by the board of administration.
3. Physical proximity, language and cultural similarities and long-standing church ties between the Canadian and American churches have forged a special relationship. This relationship is recognized through a Letter of Agreement between the Board of Administration and Free Methodist World Missions, and co-operation in such areas as the Study Commission on Doctrine and the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions.
4. If so invited, the Canadian bishop is authorized to accept an honorary seat at the meetings of the Board of Bishops of the Free Methodist Church of North America.
5. Any annual conference (when they exist), society or individual member of a local society shall have the right to submit resolutions to the general conference and to have them fully

heard. These must be introduced by a member of the general conference and are subject to the rules of that body.

6. Robert's Rules of Order in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure.

¶415 OFFICERS OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

1. **President**: see ¶250.2.3

2. **Secretary**: The general conference shall elect a member to serve as secretary during each session. The secretary may appoint an assistant.

¶420 COMMITTEES OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

1. **Study Teams**

The board of administration shall establish study teams in advance of a general conference session. These study teams will be authorized to study ministry and administrative needs of the Canadian church and present working papers and recommendations to the general conference for its consideration. The teams shall serve from their appointment to the close of the general conference session. The number of teams and their specific areas of study shall be defined by the board of administration. The members of these study teams shall be nominated by the nominating committee and appointed by the board of administration.

2. **Standing Board and Committees**

The general conference shall elect, according to the principles outlined in ¶420.2.6, the following standing board and committees that will serve from the end of the session until the end of the next regular session. No person may serve on more than one standing board or committee. These leaders in the conference shall meet the leadership qualifications of ¶630.3.3

2.1 Board of Administration

The general conference shall elect a board of administration of 10 members. Membership should include equal ministerial and lay representation; Ministerial representation can include Commissioned Ministers up to a maximum one-third of the ministerial members. Recognizing the importance of diversity, we will pursue a balanced board that reflects the age, gender, geography, race and ethnicity of the FMCIC. The functions and authority of the board of administration are defined in ¶425.2.

2.2 Ministerial Education Guidance and Placement (MEGaP) Committee

The general conference shall elect a MEGaP committee of up to 34 members, with equal ministerial and lay representation. Ministerial representation can include Commissioned Ministers up to a maximum one-third of the ministerial members. The committee shall be composed of two or more sub-committees to serve in the various geographical areas of the Canadian church. The members shall be persons of spiritual depth and wisdom competent to work with all candidates for the ministry. The functions and authority of MEGaP are defined in ¶430.2.

2.3 Nominating Committee

2.3.1 Election of the Nominating Committee:

The general conference shall elect a nominating committee of no fewer than eight members, who are not members of another standing board/committee of the conference. The committee shall have, to the extent possible, equal lay and ministerial representation and balanced representation from the various geographical areas of the general conference. Ministerial representation can include Commissioned Ministers up to a maximum one-third of the ministerial members. The number of persons on the general conference nominating committee to be elected for each region will be set by the board of administration. A national leadership team member will be an ex officio member of the committee.

The network leaders will meet apart from the national leadership team and develop a slate of nominees to the nominating committee from the various regions of the church to present to the general conference. The network leaders will consult in advance with local pastors regarding gifted and credible candidates.

Opportunity will be given for nominations from the floor of general conference after the nominations from the network leaders are presented.

2.3.2 Authority and Functions:

The committee will be responsible for providing nominations for:

- study teams for the general conference
- the secretary of the general conference
- members of the board of administration and committees listed in ¶420 (except the nominating committee)
- any board of administration or committee position which becomes vacant during the interim between sessions of the general conference.

2.3.3 Process:

In order to ensure that the standing board and committees are made up of gifted and credible Christian leaders, the general conference nominating committee will solicit input from local churches, network leaders and national leaders.

If the nominating committee is not able to identify an ordained or commissioned minister from a geographic region to serve on the board of administration or on a general conference committee, it may nominate a ministerial candidate. If no ministerial candidate is available from that geographic region, the nominating committee is authorized to set aside the principle of regional representation in this case and nominate an ordained or commissioned minister from another region.

2.4 Study Commission on Doctrine

The general conference shall elect a study commission on doctrine made up of nine members consisting of both lay and ministerial members. Ministerial representation can include Commissioned Ministers up to a maximum one-third of the ministerial members. The commission shall provide a forum for the debate and discussion of issues related to doctrine, membership and ritual and serve as the editorial board for *The Manual of The*

Free Methodist Church in Canada. It may also undertake additional duties as assigned by the board of
administration. The commission shall report to the general conference and to the board of administration in the interim between general conference sessions.

2.5 Delegate(s) - Free Methodist World Conference

In accordance with the delegate formula of the constitution of the Free Methodist World Conference, the Canadian General Conference is represented at the World Conference by a ministerial and a lay delegate. The bishop shall serve as the ministerial delegate and the chair of the board of administration as the lay delegate. Reserve delegates shall be elected by the board of administration from among its members.

2.6 Term of Office

- The term of all board or committee members shall begin at the end of the general conference session at which the member is elected and continue until the end of the next regular session.
- The members of any board or committee of the general conference may serve for a maximum of three consecutive terms of office.
- If nominated, members may serve for more than three consecutive terms if elected by a two-thirds majority vote.
- The nominating committee shall ensure that at least one-third of the members of the board and standing committees are retired and replaced at each general conference session.

¶425 BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION

1. Membership

The membership of the board of administration shall consist of 10 members as defined in ¶420.2.1. The bishop shall receive notification of all board of administration meetings and minutes, and shall be entitled to be present and participate fully without vote in all meetings except for those held in executive session of the board.

2. Authority and Functions

2.1 The board shall have general organizational, promotional and supervisory powers over all activities of the church during the interim between general conference sessions. It shall meet regularly, at times to be determined by the board, but no less than once in each 12-month period. A majority of the members elected shall constitute a quorum.

2.2 The board shall constitute the members of the corporation of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

2.3 If the office of bishop becomes vacant for any reason, a new bishop shall be elected, except for vacancies occurring in the last six months preceding a general conference. The election shall be conducted according to the procedures outlined in ¶860.

2.4 The board shall have the responsibility to determine the number of senior staff (national leadership team members) to be employed by the corporation, and to define the general duties and responsibilities of these positions in consultation with the bishop. The bishop will create a hiring task force, which must include at least one member of the board and one

member of MEGaP. This task force will be responsible for the process from job posting to recommendation of a candidate to the board for approval.

2.5 The board shall publish annually an audited financial statement outlining the assets, liabilities, and financial standing of the corporation of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

2.6 The board shall have the power to accept resignations, fill vacancies and remove for cause any of its members or any denominational executive (not including the bishop) during the interim between general conference sessions, subject to other sections of *The Manual*.

2.7 The board shall have the power to declare that a local society ceases to exist if the society does not have the personnel and financial resources needed to carry out an effective ministry plan, or is unable to elect an official board and trustees. The board shall also have the authority to declare any local or national church property surplus. It may authorize the management committee to take control of the title to the real and personal surplus properties and to transfer the title to the Corporation. It may direct the management committee to sell or otherwise dispose of such property. The proceeds of such sale may be used as directed by the board, provided they are first applied to clearing any remaining debts of the former society.

2.8 The board shall be involved in the discipline of lay and ministerial members and congregations as provided for in chapter nine of this *Manual*.

2.9 The board may approve Letters of Agreement with the board of administration of The Free Methodist Church of North America and the Department of World Missions as needed to advance the ministries of The Free Methodist Church in Canada. As the Corporation of The Free Methodist Church in Canada, the board may approve any legal agreements with other organizations or affiliated Free Methodist organizations as necessary to further the interests of the church.

3. Officers of the Corporation (Board of Administration)

At its first meeting following its election by the general conference, the board of administration shall:

- elect a chair from among its lay members.
- elect the following officers of the corporation from among its members: vice-chair, secretary, treasurer.

When employees of the corporation participate in meetings of the board of administration, they do so without a vote.

4. Committees

At its first meeting following its election by the general conference, the board shall organize its members into such committees as the board shall deem to be necessary to organize and administer the ministry programs of The Free Methodist Church in Canada. Among these committees shall be the audit, management and personnel committees.

To establish a link between the board of administration and the North American Commission on Missions, the Canadian representative to the North American Commission on Missions shall be appointed by the board of administration from among its members sitting on the committee responsible for overseas missions.

4.1 **Audit Committee**

The management committee shall nominate three persons who are members of a local society or of the Canadian General Conference for election by the board of administration as the audit committee for the term between general conferences. The audit committee will meet independently with the external auditor to receive and review the auditor's report. The nomination and election is to take place at the first meeting of the board of administration following general conference. The members of the audit committee may not be members of the board of administration.

4.2 **Management Committee**

The management committee of the board of administration shall consist of four members appointed by the board of administration from among its members**,** one of whom is ministerial. The committee shall meet in conjunction with board of administration meetings and at such other times as it deems necessary. It shall report to and be amenable to the direction of the board of administration in the interim between general conference sessions. The committee shall:

4.2.1 have general oversight of the financial resources of the Corporation of The Free Methodist Church in Canada;
4.2.2 prepare annual budgets for Core Ministries for approval by the board of administration;
4.2.3 act as administrators of the Ministers' Pension Plan;
4.2.4 manage the Ministers' and Employees' Benefit Program (Life, LTD and Medical/Dental Insurance);
4.2.5 develop and manage a salary plan for denominational executives and staff;
4.2.6 serve as the Trustees of the Corporation of The Free Methodist Church in Canada. As the national trustees, the committee shall have the authority, subject to the general directions of the board of administration to provide local church trustees with the conference consent required to mortgage, lease or sell local church property (See ¶350.1.3);
4.2.7 provide local churches with general guidelines regarding pastoral salary and employment policies.

No member of the committee shall benefit directly or indirectly from the funds under the care of the committee. It shall follow conservative investment practices with due regard for the preservation of capital.

4.3 Personnel Team

A Personnel Team shall be appointed by the board of administration at its first meeting following general conference to assist the bishop, national leadership team and supervisory staff with the annual review of all employees' performance appraisals and compensation packages for the term between general conferences. It shall comprise of four or five persons including the following: the bishop, a lay member of the board of administration (BOA), a member of the MEGaP committee, and one or two members of the Free Methodist Church in Canada or of the conference, who are not on the board of administration. The latter can be nominated by the bishop, but appointed by the BOA. At least half of the team shall be lay members, and at least one member, other than the bishop, shall be ordained.

¶430 Ministerial Education Guidance and Placement (MEGaP) Committee

1. Membership

The general conference shall elect a MEGaP committee of up to 34 members, as defined in ¶420.2.2. The bishop and the director of leadership development and church health shall receive notification of all MEGaP meetings and minutes, and shall be entitled to be present and participate fully without vote in all meetings.

2. Authority and Function

2.1 The committee shall assist the director of leadership development and church health in the recruiting, interviewing, screening and evaluation of ministerial candidates. It shall recommend lay ministers for ministerial candidacy and ministerial candidates for commissioned ministry, or ordination and membership in the conference when they are deemed ready. It shall be available to counsel ministers in personal growth and professional advancement. The committee shall consider the character and performance of each minister, including located ministers and commissioned ministers, and report to each session of the general conference.

2.2 The committee shall appoint ministers to their various ministries, in consultation with the bishop, director of leadership development and church health and pastoral leadership task forces. The process for changes of appointments is described in the "*Transitions Handbook for Churches."* The MEGaP committee shall have the authority to make changes in appointments without the request of the local society when this is deemed to be in the best interest of the local church or pastor.

2.3 A minister may be appointed to a church without being given charge of that church. In such cases, the church shall be listed "under the bishop" who shall assume responsibility for its administration.

2.4 Any minister who refuses to serve when appointed shall not be appointed by another conference without the approval of the MEGaP committee.

2.5 The MEGaP committee may grant a leave of absence to any ordained minister. If not restored to active ministry after a two-year leave of absence, the minister's membership shall be located to a local church (see ¶845). Located ministers may be restored to active ministry by the MEGaP committee. Leave of Absence appointments shall designate the reason for a leave of absence.

2.6 Located Ministers have the place of their membership determined by the MEGaP committee. In the process, the minister and official board of the church involved shall be consulted.

2.7 The MEGaP committee shall rule on divorce cases related to persons preparing for or involved in ordained ministry. (See ¶816) The bishop shall appoint a Divorce Review Committee of four MEGaP members to assist with the preparation of recommendations related to divorce cases.

¶435 PROPERTY

1. Real Property

1.1 The management committee (Trustees of the Corporation) shall have the legal authority to act on behalf of the corporation in all matters pertaining to administration and management of the real properties of the corporation.

1.2 The management committee shall have the power to mortgage, lease, sell or otherwise encumber the real property of the corporation, with the consent of the general conference or the board of administration. Where the real property in question is the property of a former local society or property that has been declared surplus, the general policy direction of the board of administration regarding disposal of such property and the use of proceeds shall be considered to be the consent of the board needed for sale or disposal of such property.

¶440 FUNDING

1. The finances for operating the ministries of the Canadian General Conference shall be provided for through two programs known as Core Ministry and Giving Streams. Policies related to these programs are found in ¶375.3.

2. **Core Ministry**

2.1 The Core Ministry funding program shall provide for the financing of the general operating needs of the general conference and the Corporation of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

2.2 Each local society in The Free Methodist Church in Canada shall contribute a tithe (10%) of its general operating income to the support of the Core Ministry program. For this purpose (only) the general operating income is defined to include all donations to the local society, LESS funds raised for:

- Giving Streams.
- Special short-term fund raising programs for local church projects (such as campaigns for building programs or debt reduction).
- Funds raised for special ministry programs outside of the local church (such as funds raised for the World Relief, and funds transferred to other Christian organizations).
- Bequests.

3. Giving Streams

3.1 The Giving Streams funding model shall provide for the support of the ministries of The Free Methodist Church in Canada in the following areas:

- Global Ministries: Support for global ministries proceeding from Canadian church involvements.
- Church Planting: Ongoing development of new Free Methodist churches in Canada, related financial assistance, and related leadership training and development.
- Leadership Development: Financial support for the Leadership Scholarship Plan, internships, foundational courses and ministers' conferences.

3.2 Financial support for Giving Streams shall be raised through voluntary free-will donations made by the individual members and adherents of local churches in Canada.

3.3 The Giving Stream model will be promoted through the communications department.

¶445 COMPASSION MINISTRIES AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

1. International Child Care Sponsorship Ministries – Canada (ICCM)

International Child Care Ministries-Canada is the child sponsorship program of The Free Methodist Church in Canada, supporting children in third-world countries. The Canadian Child Care Ministries Director shall supervise this ministry.

2. World Relief Fund

World Relief Canada is a Christian organization designated as the official humanitarian assistance arm of Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Because it represents several denominations working in partnership with a commitment to the indigenous church, famine and disaster relief projects have access to additional Canadian government funding through matching grants. The Free Methodist Church in Canada, through World Relief Canada, also participates in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

The World Relief Fund is supported voluntarily by Free Methodist churches across Canada usually through a fall campaign or as determined by the local church through the year. Funds designated to World Relief are channelled through the Canadian church or directly to World Relief Canada. Seventy percent of the funds received are disbursed to World Relief and 30% is designated to the Bishop's Relief Fund for similar Free Methodist specific projects world-wide.

3. Moral Issues and Social Action

Involvement in moral issues and social action within society has always been the concern of vital Methodists. The congregations of The Free Methodist Church in Canada are encouraged to promote the development of social conscience among their people and in their communities. Each local church is encouraged to be a member congregation of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) and to support its initiatives.

¶450 AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

A number of organizations are affiliated with The Free Methodist Church in Canada. These affiliated organizations provide for a range of ministries and services to The Free Methodist Church in Canada, the local churches and their members. These include:

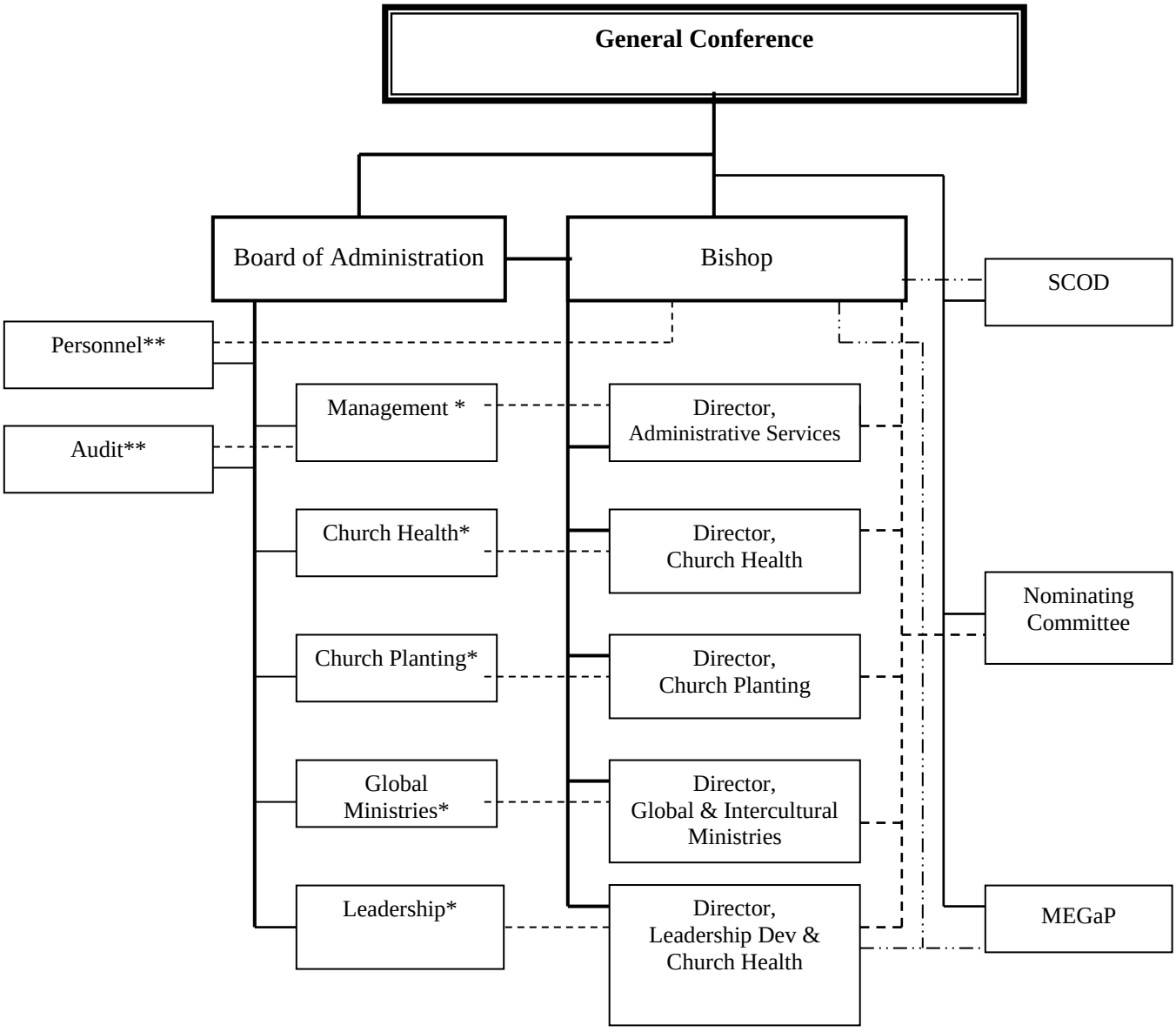
- Arlington Beach Camp and Conference Centre
- Echo Lake Camp
- Free Methodist Foundation in Canada.
- Kakabeka Falls Camp
- Lorne Park Foundation
- Maple Grove Christian Retreat Centre Inc.
- Pine Orchard Camp
- Severn Bridge Camp
- Wesley Acres Inc.

¶455 PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

Robert's Rules of Order in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure.

¶460 A ORGANIZATION CHARTS

The Free Methodist Church in Canada
Organization Chart



* Number & role defined by Board
**Include members from outside the Board

Bishop chairs SCOD

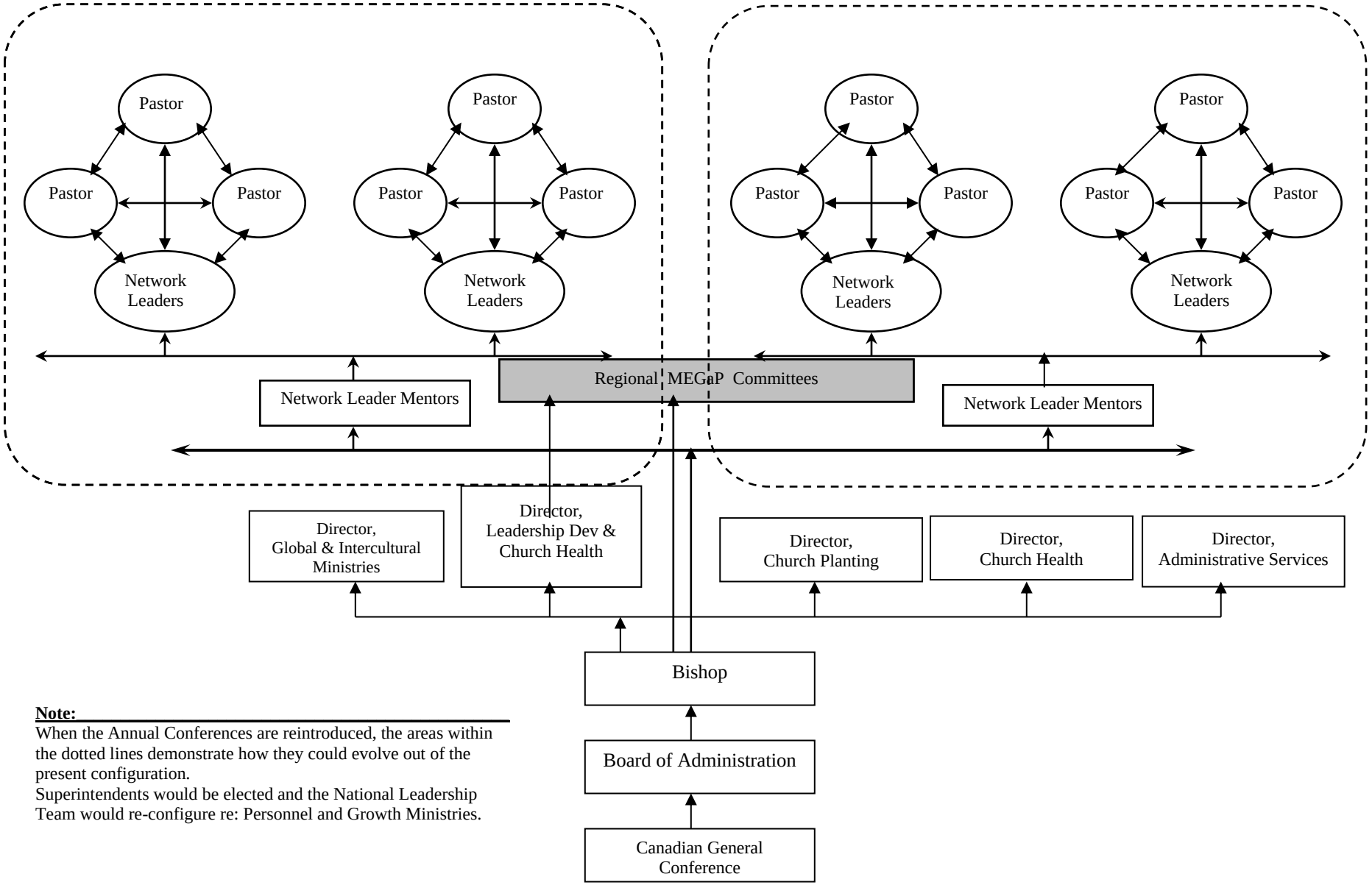
Bishop & director of leadership development and church health chair MEGaP

NLT members resource BOA subcommittees and Nominating Committee

460 B ORGANIZATION CHART: NETWORKS AND NATIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM CHART

THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN CANADA

NETWORKS AND NATIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM CHART



Note:
When the Annual Conferences are reintroduced, the areas within the dotted lines demonstrate how they could evolve out of the present configuration.
Superintendents would be elected and the National Leadership Team would re-configure re: Personnel and Growth Ministries.

***BOA**
Revised 11/12/2021

¶465 GENERAL CONFERENCE DELEGATE FORM

THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN CANADA

GENERAL CONFERENCE DELEGATE CREDENTIALS

THIS CERTIFIES THAT _____
NAME

OF _____/_____/____/ _____
STREET CITY PROV POSTAL CODE

_____/_____
PHONE EMAIL

was duly elected to represent the _____ *Church at the Canadian General Conference to be held in* _____ *commencing on the* _____ *day of* _____, *20*_____.

☐ ***Delegate***

☐ ***Reserve Delegate***

***Guidelines for electing delegates and reserve delegates are published in *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada*, Par. 320.3**

Decided at the Board /Society Meeting held at _____

*on the*_____ *day of* _____, *20*_____.

Pastor _____ Secretary _____

THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN CANADA

GENERAL CONFERENCE DELEGATE CREDENTIALS

THIS CERTIFIES THAT _____
NAME

OF _____/_____/____/ _____
STREET CITY PROV POSTAL CODE

_____/_____
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was duly elected to represent the _____ *Church at the Canadian General Conference to be held in* _____ *commencing on the* _____ *day of* _____, *20*_____.

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Decided at the Board /Society Meeting held at _____

*on the*_____ *day of* _____, *20*_____.

Pastor _____ Secretary _____

CHAPTER 5

CHURCH IN FORMATION, MISSION DISTRICT, ANNUAL CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

¶ 500 Introduction

¶ 505 Church in Formation

¶ 510 Mission District

¶ 511 Members and Officers of the Mission District

¶ 512 Board of Administration

¶ 513 Ministerial Education Guidance and Placement Committee (MEGaP)
¶ 514 Nominating Committee

¶ 515 Role of the Superintendent

¶ 516 Role of the Zonal Overseer

¶ 517 Funding

¶ 518 movable and immovable property

¶ 520 Provisional Annual Conference

¶ 530 Annual Conference

¶ 540 Provisional General Conference

CHAPTER 5: CHURCH IN FORMATION, MISSION DISTRICT, ANNUAL CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

¶ 500 INTRODUCTION

In the spirit of the Great Commission, Free Methodists desire to do their part to see healthy churches established in every nation on earth. Every national expression of the Free Methodist Church begins with believers who have come to Christ joining together to form a local church. The Lord Jesus desires to see the multiplication of communities of believers. In time, these local churches need to be linked together in order to bring their combined efforts to bear on the work of establishing a presence in the nation.

The following paragraphs describe administrative structures and procedures for each stage of development. As the Lord Jesus builds his church and the leadership demands on the structures become larger than can be healthily supported, the church will move toward the next stage of development.

¶ 505 CHURCH IN FORMATION

The formation of a core of believers is the first level for forming a national presence for the Free Methodist Church. It usually involves researching options as to where and how to begin. This initial phase of the development of a national presence involves the following activities:

1. Organization

a) Membership instruction
b) Training of ministerial personnel – 3 courses
   - Introduction to Free Methodism
   - Introduction to Christian Doctrine
   - Inductive Bible Study Class
c) Reception of members
d) Designation by missionary of pastor/leader for the country

2. Development

a) Formation of a lightly structured Administrative Committee
b) Development of a financial structure, budget (national and external support)
c) Initial steps toward a constitution, legal status and being incorporated
d) Discipleship and leadership training of laity and ministerial candidates
e) Strategic Plan for expansion developed for:
   - Church growth leading to organized local churches (12 adult members minimum)
   - Church planting/expansion

¶ 510 THE MISSION DISTRICT

When, in the judgment of the bishop and the director of global ministries, a church in formation reaches the following minimum developmental markers, it may be organized as a mission district.

1. Board of Administration formed and functioning
2. At least two organized churches
3. At least one ordained minister

4. A national budget established
5. Progress on the Constitution and legal incorporation process
6. Strategic Plan for expansion further developed for:
   a. Discipleship and the leadership training program for laity and ministerial candidates
   b. Church growth leading to organized local churches (12 adult members)
   c. Church planting/expansion goals
   d. Viable financial program developed (national and external support)
7. Property purchases and construction of facilities have begun.

¶511 MEMBERS AND OFFICERS OF THE MISSION DISTRICT

1. The membership of the mission district of The Free Methodist Church in <<*insert name of country*>> shall consist of the bishop (or his designate) who shall chair the annual meeting, the superintendent, the pastor(s) and a lay delegate(s) elected by each of the churches. Each church is entitled to send one delegate for every pastor. Members of the board of administration who are neither pastors nor lay delegates shall also be members until their terms are completed.
2. Two-thirds of the total members seated (ministerial and lay delegates) shall constitute a quorum.
3. The mission district shall meet annually on <<*day/month*>> unless otherwise arranged by the board of administration.
4. Until a provisional annual conference is formed, the mission district is the only legislative body in the church. It shall have full power to make rules and regulations subject to the limitations and restrictions of *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada*.
5. The mission district shall have general organizational and supervisory powers over all activities of the church in <<*insert name of country*>>. It shall be the only law-making body. Parliamentary Procedure (Robert's Rules of Order) shall be used.
6. It shall define the responsibilities of the superintendent and elect a superintendent from among its ordained ministers.
7. It shall elect a board of administration, determine its powers, determine the number of its officers and define the qualifications of its members. The term of a board member shall be three years. Board members (with the exception of the superintendent and zone leaders) shall be limited to two terms. To ensure continuity of its leadership, the terms of the members of the board shall be staggered.
8. The officers of the mission district are as follows: The bishop is the president. The superintendent is the first vice president.

¶512 BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION

1. MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the board of administration shall be constituted as follows – the superintendent, two ordained ministers and two lay people. The bishop shall receive notification of all board of administration meetings and minutes and shall be entitled to be present and participate fully without vote in all meetings.

2. AUTHORITY AND FUNCTIONS

2.1 The board shall have general organizational, promotional and supervisory powers over all

activities of the Free Methodist Church. The board members who are trustees of the Trust (by virtue of their offices) have supervisory powers over all property of the Trust (movable and immovable) and over its bank accounts. (See ¶518.)

2.2 It shall meet quarterly, the times and locations to be determined by the board. A majority of the members elected shall constitute a quorum.

2.3 The Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Bishop shall constitute the trustees of the Trust known as Free Methodist Church.

2.4 The board, in consultation with the presiding bishop, shall have the power to accept resignations, remove any of its members "for cause" and fill any vacancies however created in the interim between the Mission District meetings. If a board member is also a trustee of the Trust by virtue of his or his/her office and he/she is removed from the board, he/she is also automatically removed as a trustee of the Trust.

Likewise, a board member automatically becomes a trustee of the Trust, if he/she is elected to one of the following positions on the board: Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer. The presiding bishop, by virtue of his/her office is automatically a trustee of the Trust.

2.5 If the office of superintendent becomes vacant for any reason, a new superintendent shall be elected at a special sitting of the mission district except for vacancies occurring in the last three months preceding a mission district meeting.

2.6 The board shall have the responsibility to determine the number of staff members to be employed by the mission district, to define the general duties and responsibilities of these positions, to hire such staff members and, if necessary, remove them for cause.

2.7 The board shall have general oversight of the financial resources of the Corporation of The Free Methodist Church in <<*insert name of country*>>, prepare annual budgets for approval by the mission district and act as administrators of the Ministers' Pension Plan. It shall annually publish a financial statement outlining the assets, liabilities, and financial standing of the corporation of The Free Methodist Church in <<*insert name of country*>>. The financial statement, together with supporting documents, shall be subject to a financial review by an external reviewer who shall submit his/her report to the mission district and to the Free Methodist Church in Canada.

2.8 If a church does not have the personnel and financial resources needed to carry out an effective ministry plan, or is unable to elect an official board, the board will direct the zonal leader of that church to enter into discussions about taking steps to close the church.

2.9 The board shall also have the authority to declare the property of a closed church or any national church property as surplus property. It shall sell or otherwise dispose of such property in accordance with the laws of <<*insert name of country*>>. The proceeds of such sale shall be used as directed by the board (in consultation with the FMCiC), provided they are first applied to clearing any remaining debts related to the property.

2.10 The board shall be involved in the discipline of lay and ministerial members and congregations as provided for in chapter nine of this Manual. If a minister is suspended, he/she must return movable property to the Free Methodist Church and vacate immovable premises according to the conditions of the Property Waiver Agreement he/she signed.

3. **OFFICERS OF THE BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION**

The officers of the Board of Administration are the superintendent (chair), vice-chair, secretary, and treasurer. When employees of the mission district participate in meetings of the board of administration, they do so without a vote.

¶513 MINISTERIAL EDUCATION GUIDANCE AND PLACEMENT (MEGAP) COMMITTEE

1. **MEMBERSHIP**

The mission district shall elect a national MEGaP committee composed of the following: the superintendent, an ordained minister and a lay person from each zone. The bishop and the superintendent shall receive notification of all MEGaP meetings and minutes. The superintendent shall serve as chair in the absence of the bishop.

2. **AUTHORITY AND FUNCTIONS**

2.1 The committee shall assist the superintendent in the recruiting, interviewing, screening and evaluation of ministerial candidates in each zone.

Candidates for ministerial candidacy shall be screened at the time of the teaching of the "Heart of Free Methodism" course.

Ministerial candidates applying for ordination shall be interviewed a team composed of the superintendent, zone leader and two lay people from the zone. This committee shall make ordination recommendations to the board of administration which shall have authority to approve candidates for ordination.

When a candidate is being interviewed, his/her pastor shall participate in the interview if possible. If a pastor is the candidate, his/her board chair shall participate in the interview if possible.

It shall be available to counsel ministers in personal growth and professional advancement.

2.2 The committee shall consider the character and performance of each minister and report to each session of the mission district.

2.3 The committee shall appoint ministers to their various ministries, in consultation with the bishop, superintendent and pastoral leadership task forces. The process for changes of appointments is described in the "Transitions Handbook for Churches." The MEGaP committee shall have the authority to make changes in appointments without the request of the local society when this is deemed to be in the best interest of the local church or pastor.

2.4 A minister may be appointed to a church without being given charge of that church. In such cases, the church shall be listed "under the superintendent" who shall assume responsibility for its administration.
Any minister who refuses to serve when appointed shall not be appointed by another conference without the approval of the MEGaP committee.

The MEGaP committee may grant a leave of absence to any ordained minister. If not restored to active ministry after a two-year leave of absence, the minister's membership shall be located to a local church (see ¶845). Located ministers may be restored to active ministry by the MEGaP committee. Leave of Absence appointments shall designate the reason for a leave of absence (e.g. illness, education, secular work, personal reasons).

Located Ministers have the place of their membership determined by the MEGaP committee. In the process, the minister and official board of the church involved shall be consulted.

The MEGaP committee shall rule on divorce cases related to persons preparing for or involved in ordained ministry. (See ¶816) The superintendent shall appoint a Divorce Review Committee of four MEGaP members to assist with the preparation of recommendations related to divorce cases.

¶514 NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The mission district shall elect a nominating committee (normally a minister and a layperson from different churches in each zone) who are not members of another standing board/committee of the mission district elected to a three year term. The superintendent shall be an ex officio member of the committee. The committee shall elect its chair, vice chair and secretary.

¶514.1 Election of the Nominating Committee

The Zone Leaders will consult in advance with local pastors regarding gifted and credible candidates. The Zone Leaders and superintendent will then present a slate of nominees to the nominating committee from the zones.

In the District Meeting, an opportunity will be given for nominations from the floor (after the nominations from the superintendent and Zone Leaders are presented) provided that the nominator has the permission of the person being nominated.

To ensure continuity, nominating committee members' terms will be staggered.

¶ 515 ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

The superintendent is elected to serve the church as an overseer. This ordained minister functions as a teacher and defender of the faith, a general shepherd, a pastor to the pastors, and an administrator who by good example and faithful application of The Manual assures the order of the church. The superintendent is to inspire the church by preaching and being an example of one who carries out Christ's great commission.

As the national pastoral leader and chief executive officer of The Free Methodist Church in <<*insert name of country*>>, the superintendent's ministry of leadership encompasses spiritual, governance, administrative and representative dimensions. Overseeing a broad range of persons, teams and activities, the primary responsibilities of the superintendent include the development of spiritual vitality, effective administration and the strategic direction of the national church. The superintendent guides in the creation of vision and mission for the church today and in the future, leading to the growth and development of the church in <<*insert name of country*>>. The following serves as a general job description:

THE SUPERINTENDENT:

a) is an ordained minister elected by the mission district. His/her term shall be for three years. He/she may be re-elected. There is no limit to the number of terms.

b) Each term of office shall be until the closing of the annual meeting of the mission district at which his/her successor is elected.
c) is directly responsible to the bishop, mission district and it's BOA.
d) is *primarily* responsible to:
    - Oversee and assist with the work of the BOA and the Zone Leaders;
    - Be the national vision caster through strategic planning, policy development, public ministry and use of media;
    - Represent the denomination at (inter)denominational events;
    - Oversee the MEGaP committee – the recruiting, interviewing, screening and evaluation of ministerial candidates of the mission district, the recommendation of candidates for ordination, the professional development of ministry personnel and, when necessary the discipline of pastors.
    - Fulfill other responsibilities assigned by *The Manual* or the BOA.
    - Assist in a local church situation when requested by the church or a zonal overseer.
    - May only be removed from office by disciplinary action or by a majority non-confidence vote of the mission district.

¶516 ROLE OF THE ZONE LEADER

Zone leaders are mature pastors who willingly and sacrificially work as team members with the Superintendent to oversee the ministry of the Free Methodist Church in Sri Lanka.

- They are elected to a three-year term by their zone caucus during the meeting of the Mission District.
- They may be re-elected; there is no term limit.
- They are trained and resourced by the superintendent and bishop.

They are responsible to cultivate an environment to see The Free Methodist Church in Sri Lanka's common vision being fulfilled:

- They build relationships among the pastors in the zone through pastors meetings.
- They work with the pastors and lay people to plan zone rallies to build relationships among the churches.
- They promote and actively encourage people to participate in:
    - the annual Elders Meeting
    - the annual Family Camp and Mission District meetings
- They support the work of the Communication Representative in their zone to receive and pass on communication to the zone and from the zone.
- They support the work of the Ministerial Education Guidance and Placement Committee by arranging interviews for candidates for the ministry from their zone. They serve on the zone interview team with the superintendent and two lay people.
- They are the relational contact point for the superintendent. They regularly report to him on the health of the pastors and local churches and advise him of pastors and churches who need his attention.
- Under the leadership of the superintendent, they build relationships with churches that want to affiliate with the Free Methodist Church in Sri Lanka and give coaching during the process of affiliation.

¶517 FUNDING

Each church in The Free Methodist Church in <<*insert name of country*>> shall contribute *XX*% of its general operating income to fund the operations of the Mission District.

For this purpose (only) the local church general operating income is defined to include all donations to the local society, MINUS funds raised for:

a) Programs in support of church planting
b) Special short-term fund raising programs for local church projects
c) Funds raised for special ministry programs outside of the local church (funds transferred to other Christian organizations).
d) Bequests

¶518 MOVABLE AND IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

1. All movable and immovable property of the mission district is owned and managed by the Trust known as the Free Methodist Church. The trustees of the Trust are the following members of the board of administration: chair, vice chair, secretary, treasurer. The presiding bishop is also a trustee.
2. The Trust shall have the legal authority to act on behalf of the mission district in all matters pertaining to administration and management of the properties (movable and immovable) and the bank accounts of the mission district.
3. By a majority vote of its members, the trustees of the Trust (with the knowledge of the presiding bishop) have the authority:
   3.1 To approve, remove and replace signatories for its bank account.
   3.2 To take action (with or without notice according to the circumstances) to retrieve the Trust's movable property.
   3.3 To approve who may occupy the properties of the Trust and to evict those previously approved to occupy its properties and to remove the movable property of an occupant(s) from the Trust's immovable property.
4. The Trust shall have the power to mortgage, lease, sell or otherwise encumber the real property of the mission district. Financial actions by the board of administration in excess of XXXX shall require the consent of the mission district.

¶520 PROVISIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCES

The Board of Administration of the FMCiC upon the recommendation of the bishop and the director of global ministries, may approve the formation of a provisional annual conference from a mission district, when it has adopted *The Manual of the FMCiC* in principle, has filed the appropriate governmental registration and documents (constitution adapted to local culture and circumstances) and has reached the following minimum developmental markers:

1. 5 organized churches
2. 5 ordained ministers
3. 300 adult members
4. A Manual is being drafted
5. A functioning Board of Administration, MEGaP Committee and Nominating Committee
6. A Strategic Plan and track record that demonstrates the existence of the following:
   a) Discipleship and the leadership training programs for laity and ministerial candidates
   b) Church growth leading to healthy organized local churches as evidenced by their ability:
      - to care for the people/members
      - to support their pastors
   c) Church planting/expansion goals

d) Financial structures – a viable budget (national and external support)
   - a clear strategy for becoming auto-sufficient in finances, stewardship

e) Missions goals

7. Property purchases and construction of facilities

¶530 ANNUAL CONFERENCES

When a provisional annual conference has fulfilled the following requirements and has reached the stage where it has a *Manual* that has been approved by the Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church in Canada and has demonstrated that it is able to operate satisfactorily under *its Manual*, it shall approved as an annual conference.
It has:

1. 10 organized churches
2. 10 ordained ministers
3. 600 adult members
4. A *Manual* approved by the Free Methodist Church in Canada
5. A functioning Board of Administration, MEGaP Committee Nominating Committee
6. A Strategic Plan and track record that demonstrates the healthy existence of the following:
   a) Discipleship and the leadership training programs for laity and ministerial candidates
   b) Church growth leading to healthy organized local churches as evidenced by their ability:
      - to care for the people/members
      - to support their pastors
   c) Church planting/expansion goals
      - divided into districts for greater growth and use of human resources
   d) Financial structures – viable budget
      - an established track record in pastoral support
      - auto-sufficiency in finances, stewardship
   e) Missions
7. Property purchase and construction of facilities

¶ 540 PROVISIONAL GENERAL CONFERENCE

Requirements for forming a provisional General conference are found in ¶221 and those for a general conference in ¶222.

To prepare for a new provisional general conference, the Bishop of the Free Methodist Church in Canada shall form a provisional general conference task force of the superintendents, lay representatives from the participating annual conferences and the global missions director to prepare a provisional general conference proposal. It shall be presented to the participating annual conferences for adoption in principle

The Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church in Canada shall elect an ordained minister(s) who is a national citizen of the country of the provisional general conference as a suffragan bishop(s) from the nominee(s) presented by the annual conferences of that country. The suffragan bishop(s) oversees his/her provisional general conference under the supervision and counsel of the Bishop of the Free Methodist Church in Canada.

The size and composition of the provisional general conference at and its Board of Administration shall be shall be recommended by the provisional general conference task force and be approved by the Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church in Canada.

***BOA**
05/22/2017

CHAPTER 6: THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY

¶ 600 The Goal of the Christian Journey

¶ 610 The Way of Salvation
- **610.1 God's Gracious Initiative for Salvation**
- **610.2 Awakening to God**
- **610.3 Repentance and Restitution**
- **610.4 Trust / Faith**
- **610.5 Assurance**
- **610.6 Consecration**
- **610.7 Sanctification**

¶ 620 Genuine Christian Character
- **620.1 Prayer**
- **620.2 Study of the Scriptures**
- **620.3 Life in the Church**
- **620.4 Service and Ministry**
- **620.5 Love of Others**

¶ 630 Christian Life in the Modern World
- **630.1 As Regards God**
  - **630.1.1 False Worship**
  - **630.1.2 The Lord's Day**
  - **630.1.3 Divine Healing**
  - **630.1.4 Secret Societies**
- **630.2 As Regards Myself and Others**
  - **630.2.1 Worth of Persons**
  - **630.2.2 Self Discipline**
  - **630.2.3 Possessions**
  - **630.2.4 Life in the Workplace**
  - **630.2.5 Entertainment**
  - **630.2.6 Pornography**
  - **630.2.7 Sexual Intimacy**
  - **630.2.8 Sanctity of Life**
- **630.3 As Regards Divinely Appointed Institutions**
  - **630.3.1 The Christian and Marriage**
  - **630.3.1.1 Principles Regarding Marriage**
  - **630.3.1.2 Nurturing Healthy Marriages**
  - **630.3.1.3 Healing Troubled Marriages**
  - **630.3.1.4 Principles Regarding Divorce**
  - **630.3.1.5 Recovery after Divorce**
  - **630.3.1.6 Remarriage after a Divorce**
  - **630.3.1.7 Refusal of Counsel**
  - **630.3.1.8 Exceptional Cases**
  - **630.3.1.9 Same-Sex Unions**
  - **630.3.1.10 Use of Free Methodist Church Facilities**
  - **630.3.1.11 Polygamy**
  - **630.3.2 Education of Children**

630.3.3 The Christian and the Church
630.3.3.1 Membership in the Church
630.3.3.2 Leadership in the Church
630.3.4 The Christian and the State
630.3.4.1 Civic Participation
630.3.4.2 War and Military Enlistment
630.3.4.3 Swearing Oaths

630.4 As Regards the Care of Creation

CHAPTER 6: THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY

¶600 THE GOAL OF THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY

The Scriptures affirm that God's purpose for humanity, from before creation, was that we should "be holy and blameless before him in love" (Ephesians 1:3-4; I Timothy 2:4). God's purpose was far from empty. For, from before creation, his purpose had reality in the person of the Son, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:4; II Timothy 1:8b-10). The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are God's clear statement of the origin, purpose and goal that he has for humanity. For "with all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Ephesians 1:8-10).

The Christian journey is a part of this plan, which was set forth in Christ. The Christian journey is only possible because of God's eternal purpose, the redemption he made for us in Christ, and the living presence of his Spirit in our lives (I Corinthians 11:1; II Corinthians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12-13).

Because of God's plan, the goal of the Christian journey is nothing less lofty than to "live a life worthy of the calling you have received" and to attain "to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Ephesians 4:1, 13). The goal of the Christian journey in this life is that we should grow into Christ-like maturity. When we enter the life to come, our journey will be complete because we will be like God in an even fuller way than is possible now: "What we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is." (I John 3:2)

Therefore, we as Free Methodists affirm with God's Word that the proper goal for our Christian life is this Christ-like maturity, which the Bible describes as holiness and righteousness (I Peter 1:15,16; Romans 6:19). We acknowledge that this is only possible because of the grace that he so richly provides

Contents

This unit of *The Manual* is intended to describe some significant features of the Free Methodist understanding of the Christian journey. It is intended to promote in our churches an understanding of the way of salvation, Christian character, and Christian responses to modern issues. It is also a place to find some resources for Christian discipleship. This unit has the following sections:

- The first section (¶610) describes the way of salvation, including the process by which God, through the activity of his Spirit, makes it possible for sinful humans to enter the Christian journey and to grow into Christ-like maturity.
- The second section (¶620) is a description of genuine Christian character and the spiritual disciplines that nourish and support Christian life.
- The third section (¶630) addresses the Christian response to certain pressing issues that are a part of Christian life in the modern world, as it relates to God, oneself and to others.

¶610 THE WAY OF SALVATION

This section, on the way of salvation, describes the Free Methodist standard of teaching on the biblical doctrine of salvation. These paragraphs are an elaboration of what is affirmed in the Articles of Religion, in their statements on Humankind **(**¶111-113) and Salvation **(**¶114-120). They represent our understanding of the clear teaching of scripture on the process by which God, through the activity of his Spirit, makes it possible for sinful humans to enter the Christian journey and to grow into Christ-like maturity. The way of salvation is the path God has laid out for us to begin the Christian journey, and to grow in faith.

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

¶610.1 GOD'S GRACIOUS INITIATIVE FOR SALVATION

In love God has graciously provided for the salvation of all humankind. God is love (I John 4:8-10). Jesus, the eternal Son of God, was sent by the Father as an expression of God's love for the world (John 3:16). The cross shows the extent of Jesus' love for all. The love of God is further expressed to the world through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Only those who respond in repentance and faith can experience His grace as a redemptive reality (Romans 3:21-26).

The Christian life can be consciously experienced because it is a relationship between persons - the personal God and humans made in His likeness. Every person is confronted by this personal God, but the outcome of this confrontation is affected by how each person responds (II Corinthians 3:16-18).

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

Those who are justified by faith experience the peace of God (Romans 5:1, 2). When His Holy Spirit comes to the heart, there is joy and freedom (Romans 14:17; II Corinthians 3:17). The Holy Spirit's indwelling presence is the assurance of our relationship to God as His dear children (Romans 8:15-16).

¶610.2 AWAKENING TO GOD

The Scriptures teach that by nature, humans are corrupt in every aspect of their beings and have gone far from original righteousness (Romans 3:23). Added to the depravity common to all because of the Fall, there are the enslaving effects of committed sins (John 8:34; Romans 6:16). We are unable in ourselves to come to God, but God in His grace reaches out to every sinner (Romans 5:6-8).

God takes the initiative in making sinners aware of their needs, using His Word, the revelation in Jesus Christ, the Gospel proclamation of the church, the witness of individuals, and the circumstances of life. By such means, the Holy Spirit awakens sinners to their needs and to the truth of the Gospel (John 16:8, 13). Awakened, they must make a response, either rejecting the call of God or turning to God in repentance and faith **(**Acts 2:37- 39).

¶610.3 REPENTANCE AND RESTITUTION

Awakened by the Holy Spirit to their lost condition before God, persons may move toward God. Since "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), all must repent in order to come into a right relationship with God (Acts 20:21).

Repentance calls for a sincere and thorough change of mind. To repent is to turn from sin with genuine sorrow and to turn to God in confession and submission (I John 1:5-9). The whole person is involved: mind, feelings, will. Repentance is more than regret for wrongdoing or sorrow at being caught. It is personal sorrow that one has sinned against God (II Corinthians 7:10). Repentance demands a radical turning from sin and a sincere turning to God (James 4:7-10).

Sincere repentance leads to moral renewal, often evidenced by restitution - the effort to right one's wrongs whenever possible. Acts of restitution, as in the case of Zacchaeus, are certainly fruits befitting repentance (Luke 19:8). Neither repentance nor restitution save, however. Salvation is by faith in Christ (Acts 4:10-12; Romans 5:1).

¶610.4 TRUST / FAITH

Trust, also known as faith, is utter reliance upon God (I Timothy 4:10; Romans 1:17). Trust includes full acceptance of the promises of God, complete dependence on Christ's sacrifice for salvation, and unconditional commitment to the will of God. God's grace and blessings are open to those who turn to Him with full reliance on His integrity, love and power.

Christians experience God's loving care and guidance as they trust and follow Him (Psalm 25:1-9). When they think they are sufficient unto themselves they become frustrated by trying to do for themselves what God wants to do for them. Self-sufficiency is inconsistent with perfect trust (I Timothy 6:17).

¶610.5 ASSURANCE

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

Christians have peace with God through Jesus Christ because guilt is taken away and fear of judgment removed (Hebrews 10:15-23**).** God continues to give assurance to believers through the Scriptures, the conscious presence of the Holy Spirit, and love for and fellowship with other Christians (I John 3:21-24).

¶610.6 CONSECRATION

God calls His people to set themselves apart to His will and purpose (Romans 6:13; 12:1-2). Anything thus set apart is said to be consecrated.

All Christians are called to be holy and without blame before God in love (I Thessalonians 3: 12-13; 5:23-24**)**. If Christians are to witness effectively in the world, they must be distinguished by righteousness, peace, joy, faith, hope, and love (John 13:34-35; Ephesians 5:8-10). God wants a people who are fully committed and surrendered to His Lordship to do His work (Matthew 7:21; 16:24). When Christians sincerely follow Christ and listen to the Holy Spirit as He speaks in the Scriptures, they should sense this need of cleansing from inward sin. They should desire earnestly

to be filled with the love of God and long for a relationship with Christ which will satisfy their deepest inward need and empower them to serve and obey the Lord (Ephesians 5:1-2; II Peter 1:3-8) .

Christians, therefore, must consecrate themselves to God and surrender their wills to the will of the Heavenly Father (Philippians 2:12-13; Hebrews 13:20-21). Those who desire inward sanctification must deny themselves, bear the cross, and follow Christ (Luke 9:23). Devotion to self is idolatry. A Christian who is divided in loyalty cannot serve God victoriously and steadfastly. Christ must be given the pre-eminence. He must be the Lord of the Christian's life.

Therefore, to open themselves to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, believers must give themselves without reservation to God. They freely yield all to the purposes of God and devote every desire and ambition to the service of Christ rather than to self (Colossians 3:8-13, 17). Christians cannot be delivered from the dominion of sin if they permit self to reign in their lives. They cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24).

¶610.7 SANCTIFICATION

Christ gave himself "even unto death" for the cleansing of His church (Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 13:12). His disciples are called to be holy (I Peter 1:15-16; II Corinthians 7:1). Christ provided for believers to be entirely sanctified, in the atonement (Hebrews 9:13-14; 10:8-10). Accordingly, Paul prayed "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it" (I Thessalonians 5:23-24). Sanctification begins with regeneration. It continues throughout the believer's life, as the believer co-operates with the Spirit. A deeper relationship with Christ is possible when the believer is fully cleansed in heart (Psalm 51:5-13; I John 1:5-2:1),

God the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier (II Thessalonians 2:13; I Peter 1:2). Coming into the life at conversion, He fills with His unrivalled presence when the Christian's consecration is complete, cleansing the heart and empowering for witness and service (John 3:5; Acts 1:8; I Corinthians 6:11). He sheds God's love throughout the heart and life of the Christian (Romans 5:5; I John 4:12-13).

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

Inward sanctification cleanses Christians from sin and delivers from the idolatry of self **(**I Corinthians 6:19-20; Philippians 2:1-4). When they are cleansed, they are not made perfect in performance, but in love (Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 5:43-48; I John 4:12-17).

¶620 GENUINE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

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.

¶620.1 PRAYER

Prayer is an indispensable means of growth toward Christ-likeness. In prayer the Christian talks and listens, confesses and adores, asks and thanks. Prayer should be as conversation, avoiding artificial phrases and tones. Sincere prayer changes the supplicant and often the circumstances (James 5:13-16). The Bible teaches that both individual and group prayer are effective for those who are in Christ. Prayer takes us beyond ourselves and emphasizes our dependence on God. Prayer should be regular, without becoming a mere ritual (Matthew 6: 5-8).

¶620.2 STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES

The Bible is our source for discovering how we may grow. It is the Christian's "growth manual." It must be taken seriously as the final authority for our lives; therefore, it ought to be read regularly, and diligently studied for its meaning. God will speak to growing Christians through its pages if they are listening. The value and meaning of life are found in this book. The prayerful study and application of scripture is a means of cleansing and of changing attitudes and behaviour. Psalm 119:9,11,105; II Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12.

¶620.3 LIFE IN THE CHURCH

Growing Christians find their supportive environment in the fellowship of believers. They do not live independently from the Body of Christ (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25). Worship requires a proper attitude toward God. It involves the believer's active participation. Believers should prepare their minds and spirits for worship so they can reach out to God in praise, thanksgiving, dedication, confession, faith, and service. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are vital parts of the life of the church that were commanded by the Lord. God has promised to graciously meet the person who faithfully takes part in these sacraments. As a part of the Body of Christ, believers must take part in corporate worship, as well as in the other ministries of the church. Small group participation is a means of grace and growth. Support, insight, inspiration, and discipline are fruits of fellowship.

¶620.4 SERVICE AND MINISTRY

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

¶620.5 LOVE OF OTHERS

Growth in Christ requires taking responsibility to love others, all of whom are loved by God and made in His image. The quality of a Christian's relationships with others affects the quality of their own lives. Growth in Christ requires readiness to mend relationships both with God and with others (Ephesians 4:32-5:2). The Ten Commandments, summarized into two commandments by Jesus, teach the nature of our relationships with God, others and ourselves (Luke 10:25-28). Christians will express their love both by deeds of kindness (Matthew 25:31-46) and by personal words of witness (Acts 1:8) that point to Christ as the embodiment of God's love and the Saviour of the world.

¶630 CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE MODERN WORLD

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

There is no claim made that this is a complete or final description of an appropriate Christian response to all of the important issues faced in the modern world, or that such a description could ever be written. Rather, the approach taken in the following paragraphs illustrates the ways in which a Christian must form a responsible and biblically appropriate response to contemporary issues.

A member of the Free Methodist Church adopts the following description of Christian life in the modern world as an authoritative guide to living an authentic Christian life today. The church recognizes however that a Christian's conscience is not bound by this description as though it were a new law that is above the gospel itself. Rather, this vision of the Christian life is an expression of how we believe God's Word leads us to live a genuine Christian life today. We trust that the following description of genuine Christianity may be used by God to help Free Methodists form their consciences according to God's Word. We trust that the Holy Spirit's guidance will lead each member of the Free Methodist Church into a conviction about how he or she ought personally to grow into the likeness of Christ in every part of life.

The statements of principle set out below arise out of the direct, clear teaching of scripture and have as their authority not human tradition but God's Word *[statements of principle are indicated by italicized text]*. The application statements that follow each statement of principle arise from God's Word, but we do not claim that they represent in every case the direct, clear, unambiguous teaching of scripture. Rather, these paragraphs represent the historic understanding of Free Methodists concerning the implications of central biblical principles to pressing issues in

contemporary life. Therefore, the teachings of these paragraphs do not constrain us with the same authority as the principle statements, though they have the authority to instruct our consciences. Ongoing helps in applying some of these principles are available on The Free Methodist Church in Canada website.

We believe that a life lived according to all of the following statements would be a life that is "worthy of the calling to which we have been called" (Ephesians 4:1).

¶630.1. AS REGARDS GOD

¶630.1.1 *False Worship*

*Jesus Christ affirmed the Old Testament commandment, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Deuteronomy 6:4-5**;** Mark 12:29-30). The worship of any other person, spirit, or thing is idolatry (Exodus 20:3-6).*

We abstain from all practices that lead to idolatry. Occult practices, such as spiritism, witchcraft, and astrology must be avoided. Moreover, Christians are to be on guard against the idolatries of the heart - the worship of things, pleasures, and self (I John 2:15-16).

¶630.1.2 *The Lord's Day*

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

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

¶630.1.3 *Divine 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 2:4-9) 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, 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 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.

¶630.1.4 *Secret Societies*

The Christian's supreme loyalty is to Jesus Christ who is Lord (Romans 14:7-9;-1 Peter 3:15). In every association Christians must keep themselves free to follow Christ and obey the will of God (II Corinthians 6:14-18). Therefore, we abstain from solemn oaths of secrecy shared with unbelievers which cloud our witness.

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

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

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

¶630.2 AS REGARDS MYSELF AND OTHERS

¶630.2.1 *Worth of Persons*

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.

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*

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 (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). Spirit-led self-examination surrounded by loving mutual accountability is essential to growing in holiness. Therefore, we regularly ask ourselves honestly: 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 or which damage our health 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 it is our goal to live disciplined lives, in order to be transformed into the likeness of Christ, we depend upon the Holy Spirit to enable us to make choices that displace selfish indulgence in worldly pleasures. 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, the counsel and support of other Christians and, if need be the help of professional services.
The following is an illustrative list of some difficult issues, habits and substances which may hinder, confuse, or distract us in seeking a disciplined, holy, Spirit-filled life.

- We believe that the intemperate consumption of food is a form of abusing the body which may result in illness and obesity. A healthy balanced diet preserves the strength of our bodies and extends our years of usefulness as servants of Christ.

- We believe that overwork causes unhealthy strain on individuals and relationships.

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

We believe that the illicit and inappropriate use of illegal, prescription or over the counter drugs causes untold damage to people and relationships. Such drug use can restrict personal development, damage the body, and reinforce an unrealistic view of life.

- We believe that medical cannabis can be useful, as are other prescription medications, provided it is used under medical guidance and with discerning Christian counsel.
- We believe that the recreational use of cannabis, while legal, is problematic. Scientists, doctors and the police have raised many concerns about its use, such as its impact on the brain development of young adults, its addictive nature, and the risks it poses to workplace health and safety. We see abstinence as a wise form of self-discipline, recognizing that what we ingest or use is to be done to God's glory" (1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17).
- We believe that alcohol is unpredictably addictive and the destructive effects from its abuse cannot be fully measured. We see abstinence as a wise form of self-discipline. Drunkenness is to be avoided at all costs in obedience to God's Word. (Proverbs 20:1; Luke 21:34; Romans 13:13 and Ephesians 5:17-18)
- We believe that tobacco is a major cause of a variety of cancers and other diseases, as well as being an expensive and socially offensive addiction. Nicotine is a powerfully addictive substance, whatever the delivery method used.

We desire to be a community of people continuing to be transformed into the likeness of Christ, living free from the excesses of pleasure and overcoming the bondages of addictions so that we can joyfully participate in the mission of God in the world. We believe in Christ's power to deliver (Romans 6:13; Galatians 6:2). But, we also recognize the struggles associated with attaining these freedoms and are therefore committed, with the grace that God supplies, to provide support to one another within and through the church body, through making pastoral counsel available and through referring people to professional and community resources.

¶630.2.3 *Possessions*

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 6:19-21; 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 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.

¶630.2.4 ***Life in the Workplace***

As Christians we are called to be servants of all. This norm is equally applicable to employer and employee (Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-24). Our concern for justice is primarily a concern to do justice and only secondarily a concern to obtain justice (Micah 6:8).

We believe that all persons have the privilege to be gainfully employed irrespective of sex, race, colour, national origin, or creed.

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

As Christians we do not view management and labour as necessarily hostile to each other. They need not bring distrust and hostility to their place of work or the negotiating table. We resist the exploiting of people or seeing them merely as economic units. We discourage rigid confrontation and favour a problem-solving approach to disagreements. (Romans 12:18)

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

¶630.2.5 ***Entertainment***

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

In a culture where pleasure is ardently pursued, we must exercise care regarding our recreational activities. We face a multitude of entertainment media - television, videos, movies, music, the internet, magazines, novels, video games etc. Since many of these are pursued in the home, we cannot be legislated into wise choices; we must make them from a renewed heart. In the case of

children and young people living at home, however, our convictions as Christian parents should prevail.

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

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

Therefore when making choices with regard to entertainment, before the Lord we should forthrightly answer such questions as: Does this activity enhance or reduce my witness as a Christian? Does it contradict the teachings of Scripture? Is my conscience clear? Will participation expose me to unnecessary temptation? Is this activity in any sense enslaving? (Psalm 19:12-14; I Corinthians 6:12, 19-20; 8:9; 10:23-24)

¶630.2.6 *Pornography*

The Scriptures warn that those who participate in sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery "will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21). The use of pornography is a vicarious participation in sexual immorality. Such participation includes viewing, listening to, or purposefully imagining others engaged in sexual activities. Therefore as Christians we abstain from pornography and oppose its use and work toward removing its legitimacy and availability.

Human sexuality is a gift from God which is debased and damaged by pornography. This damage is personal, relational and cultural. Pornography causes a desensitizing of conscience, a perversion of sexual desire and a decay of moral values. It often victimizes the innocent and unsuspecting. It is a rampant degenerative force.

The church has a corporate responsibility to provide education, protection and God's redeeming care for those susceptible to or addicted to pornography.

¶630.2.7 *Sexual Intimacy*

The biblical vision for healthy sexual intimacy is that it is a gift from God reserved for marriage between one man and one woman. Sexual intimacy creates a unique life-long bond that Scripture describes as "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 6:16). When expressed within the commitment of the marriage covenant, sexual intimacy can be a great blessing and source of fulfillment. The marriage covenant is designed to protect this one man and one woman bond against that which is destructive and harmful to the couple, their children, the extended family, and society as a whole when one acts contrary to God's design for sexual intimacy.

Some Christians will be single and therefore celibate while they follow Jesus (Matthew 19:11-12). Scripture honours and blesses celibacy equally as one of God's gifts (1 Corinthians 7:7-8). Therefore, those who are unmarried, have become single through divorce or have been widowed, remain sexual beings even as they respond to the call of a celibate life, which necessarily does not involve sexual intimacy. Following the biblical vision of the new family of God in Christ, Churches should support people in the unique need for intimacy that celibacy creates for single people.

- The biblical word for "fornication" or "sexual immorality" includes pre-marital sexual intimacy and lists it along with other forms of immorality as sin (Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 5:3-5). Bonding sexually to a person to whom one has not covenanted in marriage robs the bond of an eventual marriage of its exclusivity. Similarly, sexual intimacy outside of a marital union occurring after divorce or the loss of a spouse is also fornication and undermines the biblical design for healthy sexual intimacy (1 Corinthians 7:8-9).

- Extra-marital sexual intimacy, which Scripture calls "adultery", transgresses God's moral law and betrays the marriage covenant. Adultery damages the one flesh union in that it contaminates the exclusive bond of marriage and undermines trust (Exodus 20:14, Mark 7:20-23).

- In keeping with our reading of the scriptures (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans1:21-27; I Corinthians 6:9-11), we do not believe that the above biblical vision is fulfilled by same-sex sexual intimacy. We maintain a distinction between same-sex sexual activity and same-sex sexual attraction. Furthermore, we acknowledge that the church has often rejected, condemned, and mistreated LGBTQ people. As followers of Jesus, this grieves us, and we strive to live out our convictions about sexuality in ways that are gracious and Christ-like.

In all of the above instances, all persons are accountable to God for their thoughts, words and deeds (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Because Christians are part of fallen humanity we must deal with many inclinations to sin. We trust the grace of God is available and completely adequate to forgive and transform (1 John 1:9; Hebrews 7:25, 9:14).

The church has a corporate responsibility to be God's agent of transformation to persons as they learn to live a Christian life that pursues the best of God's design for healthy sexuality. This transformation can best occur as the church provides a loving and supportive environment. Because the sexual desire is so powerful, counseling is recommended as a part of the church's pastoral care.

In summary, we recognize that this biblical vision contrasts with that of the prevailing culture, and we present it graciously as an alternative to the culture's view of sex and sexuality.

¶630.2.8 *Sanctity of Life*

All persons are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). As such, all human beings have inherent dignity and worth. As Creator, God is sovereign over life (Acts 17:24-26). Further, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is at the center of our conviction that God is also sovereign over death (1 Corinthians15:20-28). Thus, as his creation, we cannot claim absolute sovereignty over our lives. We are stewards rather than sovereign possessors of our life. As stewards, we must value, respect and protect life at every stage. The Bible provides a general prohibition against the deliberate, intentional taking of innocent life (Exodus 20:13). For all these reasons, we affirm the sanctity of life.

The complex issues surrounding the sanctity of life involve religious and moral values, as well as medical and legal realities. Therefore, Christians may not determine their rights and privileges only by the extent of the permissiveness of the law or the possibilities of safe medical procedures.

¶630.2.8.1 *Reproductive Technology*

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

¶630.2.8.2 ***Abortion***

Abortion is the intentional termination, by surgical or other means, of a person's life after conception and before birth. We consider abortion to be a violation of the sanctity of human life.

The decision to terminate a pregnancy involves religious and moral values, as well as medical and legal realities. Population or birth control, personal preference or convenience, avoidance of suffering, the anticipated quality of life of the unborn child, and social or economic security are not moral justifications for abortion.

Christian morality demands that we consider both biblical commandments and the human situation in which decisions must be made. We recognize that in some rare cases of very extreme and exceptional medical conditions, following a process of careful discernment with the assistance of Christian professional counsel, an abortion may possibly be morally justifiable

In all situations, compassionate alternatives and long-term care should be offered to those considering abortion.

In responding to all situations and decisions involving abortion, the church must seek to be a redemptive community of grace.

¶630.2.8.3 ***End of Life Care***

For the Christian, death is not the end of life, but the transition into eternity (John 5:24-25). Therefore, physical death is not the ultimate enemy, but part of our journey.

Christians must discourage the assumption that some lives are not worth living. Chronic disease, diminished physical capacity or ongoing disability do not constitute the end of life. We believe that there is no such thing as a "useless" life. The value and worth in our lives rests primarily in our relationship with a God whose love sustains us all through life, even to the end. He ministers to us personally and through the healing environment of Christian community. Divine wisdom in the face of end of life issues comes to us through Scripture, prayer, godly counsel, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

"Sanctity of life" must not be confused with "quality of life." Because we affirm the sanctity of life (¶630.2.8) and the consequent worth of all persons (¶630.2.1), there can be no justification for euthanasia or assisted suicide.

We recognize and support the right of a competent individual, who is facing the end of life, to decide the aggressiveness of his/her care. If an individual is incompetent to make or incapable of making this decision, then a substitute decision maker, who respects the wishes of the individual as far as they are known, can make this decision on his/her behalf.

A request that life not be sustained by heroic measures does not constitute euthanasia or assisted suicide. We recognize that treatment, or lack of treatment, which carries the risk of shortening

life, is permissible so long as the intent is to provide relief or otherwise benefit the patient, rather than to cause death.

Treatment, or lack of treatment, which carries the risk of shortening life, is permissible so long as the intent is to provide relief or otherwise benefit the patient, rather than to cause death. A request that life not be sustained by heroic measures does not constitute euthanasia or physician assisted death.

We also recognize that when people choose to proceed with physician assisted death their suffering is such that they are convinced this is the only alternative. We would assert however that there are alternative therapeutic approaches available such as pain management and effective palliative care. In addition, we believe that the Holy Spirit can bring grace to situations that may otherwise seem hopeless or unendurable.

In situations like these we reserve the right for our ministers to be involved pastorally to the degree their conscience allows. Even though we do not celebrate this type of end of life nor do we encourage it, ministers should continue to be willing to provide pastoral comfort to all involved.

¶630.2.8.4 *Other Ethical Dilemmas*

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

As we attend to human suffering, we acknowledge that the ability of medical technology to end human suffering is limited. Therefore, we accept our responsibility to use this technology with wisdom and compassion; honouring God, who is ultimately supreme.

¶630.3 AS REGARDS DIVINELY APPOINTED INSTITUTIONS

There are at least three divinely appointed, earthly institutions. One of these is marriage and the family. A second is the church. A third is the secular government. Only the church, among these institutions, will last in eternity. Nevertheless, the Scriptures have clearly placed a great deal of importance on how we act with respect to each of these institutions, before the return of Christ.

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

¶630.3.1 *The Christian and Marriage*

¶630.3.1.1 *Principles Regarding Marriage*

Nature of Marriage: At creation God instituted marriage for the well being of humanity. Marriage is the joining of one man and one woman into a lifelong, covenant relationship which

the Scriptures call "one flesh." (Genesis 2:18-24; Mark 10:6-9). The Scriptures also say that this covenant relationship illustrates the enduring, holy relationship between Christ and His Church. (Ephesians 5:22-33)

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

Sexual intercourse is God's gift to humanity, for the intimate union of a man and woman within marriage. In this relationship, it is to be honoured (Hebrews 13:4, I Corinthians 7:3-5). Marriage is therefore the only proper setting for sexual intimacy. Scripture requires chastity: celibacy outside of marriage and faithfulness within marriage. (See ¶630.2.8)

¶630.3.1.2 ***Nurturing Healthy Marriages***

The Free Methodist Church urges its people to enter the covenant of marriage prayerfully. In accordance with the apostle's command (II Corinthians 6:14), we expect them to marry only believers. Ministers are required to use diligent care when being requested to solemnize a marriage. While our ministers may officiate at the marriage of two unbelievers, those who unite believers to unbelievers go contrary to the explicit teachings of the Scriptures. Before entering into marriage, our people should counsel with their Christian leaders. Young people contemplating marriage should seek parental consent. Our ministers shall not officiate at the marriage of any person under age, unless parents or guardians are present or have given written consent, and unless two witnesses are present who know the couple. There are wedding guidelines available from the director of leadership development's office that you need to follow with respect to requests to officiate at marriages.

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

¶630.3.1.3 ***Healing Troubled Marriages***

The church which is alive to God has spiritual resources for marriages in trouble. The chief resources are the renewing power of the Holy Spirit and the Word, prayer and the sacraments, counsel and support. Through the church's ministry, God can bring healing and reconciliation. Therefore, if our members find their marriage in crisis, we encourage them to seek the counsel of the pastor and submit to the guidance of the church. Professional counsel may be necessary.

We recognize that domestic violence, emotional and/or physical, does occur in church-related families. It often jeopardizes the safety of a spouse or children and may threaten life itself. 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.

¶630.3.1.4 ***Principles Regarding Divorce***

When one marriage partner is a Christian and the other a nonbeliever, we believe that the Christian may not for that reason divorce the unchristian mate (I Corinthians 7:12-13), because Christian love may redeem the unbeliever and unite the home in Christ (I Corinthians 7:16, I Peter 3:1-2).

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

Desertion is the abandoning of a marriage without just cause. We believe that a person denies the faith that deserts a spouse deliberately and for an extended period of time. When the desertion leads subsequently to divorce, the deserted partner is no longer bound by the marriage (I Corinthians 7:15).

Where reconciliation is impossible in a troubled marriage, we acknowledge that divorce may be unavoidable (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). When marriages break down completely, we recognize that, in the words of Jesus, "hardness of heart" is implicit on one or both sides of the union (Matthew 19:3-8; Mark 10:5-9).
Though the Scriptures allow divorce on the grounds of adultery (Matthew 5:32) and desertion (I Corinthians 7:10-16), it does not mandate divorce and we advise counsel with church leaders to seek other alternatives. One of these may be for both to live celibately.

¶630.3.1.5 ***Recovery After Divorce***

Divorce always produces trauma. It is the breaking of a covenant, thus violating God's intention for faithfulness in marriage (Malachi 2:13-16). For this reason divorced persons should be helped to understand and remedy the causes for the divorce. They should seek pastoral counsel. Professional counsel may also be necessary. If unhealthy patterns of relating exist, they must be helped to replace them with new attitudes and behaviours that are Christ-like (Colossians 3:1-15). Repentance and forgiveness are crucial to recovery. The goals of the process are personal healing and restoration to wholesome participation within the church. The church must extend its concern to family and others affected by the divorce.

¶630.3.1.6 ***Remarriage After a Divorce***

A divorced member or one who is considering marriage to a divorced person must come under the authority, counsel and guidance of the church.

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

¶630.3.1.7 ***Refusal of Counsel***

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

¶630.3.1.8 ***Exceptional Cases***

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

¶630.3.1.9 ***Same-Sex Unions***

The Free Methodist Church in Canada holds that Christian marriage can only be the union of "one man and one woman" who have made a public covenant and vow before God and the state (Genesis 2:20-24, Mark 10:6-9). Therefore, it would be a breach of the doctrine and polity of our church for ministers or members of The Free Methodist Church in Canada to conduct a Christian blessing of a union between a same-sex couple, or to perform the marriage of a same-sex couple. In light of our beliefs, ministers and members of The Free Methodist Church in Canada reserve the right of conscientious objection to any demands to perform marriages of same-sex couples.

The Free Methodist Church in Canada holds that its congregations are stewards of the church property. The blessing of a union between a same-sex couple or the performance of a same-sex marriage in any Free Methodist church would be a violation of consecrated Free Methodist property. Therefore, such blessings or marriages may not be performed at Free Methodist churches.

¶630.3.1.10 ***Use of Free Methodist Church Facilities***

It is the policy of The Free Methodist Church in Canada that the facilities of Free Methodist churches are to be rented or used only by individuals or groups that are not incompatible with the goals, values, policies and statements of The Free Methodist Church in Canada and for purposes which are not incompatible with the goals, values, policies and statements of The Free Methodist Church in Canada

¶630.3.1.11 ***Polygamy***

In some of our mission districts polygamy is a current reality. This statement seeks to give guidance to these contexts and to those who come to Canada from those contexts.

When individuals involved in a polygamist marriage confess Jesus Christ as their Saviour and testify to their desire to follow him as Lord, the Free Methodist Church responds graciously while remaining faithful to the biblical "one man and one woman" vision of marriage. (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6).

In polygamy, a man has entered into legal covenants with more than one women and, as an honorable person, he must honor his promises. He must provide for the welfare of his wives. The church gives the family the responsibility to determine whether they will all continue to live

together. As the children grow, the parents will rear them to understand and embrace a Christian view of marriage and the family.

The husband must take an interest in all of his children as a Christian father and provide for the well-being of all of his children. Such believers living in polygamous relationships cannot be given positions of leadership within the church. (1 Timothy 3:2, 13; Titus 1:6)

¶630.3.2 *Education of Children*

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

The church wishes to support public schools and recognizes the responsibility that Christian teachers, parents and students have to be a positive influence in the world. We support parents in their decisions regarding the education of their children whether it be to use public school, Christian schools, or homeschooling.

In the public school setting, the church wants a Christian worldview to be given fair consideration. We therefore advocate for the inclusion of teaching materials that present a worldview consistent with a Christian perspective on matters such as justice, human sexuality, cosmology, etc. If assignments and activities conflict with the values of our families, we may request that our children be excused from them. When such conflicts arise, we request that the student's academic standing not be jeopardized and that alternative assignments be given.

¶630.3.3 *The Christian and the Church*

The church is part of God's eternal plan to make a people for himself who would be "holy and blameless before him" (Ephesians 1:4). It was instituted by Christ during his ministry when he commissioned the church to be his unique representative in the world. Therefore, the Scriptures speak of the church as the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:12-13, 27). The church has been empowered for its ministry by the active, ongoing work of the Holy Spirit since Pentecost. Just as New Testament letters were written to churches in particular places, made up of particular people, the church is not only universal, but also must be visible and local.

The church is also the people of God in the world. In both Old and New Testaments this fact is amply illustrated. The Lord of the church gives gifts to His people to serve one another and to minister in the world (I Corinthians 12:4-7; Ephesians 4:4-7, 11-16). *Christians who live in independence from the church may not forfeit their faith but will deprive themselves of the spiritual resources and opportunities God Himself has ordained. Consistent with the Scriptures, we affirm membership in the church.*
When the Holy Spirit gives new life in Christ, at the same time He effects our spiritual entrance into the church (I Corinthians 12:13). The Free Methodist Church in Canada is one denomination among the many other legitimate visible churches in Canada and the world. Entrance into the membership of one of our churches is a visible and local sign of entrance into the universal church.

¶630.3.3.1 *Membership in the Church*

In accordance with this, our church provides means by which persons who are born of the Spirit may enter into a Membership Covenant (¶156-160) and register their membership in a local

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

¶630.3.3.2 ***Leadership in the Church***

Leadership in the church is an honour that has accompanying responsibilities and sacrifices. The Scriptures provide descriptions of the qualities of leaders in such passages as: Exodus 18:21, Acts 6:3, 1Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. Those who are chosen to lead in the church do so in a spirit of humility and dependence upon God. They must be spiritually mature individuals whose lifestyle shall be in harmony with the Scriptures, the doctrine of The Free Methodist Church in Canada (¶100-131), the principles of the Membership Covenant (¶156-160) and of ¶620, ¶630. They must live personal and public lives that clearly exemplify these principles.

¶630.3.4 ***The Christian and the State***

As Christians, we are citizens of the kingdom of God and of this world. We receive benefits from and bear responsibilities to both relationships. Our first allegiance is to God, but that does not release us from responsibilities to our own country if such relationships do not conflict with the clear teachings of the Scriptures. We recognise the sovereign authority of government and our duty to obey the law (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13-17). Thus, we bear the responsibilities of good citizenship.

¶630.3.4.1 ***Civic Participation***

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

¶630.3.4.2 ***War and Military Enlistment***

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

We believe that military service is a matter where the consciences of our members must be respected (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29). We further acknowledge, as Christians, our responsibility to intervene when there is massive, extreme or violent injustice. While we must support our nation in addressing such perils, we do not believe that this must necessarily take the form of active military service. Therefore, we claim exemption from all military service for those who register officially with the church as conscientious objectors to war.

¶630.3.4.3 ***Swearing Oaths***

As Free Methodists we do not prohibit the taking of an oath when it is required by law. In every case, the Christian must speak in justice and truth (Jeremiah 4:1-2; Matthew 5:33-37; Ephesians 4:25; James 5:12).

¶630.4 AS REGARDS THE CARE OF CREATION

As Christians we affirm with Scripture that all creation declares the glory of God (Psalm 19:1-4). Since we worship the Creator and believe that Christ's redeeming work "…reconciles to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven…" (Colossians 1:20), we value creation and participate in activity that restores, protects, and respects the earth. This demonstrates our love for God.

¶640 Resources
Other resources on these and other topics are available on The Free Methodist Church in Canada website http://www.fmcic.ca .

CHAPTER 7: CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

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CHAPTER 7: CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

¶700 INTRODUCTION

Many things go on in the activities of local churches. There are times when a local church gets so involved in a flurry of activities that it loses its sense of direction. We have listed in this introduction the five primary activities of the church, which are to mark the ministry of each local church. Throughout the rest of this chapter we shall go into greater detail on each one of them.

Worship
The worship of God is the central activity of God's people, the undergirding reality of all of life. The Psalmist said, "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Psalm 34:1). For thousands of years this life of continual worship has been shaped and nourished by special gatherings in which God is praised and his saving acts recounted.

The unit on worship has the following sections, designed to help leaders prepare for vital worship today:

- The first section describes several core convictions about worship in Free Methodism in Canada.

- Then mention is made of sources for further resources and input.

- The next section explains the function of prepared services in Free Methodism.

Over the years the Body of Christ (through people with gifts and training in these areas) has developed services using time-tested words to guide God's people through special acts of worship. The use of such services offers believers a framework in which Christian truth (in some fullness) surrounds these events, and the quality of the event is not so much dependent on whether the particular pastor involved has high skills and training in theology, liturgy and worship. As well, these "rituals" serve to tie together the Free Methodist family. Wise pastors use them, adapting only within areas of expertise - for the sake of the Body of Christ.

A number of prepared rituals are provided in folder format for easier use by officiants.

Evangelism
There is more to the Biblical picture of congregational life. In worship God invites his people to enter into his own heart for people. Believers are called to share the good news of his love so that more and more people may come to know, love and worship the one true God. The vocation of God's people Israel was to be "a light to the nations . . .." (See Isaiah 42:6). As that calling and vocation are fulfilled in the people of Christ, this call continues: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ...." (Matthew 28:19) Evangelism is also at the heart of the life of God's people.

This section gives an introductory explanation of evangelism, understood biblically as bringing people into the life of the kingdom of God, outlining the several dimensions in a full-orbed view.

Healthy churches seek every way possible to reach people and bring them into the life of the kingdom - whether that evangelistic ministry be through the local church or through our connectional ministries in Canada and around the world.

Fellowship
Those who come to God through trust in Jesus Christ are drawn into a shared life. The biblical term is "fellowship." This section distinguishes Christian fellowship from the variety of meanings often held by church people when this word is used.

The call to a deeply shared life together comes to us from the New Testament, and was stressed afresh in early Methodism. It is in the context of this life together that Christians worship God, share his love with the lost, serve the needy and broken, and build each other up toward maturity.

Compassion and Justice Ministries
In worship we are called to the divine intention for the world. The God we praise has a heart for the lost and hurting. He is a God of justice and truth. In both Old and New Testaments, God's people are called to great generosity for those in need. Instructions about worshipping, praising and fearing God can be found *along with* calls for compassion for the widow and orphan.

In this section we learn that a concern for the poor and the broken in our world and for seeking justice for the oppressed has long been an emphasis among Methodists. The Free Methodist Church seeks both to evangelize and to serve, to be light and salt, and urges individual Christians and local churches to seek a variety of means to do both.

Christian Nurture
Images of growth and development abound in the New Testament. The Free Methodist Church seeks to help every believer to grow up into Christ (see Ephesians 4). The same commission of our Lord which commands that we go and make disciples of all nations explains that in addition to baptizing them the church is to teach them to obey everything he commanded (Matthew 28:19-20).

The Christian nurture process seeks to lead people to Christ and church membership, help them grow to spiritual maturity, equip them with the skills they need for ministry, and enlist them in the world-wide mission of sharing Christ.

¶710 CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

The worship of God is the central activity of God's people; the undergirding reality of all of life. The Psalmist said, "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Psalm 34:1). Worship in this life is rehearsal for the ceaseless life of worship in the world to come. In the Revelation we read, "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing 'To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!' " (Revelation 5:13).

The Free Methodist Church holds several core convictions about worship. These, we believe, apply across the cultures and years, especially in services of worship. They are characteristic of vital worship in any context (whether alone with Christ, or in small groups).

1. Worship's Focus

In a service of worship, God is the audience, the worshipping people are all the actors, and pastors, musicians, readers and other worship leaders are prompters, seeking to help the actors (the people) minister to the audience (God). Worship is *for God*!

At its heart, Christian worship is praise and thanksgiving for who God is and what God has done in Jesus Christ. In worship God's people experience anew God's character, creative and redemptive activity, and promises of salvation and new creation. In Christian worship we re-present the story and character of God.

Of course, worship services, though primarily directed to God and his glory, and focusing on his saving acts, can nonetheless be made friendly to persons in whom the Holy Spirit is awakening hunger for God. Vital worship can actually help draw such persons further into an encounter with the living God.

2. Balance

Vital worship is balanced, holding together the following tensions, striking both notes in a harmonious blend.

both	*and*
worship in spirit	worship in (Biblical) truth.
praise (for who God is)	thanksgiving (for God's mighty saving acts)
God is love	God is holy
God is near (immanent)	God is wholly "other" (transcendent)
feeling	understanding
freedom	form
joy, celebration	mystery, awe, reverence
encouragement, comfort	rebuke, challenge
reformation	tradition
shaped by trained pastors	shaped by lay teammates

Note: No one combination of components or styles or format will result in a balanced worship experience for all groups of worshippers. Worship leaders in every place need to exercise great discernment in creating worship services that reflect balance and wholeness for the people involved. In contextually appropriate ways, both ends of the tensions listed above are worked into healthy worship.

Some pastors will choose to use a lectionary, (carefully planned lists of readings designed to expose the church to the broad arcs of scripture and its teaching.) All can benefit from following the church year (at least Christmas and Easter) as means of pursuing balance and wholeness in worship.

3. Frequency

The example of almost 2000 years of walking with Jesus shows us that Christians usually plan to worship together (at least) weekly (corporately or in small groups).

4. Basic Components

Healthy worship services usually include the following components:

Singing - of songs that are *full of truth* (about God, his salvation and purposes, and about our responses to him); and *heartfelt*, in language and modes that people can "feel" and with which they can identify.

The **reading of the scriptures -** (as an act of worship, not simply as a launching point for the proclamation.) Reading the scriptures ties worship to the Biblical story of God.

Prayers - these may take the form of songs sung to God, songs in which God's Word to us are sung, or prayers prayed out loud or in the heart, or listening in silence to what the Spirit is saying. The prayers of vital worship will reflect a *balance of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication (making requests)*. Well-planned worship includes all four approaches to God.

Proclamation of the scriptures - in which God's Word is *opened to our understanding* and *applied to our lives*. Proclamation in Free Methodist worship services will not be in contradiction of the core beliefs laid out in our "Articles of Religion" or the moral vision laid out in *The Manual*.

Giving - an offering in which God's people worship through a costly action, and support Kingdom ministry.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper - (Usually monthly)

The sacrament of baptism - (As needed)

Worship includes other components that help God's people to worship him, hear his Word, and respond to his call. These may include aesthetic, creative components that enact the word of God, or depict his beauty and majesty (i.e. drama, visual displays, and other celebrative arts).

5. Resources

Abundant resources exist in books, magazines, journals and elsewhere for developing full-orbed worship theology and practice. Denominational leaders and others who demonstrate discernment and understanding regarding worship theology and practice can guide worship leaders to these resources.

Other resources may be available on The Free Methodist Church in Canada website at www.fmcic.ca..

¶711 COMMUNION SERVICES

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 prior to the Communion Service, 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 be 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 …*"). All who can, with a clear conscience, respond to this invitation are welcome to participate. Where it is known to church leaders that a person has not responded to the communion invitation with integrity, pastoral counsel will be required. Such counsel may include a request not to participate until there is 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 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 frequent 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.

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Words of Consecration

In the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: "Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In like manner, after supper He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying: "Drink of this, all of you, for this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins; do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me."

Words of Distribution

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on Him in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving.
The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

Benediction

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you forever. Amen.

SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION (1)

The Invitation

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who live in love and peace with your neighbours, and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God and walking henceforth in his holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament for your comfort; and humbly bowing make your honest confession to Almighty God.

The General Confession

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Maker of all things, Judge of all people, who with great mercy has promised forgiveness and deliverance to all who turn to you with hearty repentance and true faith, we confess that we have sinned against you and are hopeless without your grace. Have mercy upon us, O merciful Father, have mercy upon us; pardon and deliver us from all our sins:

from blindness of heart and lack of love;
from the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil;
from false doctrine and neglect of your Word;
from disbelief and lack of trust.

O God, our Saviour, keep us this day without sin. Give us strength to serve and please you in newness of life, and to honour and praise your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Petition

Almighty God, you have faithfully watched over us, and graciously helped us; now hear our petitions:

for good health and sound minds;
for strength to earn our bread;
for rest from worry and labour;
for safety in travel;
for protection from enemies;
for Christian homes; and for a just and strong nation.

Out of your compassion give us those things which are good and proper for our souls, and protect us by your might in all our tribulations. Grant us in this world the peace that is from above, and bring us to everlasting life in the world to come, through Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray saying:

> **Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.**

The Intercession

Almighty God, who created the world from nothing, and who sustains it by your powerful Word, support and protect us that we may serve you as intercessors in your world; and to that end hear our prayers for those in need:

for the sick, the infirm and the aged;
for widows and orphans, the poor and oppressed;
for the lonely, discouraged, bereaved and heartbroken;
for those in bondage to sin, unmindful of God, without knowledge of the gospel of salvation.

We pray too for all your servants who honour Christ in their work:

for homemakers and wage earners;
for teachers and students;
for doctors, nurses, and others who serve the sick;
for labourers and executives;
for farmers and city dwellers;
for the aged and the young;
for those who govern and those who are ruled.

To each of these and to all others for whom we should pray, give wisdom, strength and the power to endure, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving

Almighty God, you created us to enjoy your fellowship; and even when we transgressed your command, you did not forsake us, but chastened us as a merciful Father;

You called Abraham from the land of his fathers, and freed the children of Israel from bondage and slavery; you gave your law and sent your prophets to guide them in your ways;

At the right time you gave the world your only Son, who by his birth to a virgin, and through his temptations and ministry, his suffering and death, his resurrection and ascension, opened to us the way to heaven;

You sent your Holy Spirit, the Counsellor, who through the Apostles and the Church, called us to salvation; you adopted us and daily give us aid in the journey of faith by that same Spirit. Our hearts are full, O God, and in thanksgiving to you, we cry, Abba, Father.

In confidence that you will bring us to our full inheritance, and give us our place at the heavenly table with your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, we offer thanksgiving, joining our voices with all the Church to confess:

> **Christ has died,**
> **Christ has risen,**
> **Christ will come again.**

Prayer of Approach

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, send the power of your Holy Spirit upon us, that we may experience anew the suffering, death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ. May your Spirit help us to know, in the breaking of this bread and the drinking of this cup, the presence of Christ who gave his body and blood for all. And may your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, united in service to the world. **Amen.**

Hear us, O merciful Father, we humbly ask, and grant that we, receiving this bread and this cup, as He commanded and in the memory of His passion and death, may partake of His most blessed body and blood.

In the night of His betrayal, Jesus took the bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

In like manner, after supper He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of this all of you, for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." Amen.

Words of Distribution

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed upon Him in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving.

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

The Benediction

May the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be yours now and forever. **Amen.**

SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION (2)

The Invitation

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who live in love and peace with your neighbours, and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God and walking in his holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament for your comfort; and humbly bowing, make your honest confession to Almighty God.

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, we confess that we have sinned, and we are deeply grieved as we remember the wickedness of our past lives. We have sinned against You, Your holiness, and Your love, and we deserve only Your indignation and anger.

We sincerely repent, and we are genuinely sorry for all wrongdoing and every failure to do the things we should. Our hearts are grieved, and we acknowledge that we are hopeless without your grace.

Have mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us most merciful Father, for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who died for us.

Forgive us. Cleanse us. Give us strength to serve and please You in newness of life, and to honour and praise your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Let us continue our confession as we pray together the prayer Jesus taught his disciples:

> **Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.**

The Affirmation of Faith

O Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who with great mercy has promised forgiveness to all who turn to You with hearty repentance and true faith, have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from our sins, make us strong and faithful in all goodness, and bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Collect

Let us pray for inner cleansing:

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are opened, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Sanctus

It is always right and proper that we should give you thanks and praise, O Lord God, for you alone reign. You judge the world in righteousness and rule over all the nations.

Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the inhabitants of heaven we honour and adore your glorious name, evermore praising you and saying:

> **Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts!**
> **Heaven and earth are full of your glory.**
> **Glory be to you, O Lord, most high. Amen.**

The Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen. Amen.

The Prayer for Spiritual Communion

We do not come to this Your table, O merciful Lord, with self-confidence and pride, trusting in our own righteousness, but we trust in Your great and many mercies. We are not worthy to gather the crumbs from under Your table. But You, O Lord, are unchanging in Your mercy, and Your nature is love; grant us, therefore, God of mercy, God of grace, so to eat at this Your table that we may receive in spirit and in truth the body of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, and the merits of His shed blood, so that we may live and grow in His likeness, and, being washed and cleansed through His most precious blood, we may evermore live in Him and He in us. Amen.

The Prayer of Consecration of the Elements

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who gave in love Your only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who by His sacrifice, offered once for all, did provide a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world, we come now to Your table in obedience to Your Son, Jesus Christ, who in His holy Gospel commanded us to continue a perpetual memory of His precious death until He comes again.

¶712 INFANT BAPTISM AND DEDICATION SERVICES

¶712.1 Guidance Regarding Requests for Infant Baptisms/Dedications

The Nature of the Baptism and Dedication of Children
The presentation of a child to the Lord for baptism or dedication is a significant act for the parents, for the church and for the child. This is to be a community of faith event done in the context of the worship service when God's people are gathered. The covenant calls for the church to make promises to the family which are not possible if the baptism/dedication is performed in a private setting.

The presentation of a child is a mark of belonging to the community of faith and a celebration of the fact that God's grace is already at work in the life of the child as part of a Christian family and as part of the family of God. This aspect is particularly emphasized by parents who choose infant baptism.

It is also a moment of public covenant (by family and church) to be good stewards of a precious gift from the God we worship – in the care and training of the child. This is particularly emphasized by parents who choose infant dedication.

An article that more fully explains the history of the two traditions and the truth embraced by both is found in a discussion paper in ¶713.

Blessing the Children of Unbelieving and Non-Attending Families
The church must always respond with warmth and pastoral concern to seekers who are prompted to think about spiritual matters when a child is born into their family.

At the same time, if the parents are not committed to Christ and a congregation of His church, it would be rash for them to stand before the Lord and the church and take the covenantal vows of an infant baptism/dedication when clearly their hearts are not yielded to Christ and they do not participate in the life of His Body, the church.

Yet, this request can be seen as a wonderful pre-evangelistic opportunity for a pastoral person to meet with the family in their home and talk openly with them out of the Scriptures about the things of God and the wonderful privilege of living life in relationship with him. He/she could impress on them how wonderful it would be if this little baby grew up to be a person who knows God personally and lives with the knowledge of how much God loves him/her and then take the baby in his/her arms and pray a prayer for the baby asking the Lord to bless him/her and the parents and to open the way for him/her (and the parents) to come to know greater spiritual blessings through a personal relationship with the Lord.

In this way, the parents are not making a covenant with God that they are not in a place spiritually to keep, they are not given false security that their baby has been "done", and they are not given a certificate (a legal document) certifying to a ceremony that they could not spiritually participate in.

At the same time, they are responded to lovingly and, we hope that follow-up visits will result in them eventually opening their hearts to the Lord.

¶712.2 Infant Baptism/Dedication Service

God, through Moses, made covenant with his people, saying to them, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

In the days of the new covenant, Christ Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these;" and on the day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter declared, regarding the salvation given through Christ, "The promise is for you and your children."

It is therefore our privilege to present our children to the Lord and our duty to raise them in his ways. These parents now bring *[this child / these children]* to offer *[him/her/them]* in dedication and to pledge in the presence of this congregation, to bring *[him/her/them]* up in the Lord's discipline and instruction.

Let us pray:
Father, we praise you today for the gift of *[this child / these children]* into our world, among your people, and into these parents' home*[s]*. Thank you for all the joy *[this child / these children] [has/have]* already brought to them. We praise you too for all the potential that you have packed into *[this life/these lives]*. May *[he/she/they]*, as the years progress, increase in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with you and with other people.

Bless *[name parents]* as they parent their children. So work in their home*[s]* that at an early age in life *[this child / these children]* may affirm personally all that has been pledged on *[his/her/their]* behalf here today.

And Father, bless this whole church family in such a way that in both what we are and in what we do, we may model and minister in the power of the Spirit in ways that will lead to the fulfillment of what we ask today.

Lord, we thank you that though *[this child / these children] [has/have]* not consciously thought about you yet, you have already been thinking about *[him/her/them]*, about *[his/her/their]* place in your plan, and about how you want to shower your love upon *[him/her/them]*. Thank you for grace that seeks us even before we have even thought of you.

Come and bless us now as we consecrate *[this child/these children]* and ourselves to you. We pray this in the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

Now these questions I address to the parents.

1. **Do you, in the presence of God and this church, solemnly dedicate *[this child/these children*] to the Lord?**

2. **Do you renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways so that you will endeavour neither to follow them nor be led by them?**

3. **Will you faithfully strive by word and example to lead *[this child/these children*] to personal faith in Christ?**

4. **Do you accept the authority of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God?**

5. **Out of them, will you diligently teach [*this child/these children*] the commandments and promises of the Most High God, raising *[him/her/them]* in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?**

6. **And will you continue to raise your *child/children* in the fellowship of the church so that *he/she/they* might see and experience what it means to be part of the people of God.**

(Then the pastor shall say to the congregation:)

Let us acknowledge our duty to support this family with our prayers and encouragement, thereby aiding both parents and child[ren] to fulfill all that has here been promised. The congregation will affirm this by standing.

(The Pastor shall take the child in his/her arms, and say:)
[Name this child]
I dedicate you to God…or **I baptize you**… in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(Then the pastor may pray for the child[ren], parents and church family.)

¶713 INFANT BAPTISM /DEDICATION DISCUSSION PAPER

People coming to the Free Methodist Church from other Christian traditions are often surprised to find that babies can be dedicated *or* baptized. Most church families in Christendom have chosen only one of these. Why does the Free Methodist Church make provision for people to do either?

To clarify this matter we will ask, first, about the origins of baptism. Then we will ask what it means. This is done in the awareness that people in Christian circles range from seeing baptism as somewhat "magical" to seeing it as "merely symbolic." Free Methodists believe that the truth lies between these extremes.

What Are the Origins of Baptism?

Baptism, and religious rites involving the use of water, have been around a good deal longer than the Christian Church. At least three practices involving water were in use among groups who had contact with the early church.

1. The Old Testament law contained regulations requiring washings. It would probably be wise not to call them "ceremonial," because that word implies a distinction the Jews could not make. External religious actions were seen as having spiritual implications for the whole person. Jesus, Paul, and the writers of Scripture were not rationalistic 20th century North Americans who find it easy to separate external actions from internal personal implications. Various kinds of "uncleanness" were to be cleansed by washings with water.

2. One group among the Jews performed a rite in which participants daily went down into a pool of water to experience cleansing and commit themselves to goodness, truth, and righteousness. This community withdrew from normal Jewish life in the second century before Christ and set up a separatist commune at Qumran near the Dead Sea. (The famous Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in the desert of that region tell us of these practices.)

3. Furthermore, at the time of Jesus, a practice was taking shape for the initiation of Gentiles into the Jewish community of faith. Gentiles were, of course, seen as "unclean," and so, a ceremony of purification and initiation, not unlike baptism as we know it, became a part of their "conversion" to Judaism. In Judaism, then, baptism became the sign of that change in which an "outsider" became a member of the family of faith. It was the mark of entry.

What about the New Testament itself? The Gospels tell us that before the ministry of Jesus, a man named John was in the desert preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. In fact, the Fourth Gospel tells us that some of Jesus' disciples were initially disciples of this John the baptizer. The religious authorities were outraged by John's baptism. They saw baptism as something for the "unclean," something for "outsiders" who needed to get "in." By calling *Jews* to be baptized, John was asking those who required outsiders to be baptized to consider *themselves* as outsiders in need of God's forgiving grace. The Jewish leaders were scandalized because John was asking them to engage in a practice that implied that they too needed cleansing and forgiveness!

But John insisted that his baptism was only a preparatory rite. The water baptism he administered was only preparing people for the decisive ministry of the One who was yet to come. The Messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

On the day of Pentecost He did. And from that day to this, the message for everyone who hears the Word of Christ's death for their sins is as Peter preached in Acts 2:38,

> *Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

In the era of the church, the characteristic baptism that Jesus does is in the Holy Spirit, the visible expression of which is baptism with water.

What Does Baptism Mean?

Given the fact that there were a number of kinds of baptism in the world of the early church (see Hebrews 6:2), we need to ask, "What specific meanings does *Christian* baptism have?

1. Christian baptism has always been a visible way of identifying with the Christian community, of saying that a person now takes his or her official stand with the fellowship of believers. (This was a very strong note in the Jewish baptism of non-Jews.)

   Baptism does not seem scandalous to most of us. For many it is an acceptable social convention, the proper thing to do. Not so for those who came to Christ in the New Testament era, and for many today, especially in other cultures.

   Baptism means abandoning all your former first allegiances. It often meant becoming an outcast in your own family and among your friends. You could attend Christian gatherings and still not abandon all your former allegiances. You would still not be regarded for certain as a Christian. Once you submitted to baptism, you were burning all your bridges behind you. You irrevocably identified yourself with that strange little band of people who followed and worshipped as alive from the dead a man who had been executed as a criminal, a man named Jesus. You might toy with the Christian way up until baptism, but in that culture (and in some places today), you were "taking the plunge" when you submitted to baptism. Baptism meant forsaking all and identifying with Jesus Christ and His body, the church.

2. Baptism is an enactment of death and new life. This is the distinctive contribution of Paul to our understanding. In his writings he repeatedly connects baptism with a person's participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. In Romans chapter six, he is concerned to articulate the inner change (with outer consequences) that has taken place in those who have become Christians. Paul alludes to what he knows his readers believe about baptism. He reminds them that when they came to faith in Christ they became personal participants in his death to sin, and in his resurrection to new life. That is, when they came to Christ in faith (which in the earliest church was accompanied by baptism), the death of Christ became theirs, too, as did his resurrection. No longer were these events limited to Jesus and to the early 30's A.D., but they became real and effective in the lives of those who trusted him. In a way we can only hint at, believers have been joined to Christ and become a part of him. Paul's oft-used phrase "in Christ" refers to this. In the earliest days of the church, baptism was closely associated with this dying and rising with Christ through which a person came to be "in Christ."

3. Finally, the true baptism, the effective baptism that washes away sin and imparts new life, is not what is done in water (whatever the mode). What the church does in those instances is the outward expression of that inward baptism in which the Holy Spirit washes away the sins of those who trust Christ, and renews them from the inside out. There is only *one* Christian baptism (cf. Ephesians 4:5), but it has an outward side (water baptism) and an inward (baptism by the Spirit into Christ.)

Many Christians use the term "Spirit baptism" to refer to subsequent experiences of the Spirit in the Christian life. However, that is not our focus here. We are using the words in the basic sense of what the Holy Spirit does when we become Christians. I Corinthians 12:13 says, "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."

How Did We Get More Than One View?

The foregoing helps us realize that there are many dimensions to baptism (just as there are many dimensions to coming to Christ). Like the other sacrament (the Lord's Supper), baptism defies total grasp by mere humans, especially in light of our fallenness. Let us attempt to outline what seems to have happened.

In the earliest days of the church, the good news about new life in Jesus was first preached principally to adults who made public confession, by means of the act of baptism, that they had joined themselves to Jesus in repentance and trust and had died to sin and risen to newness of life along with him. From these early precedents the church has continued to baptize adult converts. What then becomes of the children of believers?

Two streams of interpretation have emerged over twenty centuries, both of which find some support in the New Testament texts. Though sharp battles have been fought between proponents of the two traditions, the Free Methodist position is that they are intrinsically complementary. Each needs the other for theological completeness.

The tradition practicing infant baptism has pointed to the priority of grace over faith. That is to say, this tradition stresses *God's initiative* in our coming to Christ. It also affirms that the little children of Christian parents have a right to "belong" in the community of faith.

The tradition espousing believers' baptism in which adults are baptized and infants are "blessed" or "dedicated" has placed emphasis on the importance of *the believer's response* to God's grace.

Both of these aspects of the drama of salvation need to be held together in tension if we are to have a full-orbed doctrine of coming to Christ. The tradition of baptizing only those who consciously repent and trust in Christ emphasizes free, adult decision. It stresses personal response to Christ, which presupposes volition, intelligence and accountability. The infant baptism tradition, on the other hand, stresses God's initiative prior to our human response, pointing out that God is at work in our lives (especially the lives of children with Christian parents) long before we personally respond. It also stresses the "corporate" (more than individual) dimension of life among God's people.

Acts 16:15 indicates that when Lydia opened her heart in response to Paul's message, "she and the members of her household were baptized." Paul wrote in I Corinthians 1:16, "I also baptized the household of Stephanus." Other similar statements exist. One could reasonably argue that children were likely a part of those households.

Many factors will determine which side of these debates one perceives as holding the greater truth. What seems less deniable is that baptism has some relation (though not complete) to the rite of circumcision, an initiatory rite of entry into membership in the Jewish faith. Circumcision was performed on infants. Thus it is often said that as Jews enter the old covenant community through circumcision, Christians enter the community of the new covenant through baptism.

One cannot press the analogy between circumcision and baptism too far. There are major differences between the two. Circumcision is for males only. It is clear in the New Testament that Christians joyfully baptized men *and* women from the very first (cf. Acts 16:15). In addition, the covenant entered into through circumcision involved certain elements of national and racial identity that are not factors in the new community.

The church needs to avoid both extremes. The one extreme (which sees a baptism only as something *we* do as a testimony to our faith) ignores the work of God in bringing a person to faith in Jesus. The other extreme (in which baptism is sometimes regarded as almost "magical") ignores human will, personal repentance and trust. God's initiative (grace) and personal human response (faith) have to be held in tension. Thus Free Methodists use both rites, trying to paint the whole picture.

When they baptize babies, pastors should make sure that their prayers include clear requests that God will bring the children to a personal faith that "owns" what the parents are promising at a time when the children (who "belong" from day one) cannot act for themselves. When they dedicate children, pastors should make sure that their prayers include clear gratitude to God for the fact that he is already at work in the life of that child, who already "belongs" in the Christian community.

Here's what must be stressed: whether at the time of baptism (in the adult baptism tradition) or at the time of the personal affirmation of the vows made earlier by the parents (in the infant-baptism tradition), it is faith in Jesus (dependent trust, not mere cognitive affirmation) that is crucial. Paul goes so far as to say that without faith and obedience, the old rite of circumcision has no value (Romans 2:25). The same is true of baptism. With either rite, clear evangelistic follow-through is crucial.

What Do Free Methodists Do?

We provide a service for either baptism or dedication. In both, we emphasize the grace of God and the necessity of faith. When Christian parents – as a matter of conscience – have a preference for one service or the other, our pastors honour that request. By teaching and follow-up, we emphasize that neither practice has saving virtue and that both are appropriate only for parents who themselves are living the life of faith.

Conclusion

The Free Methodist Church's roots are clearly in the infant baptism tradition. Over the years, as the church has incorporated people whose consciences have been shaped by both traditions, it has granted parents the right to choose which service they prefer. The Free Methodist Church attempts to embrace both dimensions of Christian truth.

¶714 CHILDREN AND ADULT BAPTISM SERVICES

¶714.1 Baptism of Non-Infant Children Under Twelve

In lieu of the questions to parents or guardians (in ¶712), the following may be asked candidates for baptism who are under twelve years of age.

1. Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, and do you desire to be baptized in His name?

   Answer: I do.

2. Do you intend by this act to testify to all the world that you are a Christian and will be a loyal follower of Christ?

   Answer: I do.

3. Do you believe in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?

   Answer: I do.

4. Trusting God to help you, will you resist temptation always and keep from doing those things which you know to be sinful or displeasing to God?

   Answer: I will.

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

   Answer: I will.

¶714.2 Affirmation of Baptismal Vows

Dear friends in Christ, in your infancy your parents presented you at the altar of the church for the Sacrament of Baptism. That service was one of both dedication and consecration. Your parents dedicated you to the Lord and took vows on your behalf. They promised to teach you from the Word of God and to train you in the way that you should go. God in His goodness has brought you to years of responsibility, and you now desire to acknowledge before God and His church the covenant then made on your behalf, to profess your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to consecrate yourself to Him, and thereby to bind yourself anew to His service.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has said, "So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven."

Let us repeat the words of the Apostle's Creed (together)

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and was buried; He descended into Hades; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

1. Do you believe these things?

   Answer: All these things I firmly believe.

2. Do you promise with the aid of the Holy Spirit to be Christ's faithful disciple to your life's end?

   Answer: I do.

3. Have you read and considered the vows taken for you in baptism, and do you affirm them with a humble and contrite heart, putting your whole trust in the mercy of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

   Answer: I do.

4. Do you promise to make diligent use of the means of grace, to share faithfully in the worship and service of the church, to give of your substance as the Lord may prosper you, and to give your whole heart to the service of Christ and His kingdom throughout the world?

   Answer: I do.

(Here may follow a benediction if the service is ending.)

¶714.3 Baptism of Adults

Dear friends in Christ, our faith declares that by the sin of Adam, humanity as the offspring of Adam is corrupted in its very nature, so that from birth we are inclined to sin; and that new life and a right relationship with God are possible only through the redemptive acts of God in Christ Jesus. Believing these declarations to be true, and in obedience to the command of Christ, (*this person has/these persons have)* come to make public confession that (*his/her/their)* sins have been washed away, and by means of baptism with water, to give sign of that inward washing and new life in Christ which are now (*his/hers/theirs)* by faith. We therefore implore you to pray that through this means of grace (*he/she/they*) may be further moved to keep covenant with God and so may ever experience the constant washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

[Then the minister shall say]

Let us pray. Almighty and Everlasting God, whose covenant is firm and whose promises are always to be trusted, we call upon You for *this person* that, (*he/she)*, coming to (*his/her)* baptism, may by this act give clear witness that (*he/she)* has received Your inner washing through faith in the cleansing blood of Your Son, Jesus Christ. May (*he/she)* ever rejoice in the forgiveness of sins, the indwelling of Your Spirit, the fellowship of the church and the assurance of resurrection to glory in the world to come.

[Then shall the people stand, and the minister shall say]

Christ Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age."

You, who present yourself for water baptism, have heard this congregation's prayers that God will continue His loving favour toward you and bring you to His eternal kingdom. And God, who keeps covenant, has promised by His only Son, who offered himself up for our redemption, to grant you these gracious favours. You must now promise, in the presence of this congregation, to keep covenant with Him, renouncing the life of sin, believing His Holy Word and obediently keeping His commandments.

[Then shall the minister ask each candidate these questions, to be answered individually]

1. Do you have the inward witness that your sins are forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord?
   Answer: I have.

2. Do you renounce the devil and his works, the lure of this ungodly world and the sinful desires of fallen humanity, so that you will not follow nor be led by them?
   Answer: I do.

3. Let us repeat the words of the Apostle's Creed (together)

   THE APOSTLES' CREED

   I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth

   And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and was buried; He descended into Hades; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

   I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

   Do you believe these things?
   Answer: All these things I firmly believe.

4. Is it your desire to be baptized into the Christian faith?
   Answer: It is my desire.

5. In the fellowship of the church, will you obediently do God's will and walk in His holy commandments all the days of your life?
   Answer: I will endeavour to do so, the Lord being my helper.

[Then shall the persons be baptized by sprinkling, pouring or immersion as they shall desire. The minister shall say]

I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

[Then shall the minister use the following prayer, or substitute an extemporaneous one with the same requests]

God, our Father, who gives to all who repent and believe the Gospel the right to be called children of God, may Your grace ever be effectual in this, *Your child*. And may (*he/she)* enjoy the greater baptism of the Holy Spirit so that all sinful inclinations may be conquered by Your power, and every Christian virtue may live and grow in (*him/her)*. Grant to (*him/her)* a place of service in the fellowship of Your church and may (*his/her)* witness in the world bring glory to Your holy name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[*Here may follow a benediction if the service is ending.]*

¶715 THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGE

Provincial authorization for the registration of a marriage may be granted in one of two ways: by the procurement of a marriage license by the man and woman to be married, or by the publication of banns, if applicable in their province. Those officiating at weddings should take care to acquaint themselves with the marriage act of their province to determine the particular requirements. Banns should be published only after the officiating minister has confirmed from the marriage act of the province where the wedding is to be performed that the province permits it. The banns should be published according to the direction of the province's marriage act.

¶715 SERVICE OF MARRIAGE

Dear friends in Christ, we are gathered together here in the sight of God and the presence of these witnesses to join together _____ and _____ in holy matrimony. Marriage is an honourable estate, instituted by God in the time of creation for the well being of humankind. It is safeguarded by the laws of Moses, affirmed by the words of the prophets, and hallowed by the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Marriage is a union close and enduring; a relationship in which a man and a woman forsake all others to become one flesh. This abiding union illustrates the holy relationship between Christ and His church. Marriage is therefore not to be entered into by any lightly, but reverently, soberly, and in the fear of God.

[Addressing the man and woman, the minister shall say]

_____ and _____, I remind you both as you stand in the presence of God to remember that covenant love alone will avail as the foundation of a happy and enduring home. Let Christ, who was loyal to His own unto death, be your example. Let the Apostle Paul be your teacher, who wrote "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." If you keep this steadfast love ever before you and, remaining faithful to each other, resolutely endeavour to fulfill the vows you now will make, God's blessing will be upon you, and the home you establish will endure through life's every change.

[Then the minister shall say to the man, using his Christian name]

_____, will you have _____ to be your wedded wife, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honour and keep her, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, keep yourself only for her, so long as you both shall live?

I will.

[Then the minister shall say to the woman, using her Christian name]

_____, will you have _____ to be your wedded husband, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love him, comfort him, honour and keep him, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, keep yourself only for him, so long as you both shall live?

I will.

[Then shall the minister say]

Who gives _____ to be married to _____?

[The father of the woman, or whoever gives her in marriage, shall answer]

I do.

[Then the man and woman shall face each other and join hands and say after the minister]

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death parts us, and thereto I promise you my faithfulness.

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death parts us, and thereto I promise you my faithfulness.

[The minister may receive a ring which he/she in turn will give to the groom to place on the third finger of the woman's left hand as he says after the minister]

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

[In case of a double ring ceremony, the minister will receive a ring which he /she in turn will give to the bride to place on the third finger of the man's left hand as she says after the minister]

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

Let us pray.

O Eternal God, creator and preserver of all humankind, giver of all spiritual grace, the author of everlasting life send Your blessing upon this man and this woman whom we bless in Your name that they, living faithfully together, may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant between them made, and may ever remain in perfect love and peace together, and live according to Your laws through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Then the minister shall say]

Forasmuch as _____ and _____ have consented together in holy wedlock and have witnessed the same before God and this company and have pledged their faith each to the other and have declared the same by joining hands (and by giving and receiving a ring), therefore, by the authority granted to me as a minister of Jesus Christ, I pronounce that they are husband and wife together, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together, let no one put asunder. Amen.

[The minister shall pronounce over them the following benediction]

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace; now and in the world to come. **Amen**.

¶716 THE FUNERAL SERVICE

[The minister may use the following order of worship at the church or chapel.]

OPENING SENTENCES, such as

"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."

"The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no evil shall touch them. They are in peace."

"In his favour is life, weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning."

"Like a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him."

"For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."

"The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

INVOCATION
O Eternal God, our Father, from whom we come and to whom we go, grant us the favour of Your divine presence at this time in our earthly pilgrimage; assure us by Your Spirit that the one we serve, even Jesus, has conquered death and is alive forevermore; enable us to view our temporal lives in the light of the eternal; and so may our spirits grow calm and our vision clear. Through Christ we pray. Amen.

HYMN (by the congregation, musicians, or organist)

OBITUARY AND/OR TRIBUTES

OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES
Psalms 23, 90, 121

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES
John 14:1-6; I Corinthians 15:35-49; II Corinthians 5:1-5

INTERLUDE *(use a hymn with which the congregation can identify)*

SERMON

PASTORAL PRAYER

HYMN

BENEDICTION *(not used if the service is to continue at the graveside*)

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Interment Service
[Any or all the following Scriptures may be read.]

"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last He will stand upon the earth;... then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold..." (Job 19:25-27).

"For we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world" (I Timothy 6:7).

"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

"Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way where I am going. Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me'**"** (John 14:1-6).

[Then shall the minister say]

Inasmuch as Almighty God, in His wise providence, has received from this world our deceased *brother/sister/child*, we therefore commit this mortal body to the ground, looking for the resurrection in the last day and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose Second Coming in glorious majesty to judge the world, the earth and the sea shall give up their dead; and the mortal bodies of those who sleep in Him shall be changed, and made like unto His own glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to redeem all things unto Himself.

[The minister may pray extemporaneously or use the following]

The Collect
O merciful God, you are the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, in whom whoever believes shall live, though they die, and whoever lives and believes in Him shall not die eternally. We humbly beseech You, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that when we shall depart this life we may rest in Christ. And we pray that at the resurrection on the last day we may be found acceptable in Your sight and receive that blessing which Your well-beloved Son shall then pronounce to all who love and fear You, saying, "Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world." Grant this, we beseech You, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.

Benediction
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. **Amen.**

¶717 THE QUESTIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

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

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

Candidate: **I do**.

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

Candidate: **I do.**

Pastor: Do you here resolve, by God's grace, to be Christ-like in heart and life, opening yourself fully to the cleansing and empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit, the guidance of the Scriptures, and the nurture and fellowship of this church?

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

Pastor: Do you accept the Articles of Religion, the Membership Covenant, the goals for Christian conduct, and the government of the Free Methodist Church, and will you endeavour to live in harmony with them?

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

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

Candidate: **With God's help, I will**.

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

¶717 THE QUESTIONS FOR YOUTH MEMBERSHIP

Pastor: Do you believe that Jesus Christ has forgiven your sins and is now your Saviour?

Candidate: Yes.

Pastor: Have you received Christian baptism? If not, are you willing to be baptized?

Candidate: Yes.

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

Candidate: Yes.

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

Candidate: Yes.

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

Candidate: Yes.

¶718 DEDICATION OF CHURCHES

WORDS AND PRAYERS OF DEDICATION

DEDICATORY PRAYER

O eternal God, You are mighty in power and glorious in majesty. The heavens cannot contain Your glory, much less the walls of buildings made with hands, and yet You have been pleased to promise Your special presence wherever two or three of Your faithful gather in Your name. Be present with us today, we pray, as we, with all humility and readiness of heart, consecrate this place to the honour of Your great name, separating it from all unhallowed uses and dedicating it to Your service for the reading of Your Holy Word, for proclaiming Your everlasting gospel, for teaching Your people in the ways of righteousness, for celebrating Your matchless grace, for offering Your glorious majesty the sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving, for blessing Your people in Your name, and for all other holy offices, through Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen.

All Standing, the Bishop shall say, the people responding:

To the glory of God the Father, who has called us by His Grace;
To the honour of His Son, who loved us and gave himself for us;
To the praise of the Holy Spirit, who illumines and sanctifies us;

we dedicate this building.

For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry;
For the nurture of our children and our teens;
For the upbuilding of our community;

we dedicate this building.

For the comfort of all who mourn;
For strength for those who are tempted;
For light to those who seek the way;

we dedicate this building.

For the hallowing of family life;
For teaching and guiding the young;
For the maturing of the saints;

we dedicate this building.

For the conversion of sinners;
For the promotion of righteousness;
For the extension of the kingdom of God;

we dedicate this building.

In the unity of the faith;
In the bond of Christian fellowship;
In charity and good will to all*;*

we dedicate this building.

¶720 CHRISTIAN EVANGELISM (LOCAL AND GLOBAL)

Biblical Principles

The modern church has tended towards a theology of evangelism that focuses primarily on conversion, emphasizing the role of the believer to "win others to Christ". It is important to re-affirm a broader view of God's desire for "salvation" not just conversion. John Wesley describes salvation as follows:

> "So the Salvation which is here spoken of might be extended to the entire work of God, from the first dawning of grace in the soul till it is consummated in glory." (*Scripture Way of Salvation*)

Wesley took a broader view of "salvation" which includes "all that is wrought in the soul" by grace. God by his grace acts to draw us to himself: from a "natural" state in which we have little understanding of spiritual things, to an "awakened" state in which we are conscious of spiritual need of a relationship with God, to a point of conversion and subsequent growth to maturity in Christ.

Evangelism is not simply proselytizing and converting the lost, rather it is our cooperation with the Spirit of God already at work in the lives of those within our sphere of influence. The parable of the sower and the seed provides a useful model of this process of cultivation, sowing, and harvesting (Mark 4:1-20) as illustrated in the table shown below.

Practical Application

Understanding evangelism as PROCESS rather than EVENT only, frees the church to continuously work creatively to cooperate with the Spirit at each step of grace. Christian evangelism ultimately results in the multiplication of disciples and involves:

PRESENCE – individual believers, small groups, and churches engage in the lives of their communities, both individually and corporately, being Christ to those around them.

PRESENTATION – ensure that believers are equipped to clearly enunciate the essentials of the gospel. Provide events attractive to spiritual "seekers" so that believers and small groups can develop relationships with them.

PERSUASION – within the context of relationship and community, there is a commitment to make clear, purposeful, presentations of the gospel.

PARTICIPATION – the harvest is incorporated with new believers being led to maturity in Christ and to be effective witnesses of the gospel.

The following table provides examples of these types of evangelistic activities:

PHASE	I. Cultivation	II. Sowing	III. Harvesting	IV. Multiplication
Picture	Soil = Human Hearts	Seed = Gospel	Grain = Reproduced Life of Christ	Crop = Christian Community
Explanation	Speak to the **Heart** - relationship and caring	Speak to the **Mind** – communication and clarity	Speak to the **Will** – conversion and commitment	Speak to the **Whole Person** – maturity and completion
Emphasis	**Presence** of the believer – building friendships	**Presentation** of the gospel – giving understanding of the truth	**Persuasion** – encouraging a meaningful decision	**Participation** – Integration into the body
Obstacles	Indifference Antagonism	Ignorance Error	Indecision Love of World	Isolation Inward Focus
Examples	Nicodemus – John 3 Woman at well – John 4	Ethiopian Eunuch – Acts 8 Woman at well – John 4	Philippian Jailer – Acts 16 Woman at well – John 4	Jerusalem Converts – Acts 2 Samaritan awakening – Acts 8
Application	- community involvement - personal relationships - church presence in community - small groups	- 'Fishing Pool' events - Evangelism Training for believers - small groups	- personal and corporate presentation of the gospel - small groups	- small groups

[Adapted from K.C. Hinckley, *Living Proof: A Small Group Discussion Guide* (NavPress, 1991)]

- "Becoming a Contagious Christian" seminars are recommended for training people to understand themselves and how they can be natural witnesses. The seminar identifies the following six styles of evangelism and helps people to understand what their natural style is and how it can be used effectively:

    - Confrontational style
    - Invitational style
    - Intellectual style
    - Interpersonal style
    - Serving style
    - Testimonial style

¶730 CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Life in Christ is a shared life. The term "fellowship" comes from a word meaning "common." It can also mean to "share", "to *have* a share," "to *give* a share" (see Philippians 3:10: "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and *share* 'fellowship in' his sufferings." See Hebrews 13:16, "Do good and share 'fellowship' what you have....")

It can also mean "taking part," or "participating". Paul uses it in this way in I Corinthians 10:16. "The cup of blessing (referring to the Lord's Supper) which we bless, is it not a participation 'fellowship' in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation 'fellowship' in the body of Christ?"

Fellowship involves giving a part of oneself to such an extent that Bible writers can actually use the word for *the offering*. In Romans 15:16 Paul refers to ".... an offering 'fellowship' for the poor Christians in Jerusalem . . . ." And in II Corinthians 9:13 he writes that ".... your contribution 'fellowship' was generous . . . ."

The word is also used for *partnership* (see Philippians 1:5, "I am thankful for your partnership 'fellowship' in the Gospel.")

This call to a deeply shared life together comes to us from the New Testament (see the many "one another" and "each other" commands), and was stressed afresh in early Methodism. It is in the context of this life together that Christians worship God, share his love with the lost, build each other up toward maturity, and serve the needy and broken.

There is likely no clearer description of the church in Christian Fellowship than that given in Acts chapter two:

> *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47 NRSV)*

In spite of nearly 2000 years of cultural change the image of the church is clearly that of a living, growing, organism rather than an organization, fulfilling in community the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39) of Christ. Two facets of this picture of particular note are the church in community, and the church in evangelism. In the truest sense, they should not be separate since they function fully intertwined; however, in order to provide resources to our church each is described separately.

1. The Church In Community – Small Groups

Biblical Principles

The example of the early church clearly highlights the centrality of community in the life of the church. It is in the context of community that we are drawn to Christ, we hear the gospel proclaimed, we are built up and grow in maturity, and we take up lives of service and ministry to others. It is in Christian community where all the "one another" (Hebrews 10:24-25) exhortations can be fulfilled.

A second, equally vivid description of Christian community is that presented in Paul's description of the "Body of Christ" (I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:15-16). As we live in community we are not just "like" the body of Christ, we are the Body of Christ. It is within the context of the body and for the edification of the body that the Gifts of the Spirit are provided. It is as "living stones" that we are called to be built up as a temple spiritual house, a holy priesthood. (1 Peter 2:5).

Finally, we have the example of Christ and the disciples. In the context of a community we see a rather rag-tag group of mismatched individuals grow up into spiritual leaders.

'Small groups' are not simply a program within the church. They are the church as the Body of Christ. Their key purpose is not simply teaching or support. There key purpose is 'building one another up' (Romans 15:2; 1 Corinthians 14:12; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Jude 20) as the Body of Christ.

Organizational Principles

Numerous resources for providing an organization structure for small groups are available and some of these are cited below. The clearest biblical direction for the organization of small groups is the guidance of Jethro to Moses (Exodus 18:1-27). The 'Meta' model of ministry is one example of a system of organization built upon the 'Jethro Model'. Principles of organization that can be derived from this model include:

1. Organize a systematic approach to leadership.
2. Enlist qualified and trustworthy peoples.
3. Create a clear chain of communication so everyone has access to a leader for authority and support.
4. Train your leaders.
5. Delegate the work so that it is more evenly distributed.

[Adapted from the Ginghamsburg United Methodist Church Leaders' Training Manual.]

In such a model the lay leader or coordinating pastor would develop a strategy to discover, and nurture a group of leaders, often referred to as coaches. These leaders in turn are responsible to give care and guidance to 5 to 10 small group leaders they are developing. They also assist the small group leaders in training new leaders (often called apprentices) that will then be available to provide leadership to new groups that form as each small group reproduces itself. The small group leaders facilitate and nurture a group of generally 6 to 15 persons, as they grow together towards spiritual maturity. These communities are the church at the most intimate and caring level.

The structuring the church in this type of model serves two primary purposes:

- Leadership development happens continuously and systematically.
- Everyone is cared for and no one cares for more than 10.

Resources

- Carl George's *Prepare Your Church for the Future* (Fleming H. Revell Publishing, 1992) is a very practical guide to developing the cell/small group church.
- Cell group resources developed by Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr. and associates are available from World Team Canada (1-800-610-9788).
- Small group resources by Carl George, Dale Galloway, Michael Slaughter and others, as well as Serendipity House resources developed by Lyman Coleman are available from The International Centre for Leadership Development and Evangelism (1-800-804-0777)

Other resources exist in books, magazines, journals and elsewhere for developing full-orbed theology and practice for fellowship and life together in small groups. Denominational leaders and others who demonstrate discernment and understanding regarding fellowship theology and practice can guide people to these resources.

¶740 Christian Compassion and Justice Ministries

The God we worship has a heart for the lost and hurting. He is a God of justice and truth.

The Old Testament prophets insisted that God always demands righteousness and justice. They kept reminding people that the people of *this* God must, as a part of life, leave space and resources for the needy and the hurting and the broken. (See Deuteronomy 24:17-22.) Talk of worshipping, praising and fearing God are found *along side* references to compassion for the widow and orphan (See Deuteronomy 10:12-21.)

When Jesus, the Son of God appeared, He announced that His mission was:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. (Luke 4:16ff.)

He also taught that on judgment day true followers will discover that when they have lived out their life in him serving and helping compassionately, they were in fact been ministering to him! (See Matthew 25:31-46.)

The early church had a concern for the poor and needy alongside a passion to spread the good news of Christ and to invite new people to come to new life in Him.

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.

The Free Methodist Church seeks both to evangelize and to serve, to be light and salt, and urges individual Christians and local churches to seek a variety of means to do both. (See ¶440)

Resources

Abundant resources exist in books, magazines, journals and elsewhere for developing full-orbed theology and practice for compassion and justice ministries. Denominational leaders and others who demonstrate discernment and understanding regarding compassion and justice theology and practice can guide people to these resources.

The Free Methodist Church in Canada has also agreed to partner with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Because of their good work on moral issues and social action (MISA) we highly recommend each church join the membership of EFC. We also recommend partnering with World Relief Canada in worldwide compassionate ministries.

¶750 CHRISTIAN NURTURE

Images of growth and development abound in the New Testament. The Free Methodist Church seeks to help every believer to grow up into Christ (see Ephesians 4). Initiation into the life of the kingdom involves a variety of components:

- Conversion (regeneration of persons repentant and trusting in Christ by the Holy Spirit)
- Baptism (joining the community of faith)
- Creed (owning the basic intellectual claims of Christendom)
- Morality (appropriating the moral vision of Christ's Kingdom)
- Spiritual Gifts (receiving, understanding and developing particular gifts and capacities which enable the Christian to serve)
- Disciplines (appropriating the basic spiritual disciplines to ensure ongoing spiritual maturation)

With each, there is need for Christian Education, encouragement, accountability and care. Free Methodist Churches will seek to nurture believers toward growth in each of these areas, and in our mission to evangelize and serve.

One way of conceptualizing the nurture process is found in Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Church* (Zondervan, 1995). The "Base" materials described in this book have been adapted for use in Free Methodist Churches. It depicts the Christian nurture process (using the diagram of a baseball diamond) as follows:

Base 1 - leading people to Christ and church membership
Base 2 - growing people to spiritual maturity
Base 3 - equipping people with the skills they need for ministry
Base 4 - enlisting people in the worldwide mission of sharing Christ

Resources

Abundant resources exist in books, magazines, journals and elsewhere for developing full-orbed theology and practice for Christian nurture. Many Free Methodist Churches are further developing processes based on the four-base model of Warren. Denominational leaders and others who demonstrate discernment and understanding regarding Christian nurture theology and practice can guide people to these resources.

CHAPTER 8: THE MINISTRY

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CHAPTER 8: THE MINISTRY

¶800 PREAMBLE

It is biblical for the church to set apart particular persons for special tasks of leadership. Such persons bear witness to an inward call of the Holy Spirit and a confirmation of that call by the church. They are set apart by a public commissioning service, or by ordination, with the laying on of hands after the pattern of the early church.

It is the long-held conviction of the Free Methodist Church that both men and women are eligible to hold any office of the church, including membership on the Official Board of a local church, or to be ordained to any of the church's ministries, or to be elected to the office of Bishop.

Both gifts and graces characterize men and women the church commissions or ordains. Gifts are special endowments of ability. Graces are special qualities of character. Both have their source in the enabling Holy Spirit. Although the church must discern who have such endowments, commissioning or ordination is always first and foremost an act of God's calling and appointment.

Commissioned Ministers are called by God to provide specialized ministry leadership and do not feel called to provide pastoral leadership to an entire church.

Ordained Ministers are called by God to provide overall general pastoral leadership in the church and Kingdom. They may carry out their task under appointment to a particular congregation, or they may be given other assignments. In either case, their work will include preaching and teaching the Word of God, intercessory prayer, the administration of the sacraments, pastoral care, and other ministerial activities. Central to the task of the minister is the proclamation of the saving gospel and the winning of people of all ages to Christ. Because vital worship, Christian nurture, evangelistic outreach and social concern characterize a healthy church, ordained ministers commit themselves to equipping the whole body of believers to these ends.

The commissioned and ordained ministry are both a calling and a profession. It is a calling in that it is a response to a divine summons. It is a profession in that this service is worked out under the direction of the church that sets ministers apart as leaders and requires accountability.

Free Methodist ministers are called to be leaders of God's people. Leadership requires vision, a willingness to dare, an ability to move people to action and the readiness to live with the turbulence change brings. For the person called to leadership, all this is rooted in a deep love for Christ and his compassion for human need. God's resources are abundantly available for all that embrace this task courageously and in radical obedience.

There are three stages to becoming a minister in The Free Methodist Church in Canada. The person feeling the call of God to the ministry is first licensed as a lay minister. The call is tested by service in the local church where initial training begins. Step two involves acceptance by the conference as a ministerial candidate. During this period the candidate prepares for the third step, conference membership as a commissioned minister (honorary) or an ordained minister (full).

Before detailed requirements are given for each stage in becoming a commissioned or ordained minister, in a long Methodist tradition, the following advice is given to all ministers.

¶801 ADVICE TO THE MINISTER

1. PERSONAL LIFE

DIVINE RESOURCES
Trust God. His power gives you all things necessary for life and godliness (II Peter 1:3). He has not given you the spirit of timidity, but of love, power, and a sound mind (II Timothy 1:7). Apart from Him, you can do nothing (John 15:5). Spiritual power is mediated to you through Scripture, prayer, the sacraments, the people of God and life itself. Practice the presence of God.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION
Make private, family, and public prayers of adoration, confession, petition, intercession and thanksgiving a habit. Let prayer be a daily means of grace.

Fast as health permits.

Search the Scriptures systematically, using commentaries. Meditate upon what you read and put into practice what you learn.

Take every opportunity to partake of the Lord's Supper.

Form a covenant with an accountability partner to watch over your spiritual and emotional health and meet with him/her regularly.

ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER
An accountability partner is a mature, discreet Christian of the same gender, preferably outside your congregation. He/she is neither a counselor nor a spiritual director but is a trustworthy person to whom you can confidentially confess personal matters and to whom you may be accountable for progress with respect to those matters. While an accountability partner does not divulge any information to local church or conference leaders, he/she is to urge you to seek counsel (including MEGaP guidance) when circumstances warrant it.

FAMILY LIFE
Be faithful to your marriage vows (I Timothy 3:2). Show honour to your spouse and family in private and public. Parent your children with loving discipline (I Timothy 3:4,5). Build a healthy home life.

FELLOWSHIP
Be open to your peers. Seek their counsel. Meet with them periodically for prayer. Confess your faults. Share your concerns. Take courage from mutual support. Be a part of a pastoral team. Resolve to encourage them.

Develop mature friendships that are supportive of and compatible with your vocation and ministry.

USE OF TIME
Be disciplined. Live an orderly and balanced life. Manage your time well. Resist both laziness and workaholism.

PERSONAL HEALTH
Master and apply the rules of healthy living, especially with regards to eating, rest and exercise. Set an example for those you lead. Avoid substance abuse.

CONVERSATION

Listen patiently; it is more than half of good conversation. Communicate clearly, stating your opinion with tact and kindness. Cultivate a healthy sense of humour. Keep confidences.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Love your neighbour as yourself. Speak evil of no one. Manage your money wisely and do not borrow from parishioners. Live a simple lifestyle according to gospel values. Keep debts within bounds and model wise and disciplined spending.

Be cautious in receiving gifts, grants, or bursaries. Consider the source of the funding, asking if accepting the gift is consistent with our doctrine and watching for any expectations that may be attached.

Tithe as the starting point for the generous giving of your income.

Maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries in all relationships – especially with those of the opposite sex.

Lead your church in the ethical use of music, words and other media.

Respect your peers in ministry. Keep your ordination vows. Honour the work of your predecessors and successors by treating others as you want to be treated. Pastoral transitions require a fresh start. For the new pastor to establish his/her leadership, the departing pastor needs to leave. If that courtesy was not afforded to you when you arrived, all the more reason for you to break the pattern.

Principles to follow:

- Don't promise the congregation that you will be back.
- Explain to the congregation how your relationship with them will change. Teach on boundaries and closure.
- In situations where you are requested to return to participate in a pastoral role (e.g. baptism/dedication, wedding or funeral), do not accept without first checking directly with your successor and the leadership of the church.
  Remind yourself that these significant life-events are opportunities for your successor to develop ongoing relationships. Be prepared with a statement such as: "*I'm honored that you've asked me but since I am no longer your pastor, I'll need to first consult with your new pastor*." No pastoral ministry should occur with former parishioners without the knowledge and consent of your successor.
- If you are remaining in the area, meet with your successor, clarify your relationship with him/her and the church and agree to worship elsewhere in your community for a determined amount of time.

ETIQUETTE AND PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES

Own an up-to-date book on etiquette and consult it regularly so that you are aware of how to conduct yourself appropriately as a public figure. Additionally, there are guidelines available from the credentialing coordinator that you need to follow with respect to requests to officiate at marriages.

2. PROFESSIONAL LIFE

CORE VALUES

Regularly review the eight core values of The Free Methodist Church in Canada and allow them to shape your ministry of leadership.

LEADING THROUGH PREACHING AND TEACHING

Discipline yourself to uninterrupted time for study and prayer so that you come before your people adequately prepared. Seek the Lord's help. Preaching is only effective when anointed by God's Spirit. Use suitable Scriptures for each occasion. Prepare your messages thoroughly. Stay with your subject. Preach to the needs of the people. Expound the scriptures systematically. Seek divine leadership in choice of subjects. Consult the Christian calendar to give balance to your preaching. Communicate profound truths with simple words and speak with conviction. Practice what you preach.

Teach with clarity. Present truth in an orderly way, using a variety of methods. Give opportunity for dialogue.

Seek by preaching and teaching to bring about change in understanding and behaviour.

Avoid plagiarizing. Competent pastors always give proper source credit to things written or published under their name, or spoken by them from the pulpit. In this digital and Internet era, you must not pretend that simply because you are encouraged by online ministry resource sites to use their materials, you can let others believe that all these ideas are yours.

LEADING IN WORSHIP

Plan services of worship with care. Incorporate prayers, Scripture readings, singing, preaching, and regular observance of the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and baptism. Seek a balance between ordered and spontaneous worship. Focus attention on God in all His attributes. Lead the people and teach them to worship. Be aware that you set an example by the way you worship yourself. Involve the congregation, using lay persons wisely and giving appropriate attention to the children.

Give careful thought to your pastoral prayers in advance. Deliver all prayers from your heart. Expect people to experience the presence of God. Whatever the theme of the service, always try to encourage the people before they leave.

LEADING THROUGH PASTORAL CARE AND EVANGELISM

See that attention is given to the care of your people. Balance strategic personal contact with care given through trained volunteers and/or staff. Find creative ways to ensure that a full range of pastoral care is given – e.g. visits, phone calls, cards and notes.

Give special priority to finding, befriending and introducing seeking people to Jesus. Model a personal commitment to the Great Commission yourself and see that others are trained and involved in outreach.

Ensure that attention is given to the sick, elderly, confined, and distressed. See that someone is with your people when they pass through crucial moments: the birth of a child, marriage, tragedy, the bestowment of honour, death.

Make provision for the pastoral counseling of people who seek guidance. Convey by your attitudes and words that you too are interested in their welfare. Ensure that counseling takes place in a professional manner in appropriate settings. Acknowledge the limits of your own counseling competencies/capacities and make responsible referrals when necessary, particularly with regard to legal, financial and medical matters, or other areas beyond your expertise. Interact with those under your care with honesty and love.

Be understanding. In controversy, arrange if possible, for another arbitrator/counsellor, so that you will be free to minister to both parties. This will also keep either party from accusing you of favouritism.

Maintain high professional standards. Conduct yourself always as in the presence of Christ. Do not be careless with confidentialities.

Ensure that new believers, newcomers, children and teens of the congregation are encouraged to join the church and care groups if they are available. See that membership instruction opportunities are provided regularly.

LEADING THROUGH LEADERS

The breadth and strength of any ministry is determined by the quality of its leadership. Resolve to develop Spirit-empowered, growing leaders and readily entrust responsibility to them according to their capacities of spiritual maturity, skill and availability.

Lead your leaders in planning and help them to set goals. Work to extend Christ's kingdom. Mobilize and train your laity for ministries beyond the boundaries of your present congregation. Regularly promote the vision of starting an additional service and and/or a new congregation/church.

Oversee the administration of the church. By good administration, promote the congregation's vision and mission, and work for harmony and growth. Do things in an orderly manner. Try, where appropriate, to make decisions in a consultative manner and to search for consensus so that different views are heard and people respected in the process.

Ensure that boards and committees meet regularly. See that your people have opportunity to discover and use their spiritual gifts and to develop ministry skills.

Share leadership and work cooperatively with both lay and ordained colleagues, respecting their different gifts, qualifications, ministries, and approach to spirituality.

Keep abreast of the activities of the major departments of your church. Have careful records kept of your ministries. Maintain and give summary reports regularly to your official board and conference leaders.

Build relationships with leaders of other churches in your community, promote good will, and seek appropriate ways to cooperate in ministry.

Cooperate with those in authority over you. Model loyalty to your denomination. See that requested reports are sent promptly. Use denominational resources. Participate in the support of CORE ministries and promote the Giving Streams and other general church ministries.

¶805 DISCERNING THE CALL OF GOD FOR CREDENTIALED MINISTRY

Confirmation of the initial stages of God's call to credentialed ministry in The Free Methodist Church in Canada begins when the leaders of a local church discern and confirm that call by granting a lay minister's license to a member of the congregation. This is how the process of a person being set apart for credentialed ministry begins. In the paragraphs that follow, the requirements of each stage of this process are set out.

The director of leadership development and church health, working with the credentialing coordinator and the ministerial education, guidance and placement (MEGaP) committee, oversees the steps to credentialed ministry, once a lay minister is recommended for ministerial candidacy.

A document entitled "Steps to Credentialed Ministry" summarizes the credentialing process. It is available through the credentialing coordinator or on the FMCIC website.

¶810 LAY MINISTERS (TRACKING AND LOCAL)

A lay minister is a member of a Free Methodist Church who has been granted a license by the official board. For some lay ministers (tracking), this will be an entry point into the tracking system that ultimately leads to being credentialed either as a commissioned minister or an ordained minister. Other lay ministers (local) will opt to serve only at the local church level.

Local Lay Minister: a person who is gifted and called by God to provide a level of ministry leadership beyond what is expected of a member within the local church (i.e. gifted in teaching or visitation). This call is affirmed by the local church who responds to the person's ministry and leadership, and the board who recognize gifts and affirm this call and level of leadership responsibility. While there may be an element of pastoral leadership in this person's ministry leadership, they do not feel called to pastoral leadership. The person is granted the Lay Minister license (see Ch 3 par 381a) by the board, renewable annually (see par 381b), and is accountable to the board and lead pastor (or designate).

Tracking Lay Minister – a person who is called by God to provide pastoral leadership in the church. This call is affirmed by the local church and the board who see the gifts and graces evident for pastoral leadership and are encouraging the person towards preparing for pastoral leadership through the credentialing process. This is very much a preparation and formation stage where the person will work to gain experience and understanding in general pastoral ministry as well as begin to meet the requirements to fully enter the credentialing process. The person is granted the Lay Minister license (see Ch 3 par 381a) by the board, renewable annually (see par 381b), and is accountable to the board and lead pastor (or designate).

In either case, before a license is granted, the candidate shall be a member of the church long enough to give evidence of gifts and graces suited to Christian ministry. A hunger for God, a blameless life and a motive to serve are desirable attributes. A lay minister shall be amenable to instruction, supervision, and related discipline to assure growth in grace, knowledge, and usefulness.

The lay minister retains membership in the local church, but the MEGaP committee and the credentialing coordinator shall be notified immediately if a license has been issued to either a tracking or local lay minister. The license must be renewed annually by the official board.

To qualify as a lay minister, the person must meet the following requirements (alternate process available for church planters through the Church Planting department):

- be a member of the Free Methodist Church;
- be available for ministry under supervision of the lead pastor;
- be recommended by the pastor or pastor's cabinet to the official board;
- have completed Bases 1,2,3,4 (or their equivalent);
- The candidate shall be interviewed by the official board to determine the person's call to lay ministry, and quality of spiritual life, and shall be asked questions such as:
    - When and how did you come to know Christ as Lord and Saviour?
    - Do you experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit in your life? Are you open to the call of God to lay ministry
    - What preparations and plans are you making in order to follow God's will for your life?
    - To what type of ministry and witness do you believe you are called?
    - What is your understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith?
    - What is your understanding of the doctrine of sanctification?

For local lay ministers, the person must also meet these additional requirements:

- take and successfully complete the Heart of Canadian Free Methodism foundational course
- demonstrate life-long learning
- actively participate in a small group

- submit a police clearance certificate

The official board may issue a lay minister's license (see Ch 3 par 381a) and assign responsibility for counsel and guidance to the pastor and/or the pastor's cabinet. It shall be their responsibility to provide opportunities for lay ministers to develop their gifts in such ways as:

- preaching or teaching the Gospel;
- assisting the pastor in visitation;
- assisting in public worship services;
- participating in a program of witnessing to the unsaved, winning them to Christ, and nurturing them in Christian living.

Lay ministers shall be given regular duties with clear accountability structures.

Though lay ministers maintain their memberships in a local church, they are not eligible to continue to be voting members of an official board once they have been issued a lay minister's license. If they are board members when they become lay ministers, they may complete their terms on official boards, but they may not be re-elected as board members.

Lay ministers are honorary members of the official board. At the discretion of the lead pastor tracking lay ministers, as part of their training for credentialed ministry, may participate in official board meetings except when the board is dealing with delicate matters related to the life and ministry of the lead pastor or other pastoral staff.

When it is evident to the official board that a lay minister (who desires to enter the tracking system toward ministerial credentials) possesses gifts and graces and a call of God to credentialed ministry, the official board may recommend to the MEGaP committee that this person be interviewed with a view to becoming a ministerial candidate in the conference. Official Boards must exercise careful discernment before approving a tracking lay minister. The question to be kept in mind is whether this person would have the gifts and graces to eventually be accepted as a pastor in his/her home church. Prior to this MEGaP interview, the lay minister must have established an accountability partner relationship as per ¶801.1.

It is the responsibility of the lead pastor to annually submit to the credentialing coordinator the names of all tracking and local lay ministers in the local church. They shall be listed in the records of the credentialing coordinator.

The official board shall review each lay minister's license annually for renewal (see Ch 3 par 381b). For each annual renewal, tracking lay ministers are expected to have completed a 3-credit hour course or equivalent. Local lay ministers are expected to demonstrate evidence of their commitment to life-long learning. When not completed, renewal shall be postponed. The pastor shall keep the records and report the list annually to the credentialing coordinator.

The following 3-credit hour courses shall be taken by tracking lay ministers:

- Heart of Canadian Free Methodism (history and polity)
- Introduction to Bible
- Introduction to Christian Doctrine
- Wesleyan Theology

The Heart of Canadian Free Methodism course is the only course that must be taken through foundational courses provided by The Free Methodist Church in Canada. Equivalencies for the other three courses must be taken at an accredited Bible college or seminary, either in person or by distance education. (Wesleyan Theology may also be taken through a foundational course offered from time to time by The Free Methodist Church in Canada.)

Further annual renewals shall be on the basis of the official board's assessment of effective ministry. Approval for courses for subsequent renewals is available through the credentialing coordinator.

The pastor's cabinet, personnel committee or equivalent shall do the annual review and the official board shall grant the renewal, upon their recommendation. The official board may revoke a lay minister's license for violation of its conditions.

A lay minister's license is not normally transferable to another church. In exceptional cases, a lay minister may have charge of a society under the supervision of an assigned ordained minister. In that case, the lay minister will hold membership in the church served.

¶815 MINISTERIAL CANDIDATES

A ministerial candidate is a member of a Free Methodist Church who is seriously pursuing entrance into credentialed ministry, has been granted the status of an honorary member of the conference (with voice but not vote) and is under conference supervision in studies and service.

In order to become a ministerial candidate, a lay minister must:

Demonstrate a serious desire to pursue God's call to ministry within the FMCIC by submitting the following to the credentialing coordinator:

- a copy of the lay minister's licence (see ¶381a or ¶381a-CP);
- a resume (Candidates are encouraged to attach personality/ministry aptitude inventory results.);
- required educational transcripts;
- required personal references;
- a ministerial candidate's Statement of Affirmation (see ¶871);
- a police clearance certificate
- written confirmation that an accountability partner relationship has been established
- a reflection paper on his/her call to ministry
- completed Family of Origin assignment
- completed SHAPE profile
- completed Myers-Briggs Type Indicator© inventory

Receive the church's confirmations of suitability for ministry by being:

- a lay minister in good standing;
- able to demonstrate leadership ability by establishing a small group;
- endorsed by his/her pastor's personal letter of recommendation. The pastor will assist in the development of an educational and ministry experience plan that will be submitted to MEGaP;
- recommended to MEGaP for ministerial candidacy by the official board (see ¶383B); (board should only recommend a lay minister for ministerial candidacy if the board anticipates a recommendation for his/her appointment at its local church once s/he is approved by the conference as a ministerial candidate);
- (if married) spouse and lay minister together meeting with a MEGaP subcommittee for spousal support interview
- cleared by MEGaP if there is a history of divorce (see ¶816);
- interviewed and recommended by the MEGaP committee to the conference;
- approved by the conference and admitted as a non-voting member.

Demonstrate critical thinking and communication competencies by having:

- a high school diploma;

- successfully completed 30 semester credits in an accredited liberal arts or bible college or mature applicants may demonstrate these competencies through life-learning/experience evaluations.

Receive basic orientation for ministry in the FMCIC by:

- successfully completing the following courses:
  - Heart of Canadian Free Methodism (history and polity);
  - Introduction to the Bible; (or an equivalent)
  - Introduction to Christian Doctrine; (or an equivalent)
  - Wesleyan Theology; (or an equivalent)
- successfully completing Bases 1,2,3,4 (or their equivalent)

If a Lay Minister disagrees with a recommendation from MEGaP after his/her interview, s/he may appeal that decision by sending a letter in writing to the bishop and the director of leadership development and church health outlining the reasons for the appeal. The bishop will review the MEGaP notes, the recommendation and the appeal from the candidate and decide whether or not the recommendation should be reconsidered.

When the candidate is presented to the board of administration or conference, it will be reported that the candidate has affirmed the following in a signed ministerial candidate's Statement of Affirmation (see form in ¶871).

1. Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour and offer yourself in service to Him as a ministerial candidate in the Canadian General Conference of the Free Methodist Church?
2. a) Will you further equip yourself spiritually, morally, and intellectually for the Christian ministry?
   b) For what type of ministry are you preparing yourself – ordained or commissioned? If commissioned minister, what will your specialty be?
3. Having studied *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada* carefully, do you believe the Articles of Religion and accept the moral vision as articulated in Chapter 6 and do you embrace the purpose, vision, mission, and core values of The Free Methodist Church in Canada? Will you abide by the *Manual's* instructions?
4. Will you submit to the guidance of the conference through the MEGaP committee?

Ministerial Candidates maintain their memberships in the local church, and as such they have both a voice and a vote. Ministerial Candidates should abstain from voting on budget/financial, employed personnel or other issues that would directly impact or involve the Ministerial Candidate and would be considered a conflict of interest.

Though ministerial candidates maintain their memberships in a local church, they are not eligible to serve as delegates to the conference once they have been received into the conference as ministerial candidates. If they are delegates when they become ministerial candidates, they must resign as delegates.

Ministerial candidates continue as honorary members of the official board and at the discretion of the lead pastor may participate in all official board meetings except when the board is dealing with delicate matters related to the life and ministry of the lead pastor or other pastoral staff.

A ministerial candidate or a person recommended to the conference to be received as a ministerial candidate may not serve on the MEGaP committee.

Ministerial candidates maintain their standing in the conference by an annual recommendation of the MEGaP committee.

Ministerial candidates must be appointed by the conference in order to track toward being ordained or commissioned minister. Once appointed, they may solemnize marriages and administer the sacraments. If a ministerial candidate's appointment is discontinued, the ministerial candidate credential is automatically withdrawn and the tracking process becomes 'inactive'. If another appointment request is sent to the director of leadership development and church health, MEGaP will vote on both the reinstatement of the ministerial candidate credential and the appointment request. If both are approved, the ministerial candidate can resume the tracking process.

A ministerial candidate may be appointed as a church planter upon recommendation to MEGaP from the director of church planting.

¶816 SEPARATION, DIVORCE AND THE MINISTRY

A person who has been divorced or is married to a spouse previously divorced, shall not be admitted to ministerial candidacy, nor to the conference, nor by transfer, nor allowed to be under any type of appointment unless cleared by the MEGaP committee. (See ¶430.2.2.8.). Divorce shall not in itself bar a person from consideration for conference membership, or for an appointment.

When there is marital stress and conflict in a ministerial marriage, ministers are urged to initiate early intervention and to take proactive steps to access, in consultation with conference leadership resources to receive professional help for healing the relationship. If the conflict escalates to the point where it is no longer advisable or healthy for the couple to continue to live together and separation becomes necessary, the minister must immediately apply to the official board for a paid leave of absence so that he/she can focus on regaining marital health.

If the leave of absence is granted and the ministerial couple has not reconciled as the end of the leave of absence approaches, the bishop or designate will meet separately with the pastor and the board to assess the advisability of the pastor returning to serve at the church while separated. If it is agreed that the pastor can continue, the pastor will need to agree to an ongoing month-to-month probationary relationship with the local church, the terms of which (e.g. performance/ accountability expectations), will be laid out in writing. If the separation eventually results in a divorce, the following guidance is to be followed.

A minister, who is divorced, must provide MEGaP with a statement of the circumstances of the divorce and be cleared by MEGaP before being considered for an appointment (See 430.2.8.).

He/she also may not remarry unless MEGaP has cleared them. If a minister's fiancé(e) has been divorced, his/her fiancé(e)'s divorce must be cleared by MEGaP prior to marrying. A minister who marries contrary to these guidelines shall be subject to discipline and shall not be re-appointed by the conference until cleared by MEGaP.

If the divorce of a minister (or his/her new spouse) is not cleared, he/she is not in good standing with the conference and shall withdraw from and return his/her credentials to the conference. He/she can be approved for lay membership in a local church.

¶820 COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

Commissioned Ministers are persons called by God to provide specialized ministry leadership (examples include but not limited to: Children and Family Pastor, Youth, Community Development Missionary, Social Media, etc.). They do not feel called to provide pastoral leadership to the entire church. They may, under special circumstances, be appointed under one of the categories under Special Appointment (see ¶852), but it is assumed that they will normally work as specialized associate pastors under an ordained minister's leadership.

Commissioned Ministers are eligible to be nominated as ministerial members in some of the larger administrative and leadership roles of the denomination (see Ch 4).

The training and experience candidates receive will include both formation in their area of specialization as well as ministry leadership. Commissioned Ministers are accountable to the local church and lead pastor (or equivalent) for the specific day to day living out of that call through their employment and/or job description. They are also accountable to the denomination who has credentialed them as being prepared to live out the ministry leadership aspect of that call, through their conference appointment.

In order to become a commissioned minister, a ministerial candidate must:

Demonstrate a serious desire to pursue God's call to commissioned ministry within The Free Methodist Church in Canada by:

- submitting a copy of required academic transcripts to the credentialing coordinator;
- completing 3 years of full-time ministry experience under (conference) supervision as a ministerial candidate. Ministry experience equivalency credits may be accumulated on a part-time basis under supervision and granted by the MEGaP committee. Once a lay minister has been approved as a ministerial candidate and has been appointed at a local church, retroactive ministry experience equivalency credits may be granted by the director of leadership development and church health on an individual case-by-case basis, upon written request.
- submitting a minister's statement of affirmation (See ¶ 872).

Receive the church's confirmation of suitability for commissioned ministry by being:

- a ministerial candidate in good standing;
- (if married after becoming a ministerial candidate) spouse and ministerial candidate together meeting with a MEGaP subcommittee for spousal support interview
- interviewed and recommended by the MEGaP committee for commissioned ministry;
- approved by the general conference or its board of administration for honorary membership in the conference and the commissioned ministry;
- commissioned by the bishop or the bishop's appointee.

Receive basic academic preparation for ministry in the FMCIC by:

- in addition to the courses required for ministerial candidacy, successfully completing, as a minimum, the following prescribed core courses within an accredited and approved (by MEGaP) seminary, college, or directed study program:
    - Systematic theology (3 credits)
    - Elective courses related to the specific commission specialty (e.g. administration, children, pastoral care, youth, worship, etc.) (9 credits)
    - Personal and Church Stewardship foundational course (3 credits)
    - Culture and the Missional Church foundational course (3 credits)
- being certified by the credentialing coordinator

If a Ministerial Candidate disagrees with a recommendation from MEGaP after his/her interview, s/he may appeal that decision by sending a letter in writing to the bishop and the director of leadership development and church health outlining the reasons for the appeal. The bishop will review the MEGaP notes, the recommendation and the appeal from the candidate and decide whether or not the recommendation should be reconsidered.

They remain ~~are~~ members of local churches and honorary members of the conference. When a commissioned minister transfers his/her local church membership to a different Free Methodist congregation, the commissioned minister is listed as in "transition" (as per ¶852) until the receiving church makes a recommendation for an appointment to ministry in that congregation. When a commissioned minister is in transition or retires, they retain honorary membership in the conference.

Since Commissioned ministers maintain membership in the local church, they have both a voice and a vote at the local church. Commissioned ministers also continue as honorary members of the official board and, at the discretion of the lead pastor, may participate in all official board meetings except when the board is dealing with delicate matters related to the life and ministry of the lead pastor or other pastoral staff. The Commissioned ministers also need to declare a conflict of interest with any board or society vote on budget/financial, employed personnel or other issues that would directly impact or involve them. Commissioned ministers cannot serve as a delegate at the local church, since they are honourary members of conference.

Walking in a manner worthy of their call is expected, along with attendance at denominational events such as General Conferences, Regional Gatherings, Minister's Conferences and Network meetings (except retirees).

Commissioned ministers [except retirees] must continue with ongoing development in both their area of specialization as well as in ministry leadership and must annually file a continuing education unit (CEU) report with the credentialing coordinator as a condition of maintaining good standing in the conference.

¶821 COMMISSIONED MINISTERS BECOMING ORDAINED MINISTERS

In order for commissioned ministers to become ordained ministers, they must:

- be a commissioned minister in good standing;
- have completed the following prescribed core courses within an accredited and approved (by MEGaP) seminary, college, or directed study program. These minimum credits shall include:
  - Biblical studies (9);
  - Church history (3);
  - Evangelism/church growth/planting (3);
  - Leadership/administration (3);
  - Pastoral theology and practical studies (6);
  - The balance shall be electives distributed among the following three areas: biblical studies, theology, practical studies (12 credits). (Elective courses taken to meet commissioned ministry requirements can be counted toward this requirement.);
- have completed four years of ministry experience under (conference) supervision. Once a lay minister has been approved as a ministerial candidate and has been appointed at a local church, retroactive ministry experience equivalency credits may be granted by the director of leadership development and church health on an individual case-by-case basis, upon written request.
- (if married after becoming a commissioned minister) spouse and ministerial candidate together meeting with a MEGaP subcommittee for spousal support interview
- be certified by the credentialing coordinator;
- be interviewed and recommended by the MEGaP committee to membership in the conference and ordination;
- by action of the general conference or its board of administration be a member of a conference;
- be ordained by the bishop or the bishop's appointee;
- commit to annually file a continuing education plan with the credentialing coordinator and fulfill it as a condition of maintaining good standing in the conference.

¶822 QUESTIONS FOR CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP

Ministerial candidates may be received as commissioned or ordained ministers after completing the required service and educational requirements. They shall submit the minister's statement of affirmation. (See ¶872). (These statements shall become the property of the credentialing coordinator.) When candidates are presented to the board of administration or conference, it will be reported that they have affirmed the following:

1. Have you faith in Christ?
2. Have you present assurance that your sins are forgiven?
3. Do you experience purity of heart and life and empowerment for service, through the fullness of the Spirit, and will you through study, counsel, and prayer seek and maintain this experience and lead your people to experience the same?
4. Are you resolved to devote yourself to God and to the work to which He calls you?
5. Will you partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as often as you can?
6. Will you endeavour to communicate the Gospel effectively?
7. Will you see that the people of all ages under your care are properly instructed and cared for?
8. Will you visit, ministering to those within and without the church?
9. Will you recommend fasting and prayer, both by teaching and example?
10. Having studied our *Manual* carefully, do you believe the Articles of Religion and accept the moral vision as articulated in Chapter 6, and do you embrace the purpose, vision, mission, and core values of The Free Methodist Church in Canada? Will you abide by the *Manual's* instructions?
11. Without being sectarian, will you promote the Free Methodist Church and its ministries in carrying out your work?

¶825 ORDAINED MINISTERS

Ordained ministers (formerly known as deacons and elders) are persons called by God to lead (typically as a lead pastor), to provide overall general pastoral leadership in the church and Kingdom. Ordination remains an option for those who feel called to broader ministry or leadership. It is also encouraged for associates/assistants, and may be required by some institutions for some specialized ministries such as chaplaincy. Membership in the conference and ordination constitutes the acknowledgment of the conference that the person so elected and ordained has fulfilled the ecclesiastical requirements to participate in the larger administrative and leadership roles of the church**.**

In order to become an ordained minister, a ministerial candidate must:

Demonstrate a serious desire to pursue God's call to ordained ministry within The Free Methodist Church in Canada by:

submitting a copy of required academic transcripts to the credentialing coordinator;

completing 4 years of ministry experience (at least part time) under (conference) supervision as a ministerial candidate. Once a lay minister has been approved as a ministerial candidate and has been appointed at a local church, retroactive ministry experience equivalency credits may be granted by the director of leadership development and church health on an individual case-by-case basis, upon written request.

submitting a minister's statement of affirmation (See ¶ 872)

submitting a reflection paper on the meaning of ordination to the MEGaP interview team and the bishop for evaluation prior to the final interview.

Receive the church's confirmation of suitability for ordained ministry by being:

- a ministerial candidate in good standing;
- able to demonstrate leadership ability by establishing and multiplying a small group;
- (if married after becoming a ministerial candidate) spouse and ministerial candidate together meeting with a MEGaP subcommittee for spousal support interview
- interviewed and recommended by the MEGaP committee to membership in the conference and ordination;
- approved by the general conference or its board of administration for membership in the conference and ordination;
- ordained by the bishop

Receive basic academic preparation for ordained ministry in The Free Methodist Church in Canada by:

- in addition to the courses required for ministerial candidacy, successfully completing, as a minimum, the following prescribed core courses within an accredited and approved (by MEGaP) seminary, college, or directed study program:
  - Biblical studies (9 credits)
  - Church history (3 credits)
  - Evangelism/church growth (3 credits)
  - Leadership/administration (3 credits)
  - Pastoral theology and practical studies (6 credits)
  - Systematic theology (3 credits)
  - Personal and Church Stewardship foundational course (3 credits)
  - Culture and the Missional Church foundational course (3 credits)
  - Additional electives distributed among biblical, theological, practical studies (12 credits)
- being certified by the credentialing coordinator

If a Ministerial Candidate disagrees with a recommendation from MEGaP after his/her interview, s/he may appeal that decision by sending a letter in writing to the bishop and the director of leadership development and church health outlining the reasons for the appeal. The bishop will review the MEGaP notes, the recommendation and the appeal from the candidate and decide whether or not the recommendation should be reconsidered.

Ordained ministers are required to attend ministers' conferences, general conferences, network meetings and regional gatherings and to submit annual continuing education (CEU) reports as a condition of retaining their ordination credentials. Attendance at minister's conferences, regional gatherings and network meetings and reporting CEU is optional for retirees.

In the case of ethnic ministries or on mission fields, ministerial candidates may be ordained having earned fewer than the normally required academic credits or having completed fewer than the full service requirements under the following conditions: circumstances warrant, the MEGaP committee recommends, and the presiding bishop approves.

¶830 ORDINATION CREDENTIALS

Every minister whose ordination is recognized by the conference shall be entitled to credentials from the president of the conference, certifying the fact of the ordination. The president shall remit a duplicate copy of the credentials to the credentialing coordinator.

Ministers in good standing who unite with another denomination or are granted permission to withdraw from the Free Methodist Church shall deposit their credentials with the conference office and receive a receipt for them. If they do not deposit their credentials they shall be declared null and void by action of the conference.

Ministers under discipline (i.e., suspended, allowed to withdraw under charges or complaints, expelled) must surrender their credentials to the conference office. In the latter two cases, if a minister refuses or neglects to deposit them, the conference shall by official action declare them null and void.

¶835 RECEPTION FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS AND FROM OTHER FREE METHODIST CONFERENCES

Ministers ordained in the Wesleyan or Nazarene denominations, or in another Free Methodist conference may be received according to our procedures, provided that they:

- submit a resume (Candidates are encouraged to attach personality/ministry aptitude inventory results.)
- give evidence of appropriate gifts, graces, and usefulness;
- satisfy the conference of holding ministerial orders in good standing with the Wesleyan or Nazarene denomination, or another Free Methodist conference;
- give satisfactory answers to the questions that we ask of lay members for membership (see ¶161) and sign a statement of affirmation (see ¶872);
- complete a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator© inventory
- complete the Heart of Canadian Free Methodism foundational course;
- give evidence of having taken a Wesleyan Theology course;
- commit to take the Personal and Church Stewardship and the Culture and the Missional Church foundational courses as required continuing education units (CEUs) within three years of completing the transfer;
- be certified by the credentialing coordinator, and recommended by the MEGaP committee.

Ministers ordained in other denominations who desire to unite with The Free Methodist Church in Canada may be received according to our procedures, provided that they:

- submit a resume (Candidates are encouraged to attach personality/ministry aptitude inventory results.)
- give evidence of appropriate gifts, graces, and usefulness;
- satisfy the conference of holding ministerial orders with another denomination;
- give satisfactory answers to the questions that we ask of lay members for membership (see ¶161) and sign a statement of affirmation (see ¶872);
- complete the Family of Origin assignment
- complete the SHAPE profile
- completed Myers-Briggs Type Indicator© inventory
- submit full academic transcripts to the credentialing coordinator;
- complete two of the foundational courses: Heart of Canadian Free Methodism and the Wesleyan Theology (unless equivalency credit has been granted);
- commit to take the Personal and Church Stewardship and the Culture and the Missional Church foundational courses as required continuing education units (CEUs) within three years of completing the transfer;
- be certified by the credentialing coordinator, interviewed and recommended by the MEGaP committee.

In determining the granting of standing with the conference, equivalency is the criterion. No person may attain ordination status more easily by transfer from another denomination or conference than by following the requirements of *The Manual* for all Free Methodist ministers. The candidates must meet both educational and service requirements. If ministers transferring into the conference fall short of our ordination requirements, they shall have a schedule set by which they will need to meet those requirements.

In recognition of the larger body of Christ, candidates transferring in as ordained ministers shall be given an appropriate certificate acknowledging their ordination by another body in lieu of Free Methodist ordination credentials.

¶840 TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

To transfer to another Free Methodist conference a minister must be ordained and have a certificate of standing from the regional MEGaP committee.

Only a regional MEGaP committee may give a certificate of standing to a minister intending to join another denomination. Membership in the conference and the denomination terminates upon the giving of such a certificate.

A minister who intends to serve outside the conference shall notify the bishop or director of leadership development and church health no less than 60 days before the intended transfer. Failing to give such notice, special permission to leave must be obtained from the MEGaP committee whose decision shall be final.

¶845 TERMINATION OF CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP

CREDENTIALS DEPOSITED
In circumstances where it is not possible for ministers in good standing to be located, the MEGaP committee may allow them to deposit their credentials with the conference and withdraw from the conference with the understanding that they can be restored to an itinerating ministry as provided above for located ministers.

DECEASED
Conference members who die during the period between conference sessions shall have their names noted and shall be honoured at the following conference.

DISCONTINUED FROM MINISTERIAL CANDIDACY
The names of any ministerial candidate not recommended to be continued shall be noted as discontinued in the MEGaP report to the conference.

GRANTED A CERTIFICATE OF STANDING WITH VIEW TO TRANSFER
The conference, or in the interim, the MEGaP committee, may grant a certificate of standing to ordained ministers who wish to transfer to another conference.

LOCATED
Located ministers are ordained persons who are not available to be appointed and so are located with their membership at a local church. Ministers who are located may either request the place of their membership or it may be determined by the conference upon the recommendation of the MEGaP committee. In the process, the minister to be located and the minister and official board of the church involved shall be consulted.

Located ministers shall be accountable to the local church for their service but, with respect to their doctrine, character and conduct, they shall be accountable to the MEGaP committee. Located ministers in good standing shall be listed in the records of the conference as local elders, local deacons or local ordained ministers, according to their ordinations.

Location is viewed as a termination of conference membership. Located ministers retain ordination credentials but do not have a voice or vote in the conference unless elected by a local church as a lay delegate. Because located ministers' memberships are fixed at a local Free Methodist Church, they are entitled to vote in the local church.

Located ministers against whom the local church lodges complaints shall appear before the MEGaP committee to answer the complaints. They shall not be disciplined by the local church nor shall they be deprived of ordination credentials without due process being followed by the MEGaP committee.

Located ministers may be restored to an itinerating ministry within the conference as follows:

- The MEGaP committee shall recommend;
- The board of administration shall approve by a majority vote;

- Those who move to reside within the bounds of another conference shall approach the MEGaP committee of that conference requesting that their membership be received. If received, the MEGaP committee of the receiving conference shall locate them;

Between each general conference, the director of leadership development and church health shall contact all located ministers to determine whether they are regularly attending the church where their membership has been located.

Located ministers shall conduct themselves as exemplary members of the society where they are located. Those who are not regularly attending (including those where the church has been closed) will be requested to submit written proposals to the MEGaP as to what should be done with their credentials (e.g., deposited with the conference, transferred to another denomination, surrendered, etc.). The credentials of those who fail to respond with proposals prior to the next general conference will be declared null and void by MEGaP.

MEMBERSHIP IN ANOTHER DENOMINATION
A minister who unites with another denomination (in either a ministerial or lay relationship) without having requested or received proper credentials of withdrawal will, upon satisfactory evidence of that fact, be declared withdrawn by MEGaP.

SUSPENSION LEADING TO EXPULSION
Ministers may receive discipline, be restored and have their credentials returned according to the provisions of ¶925.

Ministers under discipline shall surrender their credentials to be filed in the conference office. Those who refuse or neglect to do so shall have them declared null and void by the conference, or in the interim, by the MEGaP committee. (See ¶830).

Suspended ministers retain conference membership but are prohibited from exercising any ministerial functions or conference privileges while suspended.

The membership of expelled ministers is terminated on the date of their expulsion.

WITHDRAWN FROM THE CONFERENCE AND THE DENOMINATION
A minister who has withdrawn from the conference and the denomination shall be so listed. If a minister requests to withdraw while under discipline, the listing shall add the designation, "under complaint."

WITHDRAWN UNDER COMPLAINT
Ministers who leave the church after complaints have been lodged against them, and who subsequently regain church membership, shall not be allowed to exercise the functions of the ministerial office until they have satisfied the conference to which they belonged regarding the complaints.

¶850 APPOINTMENTS

The MEGaP committee shall appoint ministers to their fields of service according to the policies and procedures outlined in the document: "*Transitions Handbook.*" (See ¶875)

A minister may be appointed to a church without having charge of it; in such cases the administration of it shall rest upon an ordained minister assigned by the bishop.

¶851 MULTIPLE STAFF APPOINTMENTS

When a local church determines that additional appointed pastoral staff is needed, the lead pastor shall consult the director of leadership development and church health before any local action is taken. The

director of leadership development and church health shall represent the conference in the selection and recommendation for appointment.

Appointed assistant/associate pastors who desire a change shall notify the director of leadership development and church health and the lead pastor. Official boards that desire a change of appointed staff members shall notify the director of leadership development and church health and the staff member. No change shall be made without due process.

If a new lead pastor is to be appointed, it is not mandated by the conference that other staff members must submit their resignations. Each individual church will need to create policy in this regard. (See ¶375.2)

¶852 SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS

In order to nourish a healthy connection with the denomination, all ordained ministers and commissioned ministers serving in special appointments are required to attend ministers' conferences, general conferences and regional gatherings and to submit annual continuing education reports as a condition of retaining their ordination credentials. Attendance at minister's conferences and regional gatherings, as well as reporting CEUs, is optional for retirees.

They are also encouraged to be part of network meetings and to worship regularly with a local church, preferably a Free Methodist congregation when possible and advisable.

The director of leadership development shall arrange for a connection with all ministers serving under special appointment, except supply pastors, transition pastors and retired ministers, at least once between General Conferences.

ATTENDING SCHOOL
Ministers may be granted special appointments to further their studies. Such appointments shall name the institution of further education.

CHAPLAINS
Chaplains provide ministry to persons in special situations beyond the local church, such as in the armed forces, prisons, care-giving institutions, and law enforcement agencies. The national MEGaP committee establishes endorsement procedures for chaplaincy. The Free Methodist Church in Canada recognizes the Association of Chaplains, the Free Methodist Chaplains Association of North America, together with its constitution and duly elected officers. Canadian chaplains may hold membership in this association.

CHURCH PLANTERS
Ministers who are planting churches may be granted special appointments to the setting (neighbourhood, village, town) where they are working to establish a church plant.

DENOMINATIONAL MINISTRY
Ministers may be granted special appointments to ministries of the church at large; such as bishop, conference personnel, teachers or administrators in higher education, missionary service or supply relationship in another conference.

INTERIM PASTOR
Interim pastors provide basic pastoral functions during a transition time (preaching, visiting, etc.)

NETWORK MENTOR
A Network Mentor is an ordained minister who is trained and resourced by the bishop and national leadership team and is responsible to help the network leader create a "discipleship experience" for their

network of pastors. A Network Mentor is appointed by the Bishop after consultation with MEGaP. A detailed job description is found in ¶881 and a description of the Networks is found in ¶855.

RELEASED FOR SERVICE BEYOND THE DENOMINATION
Ministers may be granted special appointments to serve in ministries beyond the denomination. Their place of service shall be listed in their appointment.

RETIRED
Ministers may retire upon reaching age 65. In exceptional situations, ministers listed as retired may be appointed. The MEGaP committee shall review cases of those seeking early retirement.

SUPPLY PASTORS
Ministerial candidates who are not yet ordained, commissioned ministers and ministers who are ordained with other denominations may be appointed as pastors of our churches. Because they are not yet members of the conference, they shall be appointed as supply pastors.

TRANSITION PASTOR
Transition pastors have special training, skills and authority to help a church refocus during a transition.

¶853 SPECIAL RELATIONSHIPS

IN TRANSITION
A minister who has been released from an appointment shall be listed as "in transition." After two years of being in transition, ministers without an appointment shall be located at a local church, be listed as retired, or shall deposit their credentials according to the provisions of ¶845. Ministers who do not indicate a preference at that time will have their credentials deposited.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP
A minister not available for appointment to active ministry may be granted a leave of absence by the conference upon the recommendation of the MEGaP committee. The reason for the leave of absence: for personal reasons, or for secular work shall be listed. After a maximum of twelve months on leave of absence, the minister shall be located at a local church or deposit their credentials according to the provisions of ¶845. Ministers who do not indicate a preference at that time, will have their credentials deposited.

LOCATED
Located ministers are ordained persons who are not available to be appointed and so are located with their membership at a local church. Once located, they are eligible to vote and to hold office at the local church, and no longer eligible to vote at conference. They shall be accountable for their service to the local church but, with respect to their doctrine, character and conduct, they shall be accountable to the MEGaP committee.

SUSPENDED
- A minister who has been suspended shall be so listed.
- If a suspended minister has entered into a Covenant of Restoration, he/she will be so listed.

¶855 NATIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM, NETWORK MENTOR TEAM AND NETWORK LEADERS

1. NATIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

The directors of administration, church planting, and leadership development and church health are members of the national leadership team, led by the bishop. The bishop with the help of network leader mentors and network leaders, will oversee the development of healthy networks or "discipleship communities" for FMCiC pastors and leaders. Each of these responsibilities is assigned to a director. (A more detailed job description exists for each director position.)

Discipleship is a key component of the FMCiC, as it is Jesus' method of "building" His church. Furthermore discipleship was how John Wesley grew the Methodist movement. Since discipleship is key to the health and vitality of the FMCiC, it is clear that our leaders and pastors need to be full participants in discipleship. Networks are therefore to be "discipleship communities". Pastors and leaders will enter a covenant relationship which includes creating a mutual discipling experience for each member of the network. Networks will therefore necessarily be a safe "place" for pastors, chaplains and other ordained leaders to be supported and grow in their personal and ministry lives.

2. NETWORK MENTOR TEAM:

- Are ordained ministers appointed by the bishop after consultation with MEGaP
- Are trained and resourced by the bishop and national leadership team
- Are responsible to help the network leader create a "discipleship experience" for their network of pastors.
- A detailed job description is found in ¶881

3. NETWORK LEADERS

- Are trained and resourced by the bishop, national leadership team and network leader mentors. (See the Networks Chart ¶460 B.)
- Are assigned to a network leader mentor who will provide them with support and supervision
- Are responsible to cultivate a "discipleship community" for their network of pastors by:
  - building relationships with the pastors in the network
  - planning and facilitating network meetings
  - introducing their network to a covenant wherein the network pursues a discipleship community.
  - being involved in denominational activities
- A detailed job description is found in ¶881

¶860 OFFICE OF BISHOP

The bishop is elected to serve the church as an overseer. This ordained minister functions as a teacher and defender of the faith, a general shepherd, a pastor to the pastors, and an administrator who by good example and faithful application of *The Manual* assures the order of the church. The bishop is to inspire the church by preaching and being an example of one who carries out Christ's great commission.

As the national pastoral leader and chief executive officer of The Free Methodist Church in Canada, the bishop's ministry of leadership encompasses spiritual, governance, administrative and representative dimensions. Overseeing a broad range of persons, teams and activities, the primary responsibilities of the bishop include the development of the spiritual vitality, the administrative effectiveness and the strategic direction of the national church. As chair of the general conference and chief executive officer of The Free Methodist Church in Canada and national leadership team, the bishop guides in the creation of vision and mission for the church today and in the future, leading to the growth and development of the church in Canada. The board of administration is responsible to ensure that a more detailed job description is kept current.

Process for the Election of a Bishop
It is understood that a term is defined as the three-year period between general conferences. An incumbent bishop will normally indicate to the spring meeting of the board of administration the year prior to a general conference whether or not he/she is willing to serve as bishop for another term. The minimum amount of time for this notice would be at the fall meeting of the board of administration the year prior to a general conference.

If Incumbent Bishop is Willing to Serve Another Term:
If the incumbent bishop is willing to serve another term, the board of administration initiates an assessment process to determine his/her suitability for serving another term. This starts with commissioning the personnel team to conduct a full 360 performance appraisal of the incumbent bishop, to be completed by the fall board of administration meeting prior to general conference. At that fall board of administration meeting, the personnel team reports to the board of administration and makes a recommendation as to whether or not the incumbent bishop is suitable for another term. This is based upon the full 360 performance appraisal, previous annual performance appraisals, results of regular bishop-personnel team connection points, and the results of other personnel team connection points with national leadership team and The Free Methodist Church in Canada employees over the previous two years, as per the personnel team policy. The board of administration conducts a confidence vote on the incumbent bishop, based on the personnel team recommendation and other information/observations, and with a minimum 75% majority vote required, determines suitability for proceeding with a vote for the incumbent bishop at general conference.

At this decision point (the fall board of administration prior to the next general conference), communication is made to the general conference from the board of administration indicating the results of this process, that there will either be an upcoming general conference affirmation vote for the incumbent Bishop, or that a bishop leadership task force will be put in place to seek a new bishop.

A general conference vote of a minimum 75% approval is required for the incumbent bishop to serve another term. If the incumbent bishop does not receive a general conference vote of a minimum 75% approval, a bishop leadership task force is triggered as per the section above.

If incumbent Bishop is unwilling (or unsuitable) to serve another term:
When an incumbent bishop declines to stand for re-election or when it otherwise becomes necessary to elect a new bishop (whether he/she is found to be unsuitable to serve or other reasons), the board of administration appoints a bishop leadership task force to seek a new bishop. The bishop leadership task force will consist of five to seven people. The board of administration will appoint the chair of the bishop leadership task force and the bishop leadership task force itself will appoint a vice-chair and secretary. Other considerations in the formation of the bishop leadership task force membership will include:

- Representatives from the board of administration and personnel team
- Approximately 50% clergy and 50% lay representation
- Membership in the conference or a local Free Methodist congregation
- Not an employee of The Free Methodist Church in Canada
- Has significant involvement with the denomination (i.e. denominational committees) for at least one year
- Spiritually mature and committed to involvement in the bishop leadership task force that may last for several months
- A reputation for being able to keep information confidential

- Willing to work in cooperation with others and the board of administration
- As much as possible, represent the demographics of The Free Methodist Church in Canada (i.e. age, male/female, English/French speaking and ethnicity)
- At least one person with human resource experience would be a helpful resource

A proposed timeline for the bishop leadership task force follows (assuming notice at the spring board of administration meeting one year prior to General Conference):

- Month #1: The bishop leadership task force meets virtually for a month to pray. They will work with the national prayer team to mobilize The Free Methodist Church in Canada to pray about this process;
- Month #2:
  - The bishop leadership task force creates a strategic plan including timelines;
  - The bishop leadership task force works with the board of administration and personnel team to produce a current job description for the new bishop and a remuneration package;
  - The bishop leadership task force works with the director of communications to outline the bishop leadership task force process, communicate the qualities and competencies desired for a bishop, and invite The Free Methodist Church in Canada to pray;
- Month #3: the bishop leadership task force solicits names of potential candidates from the local church delegates and members of conference;
- Months #4-5: Potential candidates are contacted and shortlisted. References are requested;
- Month #6: Interviews and reference checks
- Month #7: Up to three potential candidates are chosen and their biography information is published for at least three weeks, for the prayerful consideration by the Conference members.
- Month #8: A conference online vote is held to elect a bishop from the name(s) put forward as potential candidate(s);
- Note that the successful candidate does not assume the Office of the Bishop until the consecration ceremony is held.

This above process will need to be abbreviated if the bishop leadership task force is triggered should the incumbent bishop not receive a minimum of 75% in a board of administration confidence vote or a general conference affirmation vote as noted above.

Other considerations:

- To be elected, a Free Methodist ordained minister must receive at least a majority vote of 50% plus one.
- The election shall be completed prior to the meeting of the general conference by a deadline set by the board of administration.
- The board of administration shall ensure that there is a method to confidentially receive and record votes from the lay and ministerial delegates of the general conference.
- The bishop-elect will be introduced to lay and ministerial delegates of the general conference.
- The incumbent bishop will provide orientation to the bishop-elect in the months prior to the meeting of the general conference.
- The bishop-elect will normally be consecrated when the general conference meets or, if necessary, at another time arranged by the board of administration. He/she will not be employed by the general conference until he/she has been consecrated.
- The bishop-elect assumes office at the conclusion of his/her consecration.
- If the bishop's office is vacated within six months of a general conference, it shall be left vacant for the ensuing general conference to fill.

Bishop Exit Process

Though it is assumed that the outgoing Bishop will be healthy and supportive of the transition process, the conference must assume a level of responsibility for a smooth passing of the baton. When an incumbent bishop indicates an unwillingness to serve an additional term, or when the board of administration has determined that the incumbent bishop is unsuitable to serve for an additional term, the exit process proceeds as follows:

- In the event that the transition is initiated by the board of administration, the board of administration meets alone with the outgoing bishop to discuss the rationale for their decision. The decision of the board of administration is final without opportunity for appeal. To allow the outgoing bishop some time to process the decision, the discussion relating to the bishop's remaining term and communication of the decision is deferred to a subsequent board of administration meeting.
- The board of administration meets alone with the outgoing bishop to discuss:
    - How the transition decision will be communicated (see following)
    - Transition of authority to the incoming bishop (see bishop onboarding)
    - Challenges, expectations and strategies for the remaining term
    - They pray together.
- The decision is then communicated by the board of administration to the personnel team, to the national leadership team, then to the remaining ministry centre staff, then to the conference.
- The outgoing bishop participates in an exit interview with the personnel team in which outstanding issues of concern are documented, ongoing issues pertaining to the office of the bishop are discussed and recorded, and an opportunity is given to the outgoing bishop to convey any suggestions or criticisms. The exit interview is summarized and presented by the personnel team chair to the board of administration.
- The personnel team is primarily responsible for helping the outgoing bishop process the transition. It is recommended that the personnel team check in with the outgoing bishop every other week to pray with him/her and ask these types of questions:
    - Do you feel supported by the board of administration, national leadership team and personnel team?
    - What concerns or challenges are you facing in this transition?
    - Are you meeting with your accountability partner throughout this time?
- Members of the personnel team are responsible to check in with members of the national leadership team regarding their experience with the outgoing bishop.

Bishop-Elect Onboarding

The bishop-elect must agree to the onboarding process as a condition of employment on the official letter of understanding for employment.

The bishop-elect assumes the office of bishop following his/her consecration ceremony. There are a variety of onboarding activities prior to consecration for the outgoing bishop to help orient the bishop-elect; however, the bishop-elect is not to assume any decision-making authority until consecration has occurred.

In the event that the outgoing bishop is unwilling or unable to assist with onboarding the new bishop, the onboarding process is overseen by the personnel team chair, board of administration chair, and the outgoing bishop's administrative assistant. The national leadership team is to be consulted regularly through the onboarding process.

Pre-Consecration

The time period after a new bishop is elected and before his/her consecration offers an opportunity for the bishop-elect to familiarize themselves with the ministry centre calendar, personnel, processes and committees. The Bishop-elect should take this opportunity to attend and observe various staff and committee meetings (e.g. board of administration, ministerial education guidance and placement, study commission on doctrine, ministry centre staff, team and network mentors/leaders and regional coaches). The intent is to provide a solid knowledge base from which the bishop-elect can evaluate and implement changes following his/her consecration.

The outgoing bishop retains decision-making authority during this time, in consultation with the board of administration, national leadership team and personnel team, and is not authorized to make any major structural or personnel changes. The bishop-elect does not have authority to make changes until his/her consecration.

With consideration that the lead-up to general conference is a busy time, the outgoing bishop and the bishop-elect should plan for a few days of overlap in the office together in the month prior to the consecration. This gives the outgoing bishop a time to transfer confidential information, processes and any other multi-perspective information. The outgoing bishop is to understand that this is a transfer of information as opposed to transfer of management style.

The outgoing bishop should vacate his/her office prior to consecration of the bishop-elect.

Post-Consecration

At this point, the outgoing bishop's term has finished, and the new bishop assumes decision-making authority. If the pre-consecration time has been used wisely, the new bishop will be familiar with the ministry centre calendar, personnel, processes and committees; however, the new bishop must understand that the transition of authority can be stressful for staff. As such, the new bishop should incorporate the following into the early days of his/her term:

- A meeting with the outgoing bishop's Administrative Assistant
- Receiving the new employee orientation given to all new ministry centre employees
- An orientation meeting with the board of administration
- Recommending changes to and/or continuing with members of the personnel team
- Selecting and/or continuing with members of the national leadership team. The national leadership team members are required to be prepared to submit their letters of resignation upon request by the board of administration or the new bishop.
- Meeting each ministry centre staff member individually to hear about their role and how they fit into the organization
- Addressing ministry centre staff as a group
- Addressing team leaders, network mentors/leaders and regional coaches

Bishops shall be amenable to the conference for their character and for the discharge of the duties. They shall report at least annually to the board of administration on the state of the work.

When a bishop leaves the office in good standing after serving with honour, he or she may, at the discretion of the Board of Administration, be given the title of Bishop Emeritus/Emerita.

The salary of a bishop shall be raised in the CORE budget. The management committee (with input from the personnel team) has authority to establish the salary of the bishop. Upon retirement the bishop shall receive a pension in accordance with the Ministers Pension Plan of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

¶ 870 CHARTS, FORMS, RITUALS, DOCUMENTS
¶ 870A DISCERNING THE CALL OF GOD

MEGAP MINISTERIAL TRACKING PROCESS
The Free Methodist Church in Canada™

MEMBER OF LOCAL CHURCH

↓

LAY MINISTERS LICENSE

- ISSUED BY OFFICIAL BOARD
- RENEWED ANNUALLY

↓

MINISTERIAL CANDIDATE

- RECOMMENDED BY LOCAL CHURCH TO MEGaP*
- CANDIDATE SIGNED AFFIRMATION FORM (intention)
  - indicating preferred track (Par 871)
- DOCUMENTS RECEIVED
- COMPLETED REQUIRED COURSES (12 HRS.)
- INTERVIEWED BY MEGaP
  - recommended to and approved by Board of Administration

↙ ↘

ORDAINED MINISTER

- COMPLETED 4 YRS OF SUPERVISED SERV.
- COMPLETED REQ'D COURSES (45 HRS.)
- INTERVIEWED BY MEGaP
  - recommended to and approved by Board of Administration
- ORDAINED AT A LOCAL CHURCH OR GENERAL CONFERENCE
- MEMBERSHIP IN GENERAL CONFERENCE

COMMISSIONED MINISTER

- COMPLETED 3 YRS OF SUPERVISED SERVICE
- COMPLETED REQUIRED COURSES (18 HRS.)
- INTERVIEWED BY MEGaP
  - recommended to and approved by Board of Administration
- COMMISSIONED AT A LOCAL CHURCH
  - specified local church ministry
- HONORARY MEMBERSHIP IN GENERAL CONFERENCE

↓

COMMISSIONED MINISTER TO BECOME ORDAINED MINISTER

- COMPLETED ADDN'L REQ'D COURSES (27 HRS)
- COMPLETED 1 ADDN'L YR OF SUPERVISED SERV.
- SAME FURTHER REQUIREMENTS AS LISTED FOR ORDAINED MINISTER

***MEGaP**
Revised August 29, 2020

**MEGaP: Ministerial Education, Guidance and Placement Committee*

¶871 MINISTERIAL CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT OF AFFIRMATION

1. Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour and offer yourself in service to Him as a ministerial candidate in the Canadian General Conference of the Free Methodist Church?

2. a) Will you further equip yourself spiritually, morally, and intellectually for the Christian ministry?

   b) For what type of ministry are you preparing yourself? Please check one:
   _____ ordained
   _____ commissioned

   c) If commissioned ministry, what will your specialty be?

3. Having studied *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada* carefully, do you believe the Articles of Religion and accept the moral vision as articulated in Chapter 6, and do you embrace the purpose, vision, mission, and core values of The Free Methodist Church in Canada? Will you abide by the *Manual's* instructions?

4. Will you submit to the guidance of the conference through the MEGaP committee?

All these I affirm before God with a clear conscience.

Name: (please print) _____

Signed:_____ **Witness:_____**

Date: _____ **Date: _____**

¶872 MINISTER'S STATEMENT OF AFFIRMATION

1. Have you faith in Christ?

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

3. Do you experience purity of heart and life and empowerment for service, through the fullness of the Spirit, and will you through study, counsel, and prayer seek and maintain this experience and lead your people to experience the same?

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

5. Will you partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as often as you can?

6. Will you endeavour to communicate the Gospel effectively?

7. Will you see that the people of all ages under your care are properly instructed and cared for?

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

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

10. Having studied our *Manual* carefully, do you believe the Articles of Religion and accept the moral vision as articulated in Chapter 6, and do you embrace the purpose, vision, mission, and core values of The Free Methodist Church in Canada? Will you abide by the *Manual's* instructions?

11. Without being sectarian, will you promote the Free Methodist Church and its ministries in carrying out your work?

All these I affirm before God with a clear conscience.

Name: (please print) _____

Signed:_____ **Witness:_____**

Date: _____ **Date: _____**

¶873 SERVICE FOR THE COMMISSIONING OF MINISTERS

Presentation of Candidate

*[The Board Chair shall present to the National Leadership Team member or designate (hereafter "NLT"), those who are to be commissioned, saying: "(*name of NLT)_____, I present to you _____ (names of candidates) to be set apart as Commissioned Minister(s) in the Free Methodist Church." *Then the NLT shall say to the people:]*

Dear Friends in Christ:
In the Free Methodist Church in Canada, Commissioned Ministers are persons called by God to become specialized Associate Pastors under an Ordained Minister's leadership (in areas such as: Children and Family Pastor, Youth, Community Development Missionary, Social Media, etc.). They do not feel called to become Ordained Ministers and provide pastoral leadership to the entire church.

We intend, God willing, to set apart as Commissioned Ministers these who stand before you. We have examined them and we find them to be called by God to this ministry and suited for the same. If anyone knows any reason to the contrary, come forward now and make your objection known

The Collect

Almighty God, who appointed various orders of ministers in Your church, look with mercy upon these, Your servants, whom You have called. May they be replenished with your truth and adorned with holiness of life, so that both by word and good example, they may serve You faithfully. So may Your name be glorified and Your church built up, through the merits of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

The Old Testament - Jeremiah 1:4-10

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do no know how to speak for I am only a youth." But the Lord said to me,

"Do not say, 'I am only a youth';
for to all to whom I send you, you shall go,
and whatever I command you, you shall speak.
Be not afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord."

Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me,

"Behold, I put my words in your mouth.
See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms,
to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant."

The Epistle - I Peter 4:10-11

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

The Gospel - Luke 4:14-19

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and every one praised Him. He went to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue, as was His custom. And He stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. Unrolling it, He found the place where it is written:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me;
therefore He has anointed me to preach
good news to the poor.

He sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Questions for Commissioned Ministers

1. Do you believe you are inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit to be set apart as a commissioned minister in the church of Christ, to serve God, promoting His glory and edifying His people?

   Answer: I so believe.

2. Do you sincerely believe all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?

   Answer: I believe them all.

3. Will you diligently read, teach and expound the same, as opportunity is given?

   Answer: I will.

4. It belongs to the office of a commissioned minister to serve the people of God in a specialized ministry under the leadership of an ordained minister. Will you do this gladly and willingly?

   Answer: I will do so by the help of God.

5. Will you diligently regulate and pattern your life (and that of your family) according to the model and teaching of Christ and make (both) yourself (and them), as far as you are able, (a) wholesome example(s) to the flock of Christ?

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

6. Will you respectfully obey those who are called to serve as leaders and overseers, following with glad mind and will their godly admonitions?

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

[The candidates shall kneel, and the NLT, praying over them, shall say:]

Send Your Holy Spirit upon Your servant (name) for the office and work of a commissioned minister in Your church.

[The NLT shall deliver the Bible to each of the newly Commissioned Ministers in turn, saying:]

Let the Scriptures guide the authority given you this day to set forth God's Word to His people and to serve them in His name.

[Then the following collects shall be prayed:]

Almighty God, giver of all good things, who by Your divine providence has guided these, Your servants, to be set apart to serve Your church; make them, we pray, modest, humble, and constant in their serving and grant to them a ready will to observe all spiritual discipline; that they may always have the testimony of a good conscience and may continue ever stable and strong in Your Son, Christ Jesus. Grant them wisdom for work, patience in ministry and fill them with the holy joy that will give them strength. These petitions we offer in the name of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and honour, now and ever. Amen.

Assist us, O Lord, in all that we do with Your most gracious favour and continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in You, we may glorify Your holy name and finally, by Your mercy obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[They shall stand and face congregation, as it stands]

[The NLT shall say:]
Let the Church, represented by all those present here, support you as you participate in the opportunities it provides for you to continue to grow and develop as a minister of the gospel.

[Presentation of credentials and congratulations.]

Benediction

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

¶874 SERVICE FOR THE ORDINATION OF MINISTERS

[The secretary shall present the candidates to the bishop, saying: "Bishop _____, I present to you _____ (reading their names aloud) to be ordained as ministers in the Free Methodist Church." Then the bishop shall say to the people:]

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

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

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

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

The leadership of ordained ministers focuses on developing healthy, biblical communities of holy people. These communities multiply disciples, mentor leaders, create new groups and plant new churches. Such Spirit-filled leadership requires vision and courage to move people to obey the Word of God, to walk in step with the Spirit of God and, with joy, to see His church increase.

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

The Collect

Almighty God, the giver of all good gifts, who by Your divine providence appointed various orders in Your church: Give Your grace, we humbly pray, to these who come now to their ordination. Replenish them with the truth of your doctrine and endue them with holiness of life as they keep watch over themselves and all the flock that they oversee.* Help them to faithfully serve before You to the glory of Your great name and to the benefit of Your holy church, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and ever. Amen.
**Acts 20:28*

The Old Testament - Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim; each had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of His glory."

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me. For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven." And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."

The Epistle – I Timothy 4:11-16

Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you …, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

The Gospel –John 15:5, 8-17

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing ... This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.
My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.

Dear Friends in Christ, *[Here the candidates may be called by name. And the bishop shall say to them as follows:]*

Each of you has heard in the lessons taken from the Scriptures what dignity and importance belong to this office to which you are called. We have confidence that you have **considered** these things long before this time and that you have clearly determined, by God's grace, to give yourself completely to the fulfilment of your call. It is our hope that with all your strength you will apply yourself wholly to this one thing and direct all your concerns and studies in this direction. May you continually pray to God the Father, by the mediation of our only Saviour, Jesus Christ, for the aid of the Holy Spirit, that by daily reading and weighing of the Scriptures, you may grow stronger and more mature in your ministry. May you endeavour through the sanctifying power of Christ to be a wholesome and godly example for others to follow.

in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture,

And now, so that this assembled congregation of Christ may also understand your mind and will in these things, and that your promise may move you all the more to fulfil your calling, answer plainly these questions, which we ask in the Name of God and His Church.

Questions for Ordained Ministers

1. Do you believe in the Triune God, and confess Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?

   Answer: I do so believe and confess.

2. Do you wholeheartedly love the Lord your God and your neighbour as yourself ?

   Answer: I do

3. Will you be careful to nourish your soul through the disciplined use of the means of grace and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, continually rekindle the gift of God that is in you?

   Answer: I will

4. Do you confidently believe that the Lord has called you to serve His church as an ordained minister?

   Answer: I so believe

5. Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain all doctrine necessary for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and are the unique and authoritative standard for the church's faith and life?

   Answer: I am.

6. Will you then, as you exercise your ministry of Word and sacrament and leadership, faithfully study, teach and apply the truth of these Scriptures publicly and privately? Will you teach nothing as necessary to salvation except what can be proved by the Scriptures and, when necessary, graciously correct error?

   Answer: I will do so by the help of the Lord.

7. Will you commit to living a holy life according to the teachings and behaviour of Christ so as to be a wholesome example of godliness? (And will you do your best to influence your husband/wife/ family to join you in this commitment?)

   Answer: I will do so by the help of the Lord.

8. Will you, in the exercise of your ministry, lead people to faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and as Lord, and disciple them to grow in grace as you lead them to participate together in God's mission to bring wholeness to the church, neighbourhood, community and world?

   Answer: I will do so by the help of the Lord.

9. Will you be loyal to the Free Methodist Church, committing yourself, along with those serving with you, to be accountable to the authority of the Holy Scriptures, to *The Manual of the Free Methodist Church in Canada* and to those appointed to oversee your ministry?

   Answer: I will

[The candidates shall kneel, the ordained ministers shall be called forward for the laying on of hands, and the bishop shall say:]

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, of Your infinite love and goodness You have given us Your only and dearly beloved son, Jesus Christ, our redeemer and the author of everlasting life. To You we offer our heartfelt thanks. We praise and worship You, and we humbly pray that we may continue always to be thankful for these and all other blessings that come from You. May we mature daily and go forward in the knowledge and faith of Him who died for us, who rose from death and even now lives to make intercession for us. May Your holy name be forever glorified and Your blessed kingdom enlarged, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

[The bishop and the ordained ministers present shall lay their hands upon the head of each of them, and the bishop, addressing each by name shall say:]

The Lord pour upon you the Holy Spirit for the office and work of an ordained minister in the Free Methodist Church now committed unto you by the laying on of our hands. Amen.

[They shall continue to kneel, and the bishop shall deliver the Bible to each one of them in succession and shall say:]

By the power of the Holy Spirit, take authority to serve as an ordained minister in Christ's church. Faithfully proclaim His Word, declare His forgiveness, celebrate the sacraments**,** care for and lead God's people**.**

Prayer of Blessing

Most merciful Father, we ask You to send Your heavenly blessings upon these Your servants, that they may be clothed with righteousness and that Your Word spoken by their mouths may have success. Grant us also that we may have grace to hear and receive what they shall deliver out of Your most Holy Word, or shall speak in agreement with the same, as the means of our salvation. May we, in all our words and deeds, seek Your glory and the increase of Your kingdom through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assist us, O Lord, in all that we do with Your most gracious favour and further us with Your continued help, that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in You, we may glorify Your name and finally, by Your mercy, obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[They shall stand and face congregation, as it stands]

[The bishop shall say:]

Let the Church, represented by those present here as ordained ministers and the congregation, support you as you participate in the opportunities it provides for you to continue to grow and develop as a minister of the gospel.

[Presentation of credentials and congratulations]

Benediction

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessings of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. Amen.

¶875 POLICIES FOR PASTORAL TRANSITIONS AND APPOINTMENTS IN THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN CANADA

The Free Methodist Church in Canada, through the ministerial education, guidance and placement committee, appoints pastors to local churches. While the appointment of pastors by the conference is a historical distinctive of Methodism, the process of making appointments has been modified from time to time to meet the changing needs and expectations of pastors and local churches throughout the history of the denomination.

In keeping with the expressed core values of The Free Methodist Church in Canada and the commitment to empower the local church, the process of appointment has been further modified to involve the local church in a greater and more responsible manner.

1. The director of leadership development and church health declares a pastoral transition through a letter sent to the church and pastor when:

    a. The director of leadership development and church health agrees in writing to a pastor's signed request to be released from the present appointment. The director of leadership development and church health will advise the bishop and the church. The church is to receive at least sixty days notice unless modified by an agreement signed by the director of leadership development and church health, the pastor and the delegate(s).

    b. The director of leadership development and church health agrees in writing to a signed letter of request from the chair of the official board and delegate indicating that a strong majority (75%) of the official board has expressed in a recorded vote that they have lost confidence in the pastor's capacity to lead the congregation

    c. If a performance appraisal of the pastoral leader (see ¶335**)**, based on the current official board approved job description (built locally and reflecting the current vision and stated mission) results in an overall average score below 5.5, the results will be referred to the director of leadership development and church health and the ministerial education, guidance and placement committee (MEGaP) who may declare that the church is in transition. The pastor is to receive at least sixty days' notice unless modified by a salary continuance agreement as outlined in ¶880.

    d. Disciplinary action of the bishop and MEGaP committee necessitates a transition in leadership.

    e. After an appraisal, it is the opinion of the conference, through the MEGaP committee, that a transition is necessary for the health of the church, the pastor or both.

    f. At the discretion of the MEGaP committee, the conference appoints a pastor to another charge. The vacancy created by such action places a church in transition.

2. Once a church has been declared in transition:

    a. The local board will be instructed by the director of leadership development and church health to establish a pastoral leadership task force (PLTF) of at least four persons who:
    - are members and/or preparing for membership, who have had significant involvement in the local church for more than a year.
    - fairly represent the makeup of the congregation
    - are committed to involvement that may last several months.
    - are willing to work in co-operation with the director of leadership development and church health and the MEGaP committee.

- are not local church employees, ministerial candidates or lay ministers who are tracking for ministry within the FMCIC, members of conference or located ministers.
- The delegate(s) shall be a member of the pastoral leadership task force.

3. The director of leadership development and church health or a designee will be assigned to guide the pastoral leadership task force.

4. The first task of the pastoral leadership task force (PLTF) is to develop a church profile to be given to prospective candidates which should include:

   a. A clear job description based on the current vision and stated mission approved by the official board. The Job Description Performance Appraisal System (JDPAS), a resource available from the conference at the expense of the local church, is recommended for use in evaluating the present condition of the church's ministry and for communicating the role of the pastor to the MEGaP Committee for presentation to prospective pastors.

   b. If the JDPAS process is not used, the profile must include the church's present vision, mission, core values and pastoral job description. The pastoral job description should be built on biblical, community and congregational research**.**

   c. A profile of the local church will also include:
   - local church description (i.e., building, pastoral history, finances, staff)
   - community information describing the positive life of the village, town or city
   - the preparation of other proposals for pastoral leadership with supporting rationale (For example, a church may need to face the reality that they can only recommend a bi-vocational pastor to give leadership at this time.)

5. The director of leadership development and church health and/or MEGaP committee, in consultation with the PLTF, and using the summary of the profile, will develop a short list of MEGaP approved potential candidates. When a transition pastor has been appointed, he/she should not assume that he/she will be recommended as the new lead pastor. He/she may, however, be considered for short lists. The short list will contain no more than three names. Short-listed pastors will be informed by the PLTF that they are on a short list.

6. The PLTF will limit its consideration of candidates to the short list. The PLTF will develop an appropriate interview process in consultation with the director of leadership development and church health. (See the "Transitions Handbook" available from the director of leadership development and church health's office.) All candidates on the short list will have a first interview by telephone or in person, depending on travel distance. Further interviews, after the initial interview, may be limited to only one candidate, and not necessarily extended to all short-listed candidates. An invitation to participate in a worship service at the local church may be offered to only the final candidate.

7. During this process the chairperson of the PLTF needs to maintain clear and current communication with the candidates and the director of leadership development and church health or designate.

8. The PLTF process will eventually result in the preparation of a recommendation to the director of leadership development and church health for action by the MEGaP committee. A Letter of Understanding (¶879) will have been drafted and signed by the candidate prior to the recommendation being sent to the director of leadership development and church health. The PLTF will notify unsuccessful candidates in writing.

9. The recommendation should use the following wording: *The Pastor and Board of Name Free Methodist Church, City , Province recommends to the Ministerial Education Guidance and Placement Committee that Candidate's Name be appointed to Church name as Title of Position effective date that the appointment should start.*

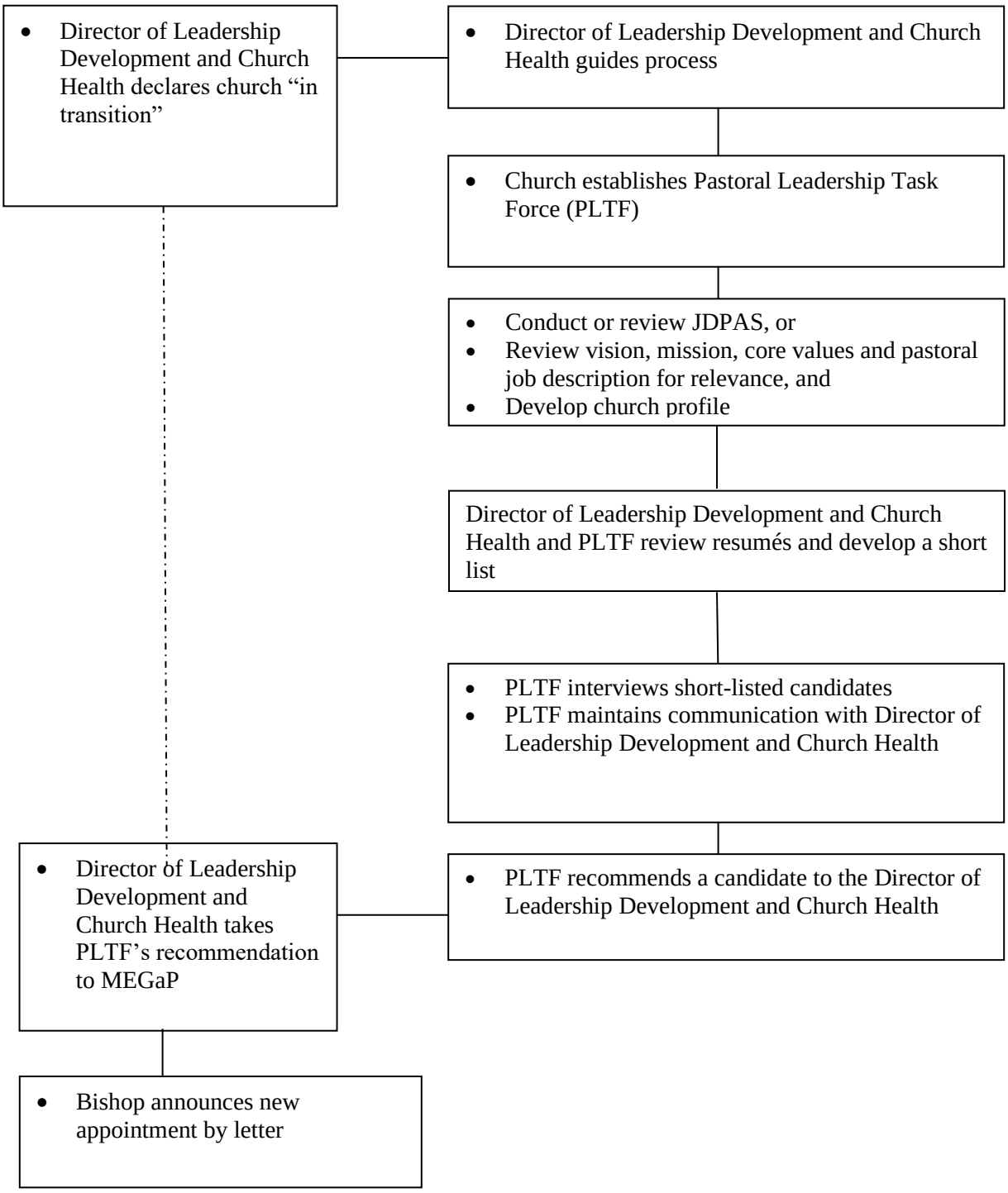
   Note: The assigning of a pastor's title is the responsibility of the local church. (See Par. 374.4.) If, in the future, an appointed pastor's title is changed because of a job description change, the local church will inform the credentialing coordinator of the FMCiC of the new title. The only exception to this is in the case of a staff pastor becoming a lead pastor (including assuming a transition lead pastor role). In this case, an appointment recommendation needs to be made to MEGaP.

10. When the MEGaP committee approves the recommendation from the PLTF, the bishop will announce the new appointment, thus completing the process. The PLTF will disband.

11. The receiving church will be responsible for the expenses incurred in the recruitment and moving of a new pastor.

***Note*:** These are the first pages of a document that is used to coach local churches when they go into transition. These pages summarize the policies and process of pastoral transitions as practised in The Free Methodist Church in Canada. The complete *Transitions Handbook* is available from the FMCIC website or the director of leadership development and church health's office. The chart on the following page summarizes the whole process.

Church in transition



¶877 A SERVICE OF INDUCTION

THE EXCHANGE OF COMMITMENTS

Bishop (or designee):

Christian friends, we have come at the invitation of this church for the induction of (the Reverend) _____ as pastor of this congregation. Inasmuch as this solemn act involves mutual obligations, I call upon all of you to unite in a covenant of dedication. *(The pastor will stand.)*

My colleague in Christ, by the will of God and the appointment of The Free Methodist Church in Canada, you have been appointed as _____ pastor of this church. In order to fulfil this calling, do you now promise to seek the help of Almighty God and submit yourself unto Him who is the Head of the Church, even Jesus Christ our Lord? Do you promise to labour faithfully and diligently in proclaiming the Gospel, both in word and deed?

Answer: I do so promise, the Lord being my helper. Willingly and gladly, I do this day affirm my (ordination vows/call to Christian ministry), believing with all my heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and accepting the Holy Scriptures as inspired of God through the Holy Spirit. It is my sincere desire to devote my life to the ministry of the Word of God, so as to bring credit and not dishonour to the Gospel which I preach, and to fulfill to my utmost ability the office of a good minister of Jesus Christ.

I believe that you, the congregation of _____ Free Methodist Church, are the people among whom I am primarily intended by God to live, to serve as _____ pastor and to lead in ministry. It is in this belief that I now affirm my acceptance of the Conference's appointment.

Bishop (or designee):

Dear Friends, are you persuaded that _____ is the person whom God has brought into this time and place to be the _____ pastor among you and the leader for your ministry? Will you please indicate your positive reply by standing?

Chair of the Official Board:

Members and worshippers, let us affirm our commitment to our new _____ pastor.

The Congregation:

We affirm our membership in the Church of Jesus Christ, renewing this day our vow of faithfulness to our Lord Jesus Christ and to His Church in our city and throughout the world. We believe that you are the person(s) intended by God to be our pastor, and the leader of our ministry. In this belief, we now affirm your appointment as our pastor.

We solemnly covenant to share Christ's ministry with you. We shall endeavour to be sensitive to you and your needs as our co-labourer in the work of Christ's Church. We want to assure you of our confidence, our encouragement, our patience, and our prayers. We promise our strong support to both you (and your family).

Pastor:

I promise to give myself, by the strength and grace of Jesus Christ our Lord, to be sensitive to your needs, singly, in families, or as a congregation. I shall endeavour to help you to grow toward Christian maturity, to stimulate you to love one another and serve one another, to share the fellowship and ministry of the wider Church of Christ in our city and throughout the world. I accept you, the people of this church, as my people.

The Congregation:

We accept you, Pastor _____, as our pastor and the leader of our ministry.

Bishop (or designee):

We who are here as fellow Christians and friends bear testimony that we have witnessed your responses and commitments to each other as pastor and congregation. As an expression of testimony, and to declare our joy and confidence in your coming together for the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to commit ourselves to supporting you in the mission we share, we stand with you.

(All others now stand for the Act of Induction)

Bishop (or designee):

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, on behalf of The Free Methodist Church in Canada, I declare you

(name of pastor)

duly inducted and appointed as _____ pastor of this church and congregation. May the blessing of Almighty God be upon you!

(All remain standing for the Induction Prayer. Pastor _____ will kneel. Members of the church board will stand behind Pastor _____.)

THE INDUCTION PRAYER *Name of person praying*

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW PASTOR
Name of person presenting

A Service of Induction

Sunday, _____ (date/year)

_____ pm

At

_____
Free Methodist Church
_____(city)

¶878 MINISTERS' AND EMPLOYEES COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS GUIDELINES
The Free Methodist Church in Canada

This booklet provides guidelines relating to salaries and benefits for ministers and employees of Free Methodist churches in Canada. They are reviewed by the FMCIC Board of Administration on an on-going basis and this booklet is updated periodically.

The guidelines are for use by churches, ministers, and other appointed staff, to encourage equitable, consistent remuneration practices and personnel policies. Following these guidelines will create an environment conducive to strong ministerial leadership.

The guidelines in this booklet apply to full-time appointed ministers and associates/assistants. Other employees, employed at least 20 hours per week, may participate in the LTD insurance, health care insurance and group life insurance package.

This booklet is a description only of the main features of various Plans. It does not create or confirm any contractual rights. It should be understood that all rights and interpretations will be governed by the various Plans referred to in the booklet, "Government legislation, Church Policy and Administrative procedures."

MINISTERS' AND EMPLOYEES COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS GUIDELINES

1. EMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION
- 1.1 Employment Compensation - Ministers
- 1.2 Multiple-Ministerial Staffing
- 1.3 Housing Allowance

2. RETIREMENT INCOME PROGRAM
- 2.1 FMCIC Pension Plan
- 2.2 Canada Pension Plan
- 2.3 Old Age Security
- 2.4 Retirement

3. INCOME PROTECTION PROGRAM
- 3.1 Short Term Disability/Sick Leave
- 3.2 Long Term Disability (LTD) Insurance
- 3.3 Employment Insurance (EI)

4. HEALTH CARE PROGRAM
- 4.1 Dental Insurance
- 4.2 Major Medical Insurance
- 4.3 Vision Care

5. SURVIVOR PROTECTION PROGRAM
- 5.1 Life Insurance
- 5.2 Optional Life Insurance

6. OTHER BENEFITS
- 6.1 Vacation - Ministers
- 6.2 Statutory Holidays
- 6.3 Special Leaves
  - Compassionate Leave
  - Maternity/Parental/Compassionate Family Care Leave
  - Special Ministries Leave
  - Continuing Education Leave
  - Leave of Absence
  - Sabbatical Guidelines
- 6.4 Pastoral Care

7. OTHER POLICIES AND GUIDELINES
- 7.1 Travel Expense
- 7.2 Transition/Transfer/Retirement
- 7.3 Ministerial Moves
- 7.4 Centralized Payroll Plan
- 7.5 Malpractice Insurance

1. EMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Ministers have responsibility to provide for themselves and their families, and are expected to maintain a lifestyle similar to that of the congregation. However, they may be hesitant to bargain for financial compensation, as this may appear materialistic.

To determine compensation for your minister, investigate what salaries are provided by congregations of similar size, particularly in your area. It may also be helpful to investigate salaries for teachers and principals in your community. Another useful comparison is the average salary of the group your church is targeted to reach. For each comparison, it is important to note any special income tax provisions available to ministers. For most Free Methodist churches, the above information will assist in establishing fair ministerial compensation.

1.1 EMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION - MINISTERS

Total payments fall into a number of categories that recognize the professional necessities of the work. These might include:

- --- basic salary
- --- housing (supplied housing or a "Housing Allowance")
- --- benefits (Employee and Employer shares)
- --- travel expenses, including entertainment
- --- books and professional supplies
- --- other benefits and allowances.

A finance committee, looking at the list, may think "These are all costs to have a minister on site." A minister may think, "The first two or three items are part of my salary; the others are expenses connected with my work, and not part of salary."

To bring consistency to Free Methodist churches in Canada and to ensure conformance to tax laws, the following guidelines should be used:

Ministerial compensation includes only basic salary and housing (or housing allowance).

Travel and entertainment expenses, the employer's share of benefits, books and supplies, and other allowances are part of the church's expenses and, although they may be treated in the society's annual budget as part of the overall cost for having a minister, they are **not** considered as **ministerial compensation** for purposes of this booklet.

1.2 MULTIPLE-MINISTERIAL STAFFING

Multiple staff appointments are detailed in Paragraph 851 of *The Manual*.

1.3 HOUSING ALLOWANCE

The Income Tax Act stipulates that the annual rental value of housing provided by an employer without cost must be included in the employee's income for tax purposes. Eligible individuals may claim a "clergy" housing allowance deduction on their personal tax returns. To support such a deduction, the employee must obtain a signed certificate from his/her employer confirming eligibility provisions were met in the year. The certificate forms part of the tax return.

To qualify for the clergy housing deduction, a person must satisfy both a status test and a function test. In The Free Methodist Church in Canada, a person must have been granted a Lay Minister's License by the local church policy/official board and must have signed a Ministerial Candidate's Statement of Affirmation (¶871) to satisfy the status test. To meet the function test, an individual must be in charge of or be ministering to a congregation or be engaged in full-time administrative service by appointment of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

Persons who qualify and do not live in a Manse are entitled to claim the lesser of:

a. The greater of $1000/month times the number of months the person qualifies for the housing allowance (maximum allowance $10,000) or one third of gross remuneration for the year
   OR
b. the fair rental value of the residence plus the cost of utilities. Utilities do not include property taxes.

Persons who live in a Manse are asked to contact The Free Methodist Church in Canada for more specific assistance in regards to the housing allowance.

BENEFITS PROGRAM

The FMCiC Benefits Program is an important part of the total compensation employees receive. Together with various government plans these benefits help protect them and their eligible dependents against loss of income and unexpected financial burdens resulting from illness, disability or death, as well as providing a continuing income after retirement.

The benefits program is available to both ministers and church employees provided paid employment is a minimum of twenty hours per week.

A Word about Costs

The cost of the benefit program is shared by the employer and the employee. Long-term disability (LTD) premiums are paid fully by employees so that disability income will be tax-exempt.

2. RETIREMENT INCOME PROGRAM

The FMCIC Pension Plan is designed to integrate with benefits payable under the Canada/Quebec Pension Plan to provide employees with continuing monthly income in their retirement years. The four plans from which employees may receive regular income when they retire are:

- FMCIC Pension Plan
- Canada/Quebec Pension Plan
- Old Age Security
- Registered Retirement Savings Plan

2.1 FMCIC PENSION PLAN

Participation in the FMCIC Pension Plan is mandatory upon employment as an appointed minister.

Until March 31, 2009 two defined benefit options were available: **Plan A**, where the employee contributed 5.0% of basic salary, housing allowance, utilities. The employer (local church) paid 5.3% of the same total. **Plan B**, where the employee did not contribute anything and the employer paid 5.2% of basic salary, housing allowance and utilities.

The plan is registered with Canada Revenue Agency (037083). Annual information statements are sent to participants.

On April 1, 2009, Plans A and B were frozen and a defined contribution (DC) component was introduced to the Plan. Key highlights of this defined contribution component are:

a) Members previously participating in Plan A or B of the defined benefit components will automatically participate in the defined contribution (DC) component.
b) All Members will be required to contribute a minimum of 3% of earnings (and be allowed to contribute up to a maximum of 12% of earnings).
c) Each employer will be required to match the Member contributions dollar for dollar on the first 6% of Member contributions as outlined in the table below.
d) Retirement income will be based on employee and employer contributions plus investment returns.

Member Contribution	Employer Contribution
3%	3%
4%	4%
5%	5%
6%	6%
7%	6%
8%	6%
9%	6%
10%	6%
11%	6%
12%	6%

Details of the FMCIC pension plan, and benefits paid to participants, are contained in a booklet entitled "The Ministers' Pension Plan of the Free Methodist Church in Canada" which is available from the Ministry Centre or may be downloaded from the FMCIC website at http://www.fmcic.ca/en/admin-index/ministers-pension.

2.2 CANADA PENSION PLAN

The federal government administers this mandatory plan. The employee and the employer (local church) make matching contributions. These are payroll deductions at source and the funds are sent to Canada Revenue Agency. The deduction is based on basic salary, utilities, RRSP and the taxable portion of Group Life Insurance premiums. Housing allowance is excluded from this calculation. Information about the Canada Pension Plan maximum monthly benefit is available at www.sdc.gc.ca.

Employee contributions are exempt from income tax.

2.3 OLD AGE SECURITY

The Old Age Security is payable in addition to the Canada/Quebec Pension Plan benefit. It is paid at age 65 assuming that residence requirements are met. Information about the Old Age Security maximum monthly benefit is available from the Financial Benefits section of the Department of Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) website. Call 1-800-277-9914 or 1-800-255-4786 and request an application kit. The relevant information may also be downloaded from their website at www.hrsdc.gc.ca.

2.4 RETIREMENT

Retirement will normally occur during the calendar year in which the minister attains age 65. Contact should be made with the Ministry Centre to arrange for proper forms to be completed for the Minister's Pension Plan.

Employees planning retirement should also contact the local office of Health and Welfare Canada at least 6 months prior to age 65 to complete forms for Old Age Security, Canada Pension, Seniors Drug Card, Employee Health Tax, Medical Card, and Employment Insurance.

3. INCOME PROTECTION PROGRAMS

The Income Protection Programs provides employees with a regular income while they are off work because of sickness or disability. In addition the Government of Canada administers an Employment Insurance program which may provide benefits for any periods of unemployment.

3.1 SHORT TERM DISABILITY/SICK LEAVE

Ministers are normally permitted paid sick leave of 1-1/2 days per month of continuous service in the Canadian Conference, to a maximum of 18 days per calendar year. This is not cumulative and, if not needed, is not carried forward to any succeeding year. If more than 18 days is needed in a year, a local church official board may act to extend the short term paid sick leave.

3.2 LONG-TERM DISABILITY (LTD) INSURANCE*

LTD insurance is to provide on-going income to employees who are unable to fulfill their responsibilities due to illness or injury. The LTD plan is administered by The Free Methodist Church in Canada. LTD benefits apply only after a waiting period of 119 days. Full details are available from the Ministry Centre or may be downloaded from the FMCIC website: http://www.fmcic.ca/images/stories/administration/Accounting%20Forms/groupbenefits/SLFBookletCanadaEast.pdf Benefits are calculated on basic monthly salary, housing allowance, utilities (if paid by the local church). The benefit is calculated as follows:

	Gross Monthly Earnings	Coverage
66.7% of the first	$2250	$1500
50% of the next	$3500	$1750
44% of the balance	$1703	$ 750
Maximum	$7453	$4000

Monthly premiums are paid in total by employees by payroll deduction. The plan is reviewed annually and information is provided when premium changes are made.

Under certain circumstances, there may also be eligibility to receive disability income payments from the Canada/Quebec Pension Plan.

3.3 EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (EI)

Employment Insurance premiums are deducted by payroll deduction and remitted to Canada Revenue Agency. EI premiums are calculated on salary and housing allowance or, where housing is provided, the "fair rental value" of the supplied housing. The employer (local church) pays 1.4 times the amount contributed by the employee.

If information to apply for Employment Insurance is needed, go to the website:
www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/ei/application/employmentinsurance.shtml
or call 1-800-206-7218.

4. HEALTH CARE PROGRAM

Health Care Insurance Benefits are provided to employees on a cost-shared basis.

4.1 DENTAL INSURANCE*

Employees and their families are covered by a Dental Benefits Plan administered by The Free Methodist Church in Canada through its insurance carrier, Sun Life Financial. Full details of the plan are outlined in the "Employee Group Benefits" booklet produced for The Free Methodist Church in Canada by Sun Life Financial.

Premiums are shared equally by the employee and the employer.

4.2 MAJOR MEDICAL INSURANCE*

Major Medical benefits provide supplementary health care benefits, which include semi-private/ward hospital accommodation, prescription drugs, and miscellaneous other health care benefits. Full details of the benefits are contained in a booklet produced by the company providing the coverage, Sunlife Financial.

The cost is shared equally by the employee and the employer.

4.3 VISION CARE*

A vision care benefit has been added to the current extended health care coverage. The coverage is for eyeglasses or contact lenses for every eligible person. The maximum benefit is $150.00 per eligible person in any period of 24 consecutive months.

The same deductibles and coinsurance apply to this benefit on a combined basis with the present extended health care.

5. SURVIVOR PROTECTION PROGRAM

5.1 LIFE INSURANCE*

Employees and their families are covered by a group life insurance policy arranged by The Free Methodist Church in Canada. Full details are contained in the "Group Benefits" booklet produced for the FMCIC by the benefit provider.

Premiums are shared equally by the employee and the employer.

Life Insurance Coverages

Employee Age	**Employee**	**Spouse**	**Child**
To Age 64	$75,000	10,000	5,000
Age 65 – 69	37,500	10,000	
Retiree *	20,000	5,000	

*for those retired prior to January 1, 2009 and are paying 100% of premiums

5.2 OPTIONAL LIFE INSURANCE

All active members and spouses, under age 65, are eligible to apply for Optional Life Insurance Coverage.

The Optional Life Insurance is available in units of $10,000 up to a maximum benefit of $250,000. Applications are available ~~at~~ from the Ministry Centre and completed applications are to be mailed to the Ministry Centre. The group policyholder's name is "The Free Methodist Church in Canada."

**The LTD Insurance, the Health Care Insurance and the Group Life Insurance are offered as a total package.*

6. OTHER BENEFITS

Recognizing the need for refreshment and renewal, each church should have a written policy regarding vacation and days off for all employees. This should be in harmony with the labour laws of the province in which the church is located.

6.1 VACATION - MINISTERS

The following principles are given to local churches as guidance for setting up minimum paid vacation entitlements. An official board is, of course, free to grant more vacation time than is suggested below.

Vacation entitlement is based on the principle of years of conference service under appointment (including time as a supply pastor), not service at a particular church. For example, a minister with 10 years of service in the Canadian Conference is entitled to paid vacation minimums based on that service, even in the first year of appointment to a local church.

Length of service (by Dec. 31 of current year)	**Vacation Entitlement**
Less than one year	Pro-rata share of 3 weeks (based on completed months of service)
One year but less than ten	Three weeks
Ten years but less than fifteen	Four weeks
Fifteen years or over	Five weeks

A vacation week consists of seven consecutive days including one Sunday.

Vacation entitlement cannot be accumulated. It is to be taken in the calendar year except for special circumstances mutually agreeable to a minister and local church.

Attendance at general conference, family camp, and similar conference functions is part of the minister's job-related responsibility and not part of vacation time.

All vacation should be scheduled in consultation with the pastor's cabinet and official board. Vacation days taken must be recorded in suitable records.

Vacations (or the pro-rata share thereof) in a current year should be taken before transition to a new appointment.

6.2 STATUTORY HOLIDAYS

Statutory holidays are in addition to vacation time. Employees are entitled to-statutory/provincial holidays annually as follows: The chart below, provided by the government of Canada, displays a list of national and provincial statutory (**S**) holidays observed in Canada. Holidays exist on the federal level and there are additional holidays for each province and territory. Each province has their own set of stat holidays which are paid days off.

Holiday	**Day Observed**	**BC**	**AB**	**SK**	**MB**	**ON**	**QC**	**NB**	**NS**	**PE**	**NL**	**YT**	**NT**	**NU**
New Year's Day	January 1	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Family Day	Third Monday in February		S	S		S								
Louis Riel Day	Third Monday in February				S									
St. Patrick's Day	March 17													
Good Friday	Friday before Easter Sunday	S	S	S	S	S		S	S	S	S	S	S	S

Holiday	Day Observed	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PE	NL	YT	NT	NU
Easter Monday	Monday						S							
St. George's Day	April 23													
Victoria Day	Monday preceding May 25th	S	S	S	S	S	S			S		S	S	S
National Aboriginal Day	June 21												S	
Féte Nationale	June 24													
Discovery Day	June 24													
Canada Day	July 1	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Nunavut Day	July 9													S
Civic Holiday	First Monday in August	S			S			S						S
Discovery Day	Third Monday in August											S		
Labour Day	First Monday of September	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Thanksgiving	Second Monday in October	S	S	S	S	S	S					S	S	S
Remembrance Day	November 11	S	S	S				S		S	S	S	S	S
Christmas Day	December 25	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Boxing Day	December 26					S								

In cases where the above day(s) fall on Sunday, an alternative day may be taken.

Statutory holidays are non-cumulative.

Where provincial labour legislation permits additional statutory holidays not scheduled above, that legislation will apply.

6.3 SPECIAL LEAVES

Compassionate Leave

Employees may be granted leave of absence of up to three calendar days, with pay, in the case of bereavement of spouse, parents, brother, sister, children, grandparents, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law, or brother-in-law. Further compassionate leave may be granted by the official board due to unusual circumstances (e.g. related special travel needs.)

Maternity, Parental, and Compassionate Family Care Leave

Maternity Leave, Parental Leave, and Compassionate Family Care Leave are granted according to labour law standards.

Special Ministries Leave

Ministers may be granted “special ministries” leave of absence for two weekends per year, exclusive of vacation, for special ministries as approved by the official board.

Continuing Education Leave

Continuing education for ministers is for the development, maintenance, updating, and upgrading of professional skills. These skills, developed in an individual involved in a continuing education program, will help bring the joy and satisfaction of a balanced and fulfilling ministry.

Continuing education refers to learning experiences chosen to enhance one’s ministry. These may be either for academic credit or non-credit. Ministers are required to develop a continuing education program in

consultation with the ministerial education guidance and placement committee. Where possible, spouses should be included in learning experiences.

Local churches are encouraged to provide financial assistance to ministers for continuing education.

Leave of Absence
Guidelines for a Leave of Absence administered by the local church can be found in *The Manual*, Chapter 3 Handbook, Par. 374.6.

Sabbatical Guidelines
Guidelines for the development of a local church sabbatical policy are available through the credentialing coordinator or on the FMCIC website.

6.4 PASTORAL CARE

The Free Methodist Church in Canada recognizes the need to make provision for a confidential clergy care referral system and for counseling resources. The Free Methodist Church in Canada, has some funds, confidentially administered by a member of the MEGaP committee in consultation with the credentialing coordinator, which are available to ministers and their families to assist with counselling costs. Additionally, Focus on the Family maintains a confidential Clergy Care Hotline service intended to help ministers, their spouses, and their families. It is available free of charge to any minister. The hotline telephone number is 1-888-5CLERGY (1-888-525-3749).

7. OTHER POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

The following list describes a number of matters relating to employment practices that are best understood through clearly-stated guidelines. Some are concerned with a minister's relationship to the local church; others to his/her relationship to the conference.

7.1 TRAVEL EXPENSE

Reasonable reimbursement should be made to an employee for use of a personal vehicle for church-related business. This is unrelated to employment compensation.

To be reimbursed, the employee must submit an account (or log of travel) to the local treasurer. Dates of travel, number of kilometres travelled, and the purpose of the trips should be shown. Trips from home-to-office or any travel of a purely personal nature may not be claimed.

Guidance on current Canada Revenue Agency per kilometre rates are available from the Administrative Services Department at the Ministry Centre.

7.2 TRANSITION/TRANSFER/RETIREMENT

It is expected when a minister makes contact with another conference or outside agency regarding a job situation or placement, the director of leadership development and church health will be notified. It is also expected that a minister will give 60 days notice if transition is the intent.

7.3 MINISTERIAL MOVES

The costs of moving the pastor's personal property shall be the responsibility of the receiving local church or new ministry/employer (if not the FMCIC). Where a minister living in a parsonage is leaving active ministry, (i.e. retirement or long term disability) and is not entering into another ministry or employment opportunity, and is in good standing, the conference will assist with moving expenses incurred up to a maximum of $1000. This policy also applies to the moving costs of a surviving spouse living in a parsonage should a minister die while under normal appointment.

All part-time ministers and part-time assistant ministers are responsible for their own moving expenses subject to any provision made with their receiving church.

Ministers moving to another conference, denomination, or other employment must make their own arrangement with regard to moving expenses.

7.4 CENTRALIZED PAYROLL PLAN

Participation in the Ministry Centre's payroll service is mandatory for all local churches. It consists of automatic electronic funds transfers to employees' personal bank accounts on a semi-monthly basis, corresponding withdrawals from the local church's operating funds account, and includes preparation on behalf of the church of all payroll information slips and all Canada Revenue Agency forms required under Income Tax legislation. Details of the plan, and application forms are available from the Ministry Centre or may be downloaded from the FMCIC website.

7.5 MALPRACTICE INSURANCE

Each church should carry malpractice insurance on its paid and volunteer staff.

¶879 LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING TEMPLATE

A Letter of Understanding Template is available on the FMCiC website at:
https://fmcic.ca/wp-content/uploads/879-LETTER-OF-UNDERSTANDING-TEMPLATE.pdf

¶880 TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT

A Termination of Employment Template is available on the FMCiC website at: http://fmcic.ca/chapter-8-forms/

¶881 THE NETWORK SYSTEM OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN CANADA

The Vision of a Network: Discipleship is a key component of the FMCiC, as it is Jesus' method of "building" His church. Furthermore discipleship was how John Wesley grew the Methodist movement. Since discipleship is key to the health and vitality of the FMCiC, it is clear that our leaders and pastors need to be full participants in discipleship. Networks are therefore to be "discipleship communities". Pastors and leaders will enter a covenant relationship which includes creating a mutual discipling experience for each member of the network. Networks will therefore necessarily be a safe "place" for pastors, chaplains and other ordained leaders to be supported and grow in their personal and ministry lives.

The FMCiC defines "discipleship" as an intentional, organic and transformative relationship that Jesus modeled for each of us. Discipleship involves two or more people meeting regularly, where at least one (the leader, discipler, mentor, coach) is already a follower of Christ. The purposes of discipleship include: i) nurturing church family; ii) learning God's Word; iii) prayer-worshipping; iv) participating in God's mission in the world; and v) healing, deliverance, freedom in Christ.

The bishop, the national leadership team, the network mentor team and the network leaders work together to cultivate an environment to see the FMCiC's common vision fulfilled.

NETWORK MENTOR TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

1. **The Role of the Network Mentor:** The Network Mentor is responsible to help Network Leaders to create a discipleship experience (as defined above).

Responsibilities: Network Mentor (hereafter "NM") will:

A. Work together with the Bishop and the Network Mentor Team for the selection and placement of new Network Leaders;
B. Meet regularly by phone or Zoom with each Network Leader for coaching and/or discipling. These meetings will include coaching / mentoring in the use of the discipleship materials. The hope is that the Mentor will become [another] spiritual mentor in the life of the NL;
C. NM will work closely with the Bishop to find resources for networks, strategize and pray. Presently, "Radical Mentoring" and "Bearing Faithful Witness" are excellent resources. On occasion the network may choose to meet with another network for a special course or social;
D. The NM will be responsible to help the Network Leader remember and honour the Network Covenant (see below) in the networks;
E. The NM will ensure that the network check-ins with one another in between meetings (the Network Leader may choose to do this themselves or the network will discuss a strategy – for example each member is assigned another member to check in with);
F. The NM will be available for the annual Mentor-Network Leader meeting, which is currently held in January. This is a two day event;
G. The NM also has as support and resource: Regional Coach, Director of Leadership Development, Director of Church Planting and Bishop.

2. **General Policies**

- Mentors will be appointed ministers.
- Expenses (travel, meals) incurred to do "work" (outside of the Network meeting) requested by the Bishop.

- Network Mentors who attend one network for their church but lead another are to be paid for travel/meal expenses.
- The term of office for a NM is indefinite. Each year, adjustments will be made to the network leadership, based on performance evaluations and requests.

LEADING AS A NETWORK LEADER IN THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN CANADA

1. **The Role of the Network Leader:** The Network Leader is responsible to help a network of FMCiC pastors / leaders create a discipleship experience (as defined above).

Responsibilities: Network Leaders (hereafter "NL") will:

A. Meet regularly by phone or Zoom with Mentor for coaching, discipling. These meetings will include coaching / mentoring in the use of the discipleship materials. The hope is that the Mentor will become [another] spiritual mentor in the life of the NL;
B. Facilitate network meetings (at least 6 days per year);
C. Bring to the network resources that would help create a discipleship experience. The NL's Mentor and Bishop will offer resources and training. Presently, "Radical Mentoring" and "Bearing Faithful Witness" are excellent resources. On occasion the network may choose to meet with another network for a special course or social;
D. The NL will be responsible to introduce and help the Network mutually honour the Network Covenant (see below);
E. The NL will ensure that the network check-ins with one another in between meetings (the NL may choose to do this themselves or the network will discuss a strategy – for example each member is assigned another member to check in with;
F. The NL will be available for the annual Mentor-Network Leader meeting, which is currently held in January. This is a two day event;
G. The NL also has as support and resource: Mentor, Regional Coach, Director of Leadership Development, Director of Church Planting and Bishop.

2. **Character Requirements for this Ministry of Leadership**
   - "A leader is a person who under the Lordship of Jesus knows where he/she is going and is able to influence others to follow."
   - "A team player is a person who is able to give and receive loyalty to other team members as they work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect to achieve a common purpose."
   - "A team player is a person who is able to effectively manage communication flow so that all people within the team feel that they are valued--their input is valued and their questions/concerns are answered."
   - "A leader is a person who helps others develop by doing. He/she coaches and expects team members to make decisions and assume responsibility for outcomes. A leader celebrates with those who succeed and comes alongside those who are faltering to coach them more closely."
   - "A leader is a person who cares: By praying regularly for the pastors under his/her supervision, and by taking personal interest to know the names of spouses and children."

3. **General Policies**
   - Selection and placement of Network Leaders is the responsibility of the Network Mentor Team.

- Expenses (travel, meals) incurred to do "work" (outside of the Network meeting) requested by the Bishop or Mentor.
- Network Leaders who attend one network for their church but lead another are to be paid for travel/meal expenses.
- The term of office for a Network Leader is indefinite. Each year, adjustments will be made to the network leadership, based on performance evaluations and requests.
- Multi-day meetings of Networks are encouraged to take advantage of denominational facilities (e.g. camps) where practicable.

Pastor's Network Covenant

The Free Methodist Church in Canada takes very seriously the spiritual and personal health of its pastors. With this in mind, networks have been established for peer support and accountability.

In the Methodist tradition we commit to this covenant:

1. It is my desire to become an all-in Jesus-follower, disciple-maker and Christian leader.
2. I understand that I will give and receive direct, honest feedback from the group. I will do everything in my power to receive it in love and to learn from it. I will avoid defensiveness, realizing that when I defend, I lose the opportunity to learn. I commit to being open in examining myself. I want to learn. I want to change, to be more like Jesus Christ in every fiber of my being.
3. I agree that network time is valuable, and that I may have to say "no" to important things in order to meet with the network and I am willing to do so.
4. I will strive to contribute my value to the network, and trust that the other members will also do so.
5. I understand that network is a safe place for pastors to grow as individuals and spiritual leaders. I will be totally vulnerable about my relationship with Christ, for the purpose of growing in my faith.
6. I commit to total confidentiality. What is said in the group stays in the group. The network leader reserves the right to the following exceptions:
   a. If the pastor may be an immediate danger to himself or others
   b. If the pastor is endangering a population that cannot protect itself, such as the case of child or elder abuse
   c. As required by law
7. I discussed this commitment with my Church Board and they fully support my involvement. They willingly give the time and resources it will take to attend the meetings and retreats with the goal of my becoming a godlier person and a better pastor.

_____	_____
Pastor's Name	Signature
_____	_____
Network Leader's Name	Signature
_____	_____
Delegate's Name (on behalf of the board)	Signature

CHAPTER 9

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

¶ 900 **Accountability to Covenant Commitments**

¶ 905 **Purpose**

¶ 910 **Guiding Principles**

¶ 915 **Discipline and Restoration of Lay Members**

¶ 920 **Trial of a Lay Member**

¶ 925 **Discipline and Restoration of Ministers**

¶ 930 **Trial of a Minister**

¶ 935 **Discipline and Restoration of Non-Members**

¶ 940 **Discipline and Restoration of a Church**

Appendix 1 **Order for Conducting Trials**

Appendix 2 **Order for Conducting Appeals**

Appendix 3 **Rules of Admissibility of Witnesses and Evidence**

Appendix 4 **Paralleling the Disciplinary Processes Chart**

¶ 900 ACCOUNTABILITY TO COVENANT COMMITMENTS

Believers bind themselves to Christ and the church by way of covenant commitments. In addition to a commitment to Jesus Christ, members of the church also make commitments by way of the Membership Covenant (¶156-161).

The highest standards of life and conduct are placed upon those who serve in ministerial capacities in the church. Individuals make additional covenant commitments when becoming Ministerial Candidates (¶815), becoming Commissioned Ministers (¶820) or upon ordination (¶825). Covenant commitments require accountability (¶155). If any of these covenant commitments are disregarded or violated, personal integrity and the integrity and witness of the church are dishonored. Relationships with God and others are damaged and broken. Therefore, accountability to these covenant commitments must be maintained.

¶ 905 PURPOSE

Discipline is an exercise of scriptural and spiritual authority for which the church is responsible in giving healthy formation and, when needed, healing to the body of Christ. The process for correction and discipline of members and ministers who ignore or violate covenant commitments is designed to lead to repentance and forgiveness. Objectives are a return to fellowship with God and the church, and restoration to effective service in the life of the church.

Prompt admonition and counsel that will promote holiness of heart and life and sustain the integrity and witness of the church are to be administered with mature Christian love and discernment.

Discipline is to be redemptive and corrective in nature and is to be exercised as under a dispensation of grace, mercy and justice. The purpose of discipline is not punitive or retributive; it is to serve the body by bringing believers and churches back to established standards of wholesome conduct. Determination of standing and continued relationship to the church is also a function of the disciplinary process.

Disciplinary action is only to be taken after Christian counsel and admonition have been unsuccessful or where the nature of the violation necessitates immediate action.

¶ 910 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The discipline process seeks to honor the principles taught by our Lord and others in the Scriptures in bringing restoration to believers who have ignored or violated covenant commitments. These underlying principles are also in keeping with commonly established ecclesiastical law and in accordance with the principles of natural justice. These principles include:

- A Christ-like and prayerful spirit will be maintained at all times by all parties.
- Reasonable effort will be made to clear up an accusation or to deal with an offending person without the formality of a church trial.
- The accused person will be presumed innocent until found guilty.
- All accusations and proceedings will receive prompt and careful attention by the proper authorities. In all cases, if the alleged offence is criminal or involving the abuse of children, the matter is to be reported to the police, or in the case of child abuse, to the appropriate child welfare authorities as outlined in the denomination's child abuse policy.
- Any accusation must be submitted in a written and signed disclosure of evidence. Any confession(s) by the accused must be in writing and signed.

- The form of discipline (private admonition and counsel, public reproof, censure) is to be commensurate with the offence and will be conducted in accordance with accepted principles of confidentiality.

The process of admonition and counsel will seek to:
- give a clear explanation (with evidence) of the offending conduct;
- advise of the impact of the offending conduct on personal and corporate spiritual life and witness;
- set out to the accused the available options which will lead to restoration or censure;
- obtain signed acknowledgement and confession of the wrong doing by the accused, leading to sincere repentance;
- reconcile and restore broken relationships through forgiveness.

During the process of correction or discipline, members and ministers will be held accountable for their relationships. This includes:
- submitting to the counsel and discipline of those in authority;
- maintaining fellowship with peers;
- refraining from irresponsible talk;
- demonstrating a consistent Christian life before family and community.

In all cases, those giving admonition and counsel will not neglect the care of offended parties or their participation, where appropriate, in the restoration process. The administration of these disciplinary provisions must always be motivated by love, rooted in prayer, and undertaken in a spirit of humility.

In order for a matter of church discipline to proceed in good faith, all persons involved in any way must agree to be bound by the decisions made as a result of proper disciplinary process. All participants are to be advised and agree in writing that recourse to a civil court is waived once a disciplinary proceeding begins.

¶ 915 DISCIPLINE AND RESTORATION OF LAY MEMBERS OF LOCAL CHURCHES

1. Private Admonition and Counsel

Allegations of criminal behaviour (including allegations of child abuse) will be reported to the appropriate civil authorities. Otherwise, when a lay member has concerns about the behavior of another lay member, it is assumed that the instructions of Matthew 18:15-16 to speak to the other person privately will be followed. If the accused person denies the alleged misconduct or acknowledges the misconduct but refuses to repent, and if the alleged misconduct is such that it will bring public reproach upon Christ and his church, the matter must be brought to the attention of the pastor.

Accusations of unchristian conduct or of a violation(s) of membership vows which are made against lay members must be in writing, dated, signed by the accuser(s) and given to the pastor before any official action can be taken. After receiving a signed accusation, the pastor will then consult with a member of the membership care committee (or of the body charged with this responsibility. See ¶373.2.3). (The committee member must not have a conflict of interest with respect to the matter.) They will together evaluate the substance of the accusation(s) and discreetly interview the accused. Based on the response of the accused, they will decide if private admonition and counsel is sufficient or if the matter needs to go further and be reported to the membership care committee because the member refuses ongoing accountability or is unrepentant.

If it is decided that the matter needs to be reported to the entire membership care committee, a meeting of the membership care committee will be called. The committee will evaluate the admonition already given and may offer additional counsel. Likewise, if the accusation is unsubstantiated, the matter of the false accusation will be brought to the attention of the entire membership care committee who will interview the accuser(s) and give them counsel.

When the member (in either case) is repentant and the conduct or false accusation has not and will not become the cause of public reproach to Christ and the church, confession will be heard by the membership committee, remedial counsel planned and ongoing accountability established.

2. Public Reproof

In cases where the member is repentant and responsive to private admonition and counsel, but when the conduct has or will likely cause reproach to Christ and the church, the membership care committee will make such recommendation to the official board as it considers appropriate in the circumstances and in accordance with the purposes and goals of the disciplinary process. Possible recommendations could include actions to:

- Implement a remedial plan of restoration containing provisions such as:
  - removal from offices and responsibilities in the church
  - public confession
  - apology and restitution to the offended parties
  - submission to a spiritual director
  - ongoing accountability
- Suspend membership privileges for a specified period of time, not to exceed one year
- In response to a written request, grant a voluntary withdrawal from membership.

When the member is repentant and when the conduct causes public reproach but is not serious enough to require termination of membership, the member may be required to meet with the official board where the member will make confession, request forgiveness, receive reproof and forgiveness and submit to whatever discipline and remedial counsel the official board considers appropriate.

3. Censure (Termination of Membership)

In cases where the member is unrepentant and unresponsive to private admonition and counsel, and when the conduct has or will likely cause reproach to Christ and the church, the membership care committee will make such recommendation to the official board as it considers appropriate in the circumstances and in accordance with the purposes and goals of the disciplinary process.

The official board will meet within 30 days to consider and take action on any recommendation received from the membership care committee concerning disciplinary matters. The official board is not required to accept the recommendations of the committee but may take such action as it considers appropriate. It will take into consideration the circumstances, including the seriousness of the conduct and the actual and potential impact on the life and witness of the accused and the church. For the purposes of disciplinary proceedings, the board is empowered, after considering the case fully to take any of the following actions in addition to any other powers they may hold:

- Exonerate the member from all misconduct
- Suspend membership privileges for a specified period of time, not to exceed one year and establish a program of counseling
- In response to a written request, grant a voluntary withdrawal of membership

- Terminate membership and inform the member of the action by registered mail. Membership may only be terminated by a ballot vote of the official board. A two-thirds majority of those casting votes is required.

If a member wishes to request to meet with the official board for a hearing to show cause why the official board should reconsider its decision to terminate the membership, the request must be delivered or sent by registered mail to the secretary of the official board within 30 days of the decision passed by the official board. The official board shall meet with the member whose membership has been terminated within 30 days of receiving the request for a hearing, to hear and consider the member's reasons for requesting reconsideration of the official board's decision to terminate membership. If the official board reverses its decision, the member shall be re-instated. If the official board maintains its decision to terminate the membership, the member may request a trial according to the provisions of ¶920 and the Official Board will appoint a person who is responsible to prepare the charges in final form, to present them at the proper time and place to the trial and to represent the church during the trial.

¶ 920 Trial of a Lay Member

In order for lay members whose memberships have been terminated by the official board to be entitled to make requests of the next level of jurisdiction (the Board of Administration of the Canadian General Conference) for trials, they must have first requested a hearing before the official board to show cause why their memberships should not be terminated within 30 days of the decision of the official board to terminate the memberships. If, after the hearing, the official board maintains as its final decision to terminate the memberships, notice of intent to request a trial must be provided in writing and sent by registered mail to the secretary of the Board of Administration of the Canadian General Conference within 30 days of the official board's final decision.

The Board of Administration will elect a presiding officer and a trial committee of six persons plus one lay and one ministerial reserve within 30 days of receiving the request for a trial. The committee will be composed of 3 ministers and 3 lay persons who are members of a local society or of the Canadian General Conference. No person will be allowed to serve on the committee who has previously been involved in the case or is in a position of conflict of interest.

The secretary of the Board of Administration will, by registered mail, inform the accused and the prosecutor of the names of the presiding officer and of the members elected to the committee and shall negotiate a mutually agreeable date for the trial at least 30 days in advance of the trial.

The trial committee, by a majority vote, may affirm, modify or reverse the action(s) of the official board in whole or in part. The decision will be delivered within 30 days of the conclusion of the trial.

Rules of Procedure for a Trial

- **Presiding Officer** – The Board of Administration will appoint a presiding officer who will ensure that the trial proceeds in an orderly manner. The presiding officer is to act impartially. The presiding officer may request the presence of legal counsel who may provide advice to the presiding officer only in matters related to the trial proceedings.

  The presiding officer has authority to impose limits on the number of pages of written material submitted to the trial and on the length of time used for presentations and cross examinations. Objections may not be raised during presentations. The presiding officer may allow the trial

committee to ask questions after each presentation by either the prosecution or the accused. An *Order for Conducting Trials* is found in *Appendix 1*.

- **Grounds for Challenge** –Thirty days prior to the beginning of the trial, both the prosecutor and the accused will receive a list of the trial committee members. Up to 21 days prior to the trial, each shall have the right to challenge, for cause, the selection of any member of the trial committee. The presiding officer will rule on the validity of the challenge.

- **Evidence** – The presiding officer of the trial will rule on the admissibility of witnesses and evidence. *Rules of Admissibility of Witnesses and Evidence* are found in *Appendix 3*.

- **Testimony** – No one will be barred as a witness on the grounds that they are not a member of a local society or the Canadian General Conference. If circumstances make it impossible for a witness to appear, a proper affidavit from the individual may be presented, provided that both the accused and the prosecutor have had an opportunity to review the affidavit and to question the person signing the affidavit about its contents, with witnesses listening.

- **Charges** – It is not required that the charges be written in any particular legal form, but it is recommended they be written in the standard form as provided in *Robert's Rules of Order*.

- **Counsel** –The Official Board will appoint a prosecutor who is responsible to prepare the charges in final form, to present them at the proper time and place to the trial and to represent the church during the trial. Both the accused and the prosecutor have the right to receive advice or guidance from lay members or ministers of The Free Methodist Church in Canada and to have up to a total of two such persons serve as their assistants in the trial. Neither the accused nor the prosecutor is entitled to, and in fact are precluded from, retaining professional legal counsel to participate in the trial.

- **Participants** – Only those who are members of a local society or of the Canadian General Conference will be allowed to participate in the trial, with the exception of witnesses. Only those participating in the trial and the spouse of the accused are permitted to attend the trial.

- **Confidentiality** – All deliberations of the trial will be considered confidential. All those participating in the trial will not discuss the case with anyone not participating in the trial, **before,** during or following the trial.

- **Withdrawal** – If during the trial, the accused submits a letter requesting to withdraw from membership in the church, the request will be granted and the trial will end.

- **Records** – The presiding officer will appoint a secretary, not a member of the trial committee, who will be responsible to keep complete and accurate records of all proceedings, testimony, evidence, documents admitted, together with charges, specifications, notices, citations and findings of the trial committee. When advisable, the services of a professional court reporter may be engaged. The presiding officer will be the custodian of such records until the case is finished and then will deliver the records to the secretary of the Board of Administration for permanent filing.

- **Judgment** – The trial committee will deliver a decision within 30 days of the conclusion of the trial. The trial committee, by a majority vote, may affirm, modify or reverse the findings of the official board in whole or in part.

- **Expenses** – The accused is responsible for his/her own expenses, for the expenses of the person(s) chosen to assist with advice or guidance and for the expenses of witnesses required by the accused to be present at the trial. Other expenses, if any, are the responsibility of the local church and/or the Canadian General Conference.

¶ 925 Discipline and Restoration of Ministers

1. Grounds for Correction and Discipline

The reasons a minister may receive discipline are as follows:
- Teaching contrary to the Articles of Religion or the membership covenant of The Free Methodist Church in Canada;
- Behaving in a manner that is immoral, criminal or unbecoming a minister;
- Exhibiting a contentious or un-cooperative spirit resulting in insubordination and a willful refusal to recognize the church's authority.
- Disobeying the provisions of The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada or enabling such disobedience;
- Mismanaging personal or church finances resulting in reproach.

Accusations must be made in writing, dated, signed by the accuser(s) and given to the bishop before any official action can be taken. If the bishop is the accuser, he/she will give the written accusations to the minister's regional Ministerial Education Guidance and Placement (MEGaP) Committee.

2. Levels of Correction and Discipline

2.1 Private Counsel

When a minister voluntarily confesses to a non-criminal offence, the first step is private counsel by the bishop. In all cases, if the alleged offence is criminal or involving the abuse of children, the matter is to be reported to the police or, in the case of child abuse, to the appropriate child welfare authorities as outlined in the denomination's child abuse policy.

When a minister is accused of an offence and the minister is found not to be guilty of the accusation after a review and investigation by the bishop, the bishop, the minister and the immediate supervisor of the minister will decide together how to best respond to the testimony, rumor or impressions that led to the accusation.

When a minister is accused of an offence that is supported by verifiable testimony, the first response will be private counsel by the bishop. When the minister is repentant and the offence has not and will not become the cause of public reproach to Christ and the church, confession will be heard, remedial counsel planned and ongoing accountability established.

When the minister is not repentant, the bishop will take immediate counsel with the minister's immediate supervisor and advise the minister of this action. The bishop and immediate supervisor will investigate the matter further and they will urge the minister to comply with the counsel they are offering. If the minister remains uncooperative, the bishop may suspend the minister, take possession of any ministerial credentials and inform the minister's regional Ministerial Education, Guidance and Placement (MEGaP) committee of the suspension. No ministerial functions or duties may be performed until the case is decided.

The bishop may also suspend a minister who confesses in a signed statement that an offence has been committed that will bring reproach to Christ and His church or if such an offence is confirmed by verifiable written testimony. The bishop will inform the minister's regional MEGaP committee of the suspension.

In any of the above cases, the bishop may cite the minister to appear before the minister's regional MEGaP committee. A minister so cited will be furnished with a statement describing the offence and the time and place where he/she is to appear. If the accused pleads guilty or is found guilty, the MEGaP committee will proceed by offering private counsel, public reproof or corporate discipline as it deems appropriate.

2.2 Public Reproof and Forgiveness

When a confessed offence is of a public nature, but not serious enough to require suspension, arrangements may be made by the bishop for the offender to meet with the pastor's cabinet of the church where the minister is appointed and/or the regional MEGaP committee as the case may be. The spirit of Christian restoration will characterize the process.

The offender will read his/her signed confession, request forgiveness, receive reproof and forgiveness and agree to submit to the counsel that is given. The written statement of the offender will be submitted to the bishop for prior approval.

The bishop will counsel with the offender's immediate supervisor, the pastor's cabinet and/or the regional MEGaP as the case may require.

2.3 Corporate Discipline

If a minister under investigation is not suspended by the bishop, but is cited to appear before the regional MEGaP committee, the regional MEGaP committee is empowered to institute interim remedial disciplinary action until the matter is fully investigated and decided. Refusal to comply with the interim remedial disciplinary action of the regional MEGaP committee will be considered insubordination and could result in suspension by the regional MEGaP committee and the loss of credentials by the offender.

When the bishop suspends a minister, within seven days the regional MEGaP committee, or a regional MEGaP sub-committee of not fewer than six members, equally divided between laypersons and ordained ministers, will be convened to review the evidence presented by the bishop and the minister's immediate supervisor. It will have the authority to take one of the following actions, which must be reported to the Board of Administration and the subsequent meeting of the Canadian General Conference:

- Exonerate, return credentials and restore to ministry;
- Confirm the suspension and establish a program of counseling and restoration;
- Allow the accused to surrender credentials permanently (under charges or complaints) and approve the person for lay status;
- Allow the accused to surrender credentials (under charges or complaints) and withdraw from the general conference and the denomination;
- Expel from the general conference and the denomination.

If a minister wishes to appeal the regional MEGaP committee's decision and meet with the regional MEGaP committee for a hearing to show cause why the regional MEGaP committee should reconsider its decision, the request must be delivered or sent by registered mail to the Director of

Leadership Development and Church Health within 30 days of the decision passed by the regional MEGaP committee. The regional MEGaP committee shall meet with the minister under discipline within 30 days of receiving the request for a hearing, to hear and consider the minister's reasons for requesting reconsideration of the regional MEGaP committee's decision. If the MEGaP committee maintains its decision, the member may request a trial according to the provisions of ¶930.

3. Special Cases

When a minister is charged with a criminal offence, the bishop shall immediately report the situation to the regional MEGaP committee and seek its advice. If the minister is convicted of a criminal offence, the bishop shall immediately suspend the minister.

When immoral or criminal misconduct of a spouse or dependent child may adversely affect ministry, ministers will report the situation to their immediate supervisor who will consult with the bishop. The bishop will ensure that the criminal conduct has been reported to the police and any abuse of children to child welfare authorities in accordance with the denomination's child abuse policy. Notwithstanding the above, disclosures of any criminal conduct must be consistent with the current criminal law.

4. Credentials

When a minister is required to relinquish ordination credentials due to suspension, expulsion or otherwise, the credentials are to be sent to the Personnel office of The Free Methodist Church in Canada. When the bishop is satisfied that the restoration process is successfully completed, the bishop may, upon the recommendation of the regional MEGaP committee and approval of the Board of Administration, restore credentials.

If an ordained minister refuses to surrender ordination credentials when legitimately requested to do so, the regional MEGaP committee will recommend to the Board of Administration that the credentials be declared null and void.

5. Restoration

The restoration process begins when the suspended minister applies for a Covenant of Restoration. The bishop, assisted by the Director Church Health and the regional MEGaP committee, will work with the suspended minister to develop a covenant of restoration that defines the expectations and responsibilities of all parties involved in the restoration process.

Restoration to ministry requires the following:

- Repentance and a request for forgiveness;
- Indication of contrition;
- Public confession where advised;
- Restitution where applicable;
- Counseling where advised;
- The assignment of a mutually acceptable accountability partner;
- Healing of broken relationships where possible;
- Reestablishment of credibility.

While the candidate for restoration is following the prescribed course, a designated supervisor will assign and oversee such ministerial duties as may prepare the candidate for resumption of ministerial leadership.

Restoration of credentials and reappointment will proceed according to the following conditions:

- The regional MEGaP committee will assess the candidate's progress in spiritual maturity, trustworthiness, moral integrity and ministerial effectiveness. The candidate will be called for a personal interview. References will also be obtained from the designated supervisor, the candidate's counselor(s) and other persons familiar with the case. The official board of the church where the candidate attends may be asked if it is prepared to submit a restoration of credentials form. (See ¶ 383A, Local Church Forms, page 2).
- The Board of Administration of the general conference will make the final decision, based on the recommendation of the regional MEGaP committee. Credentials will not be restored sooner than two years, except in exceptional circumstances and only after the process of restoration is complete. Restoration of credentials does not guarantee reappointment to ministry.

¶ 930 Trial of a Minister

In order for a minister who has been suspended by his/her regional MEGaP committee to be entitled to make a request of the next level of jurisdiction (the national MEGaP committee of the Canadian General Conference) for a trial, he/she must have first requested a hearing before his/her regional MEGaP committee, within 30 days of the decision of the regional MEGaP committee's decision to confirm his/her suspension, to show cause why he/she should not have been suspended.

If after the hearing, the regional MEGaP committee maintains suspension as its final decision, a minister, whose suspension has been confirmed by regional MEGaP, has the right to challenge the decision of the regional MEGaP committee and request a trial. A request for a trial must be provided in writing and must be sent by registered mail to the secretary of the Board of Administration of the Canadian General Conference within 30 days of the regional MEGaP committee's final decision.

The Secretary of the Board of Administration will direct the national MEGaP committee (excluding the regional MEGaP committee involved in the discipline of the minister) to elect a presiding officer and a trial committee of six persons plus one lay and one ministerial reserve to try the case within 30 days of receiving request for a trial. The trial committee will be composed of three ministers and three lay persons who are members of a local society or of the Canadian General Conference. No person will be allowed to serve on the committee who has previously been involved in the case or is in a position of conflict of interest.

The secretary of the Board of Administration will, by registered mail, inform the accused and the prosecutor of the names of the presiding officer and of the members elected to the trial committee and shall negotiate a mutually agreeable date for the trial at least 30 days in advance of the trial.

The trial committee, by a majority vote, may affirm, modify or reverse the action(s) of the regional MEGaP in whole or in part. The decision will be delivered within 30 days of the conclusion of the trial.

1. Rules of Procedure for a Trial

- **Presiding Officer** –The Board of Administration will appoint a presiding officer who will ensure that the trial proceeds in an orderly manner. The presiding officer is to act impartially. The

presiding officer may request the presence of legal counsel who may provide advice to the presiding officer only in matters related to the trial proceedings.

The presiding officer has authority to impose limits on the number of pages of written material submitted to the trial and on the length of time used for presentations and cross examinations. Objections may not be raised during presentations. The presiding officer may allow the trial committee to ask questions after each presentation by either the prosecution or the accused. An *Order for Conducting Trials* is found in *Appendix 1*.

- **Grounds for Challenge** –Thirty days prior to the beginning of the trial, both the prosecutor and the accused will receive a list of the trial committee members. Up to 21 days prior to the trial, each shall have the right to challenge, for cause, the selection of any member of the trial committee. The presiding officer will rule on the validity of the challenge.

- **Evidence** –The presiding officer of the trial will rule on the admissibility of witnesses and evidence. To assist with this, *Rules of Admissibility of Witnesses and Evidence* are found in *Appendix 3*.

- **Testimony** – No one will be barred as a witness on the grounds that they are not a member of a local society or of the Canadian General Conference. If circumstances make it impossible for a witness to appear, a proper affidavit from the individual may be presented, provided that both the accused and the prosecutor have had an opportunity to review the affidavit and to question the person signing the affidavit about its contents, with witnesses listening.

- **Charges** – It is not required that the charges be written in any particular legal form, but it is recommended they be written in the standard form as provided in *Robert's Rules of Order*.

- **Counsel** –The regional MEGaP committee will appoint a prosecutor who is responsible to prepare the charges in final form, to present them at the proper time and place and to represent the church in all instances. Both the accused and the prosecutor have the right to receive advice or guidance from lay members or ministers of The Free Methodist Church in Canada and to have up to a total of two such persons serve as their assistants in the trial. Neither the accused nor the prosecutor is entitled to, and in fact are precluded from, retaining professional legal counsel to participate in the trial.

- **Participants** – Only those who are members of a local society or of the Canadian General Conference will be allowed to participate in the trial, with the exception of witnesses. Only those participating in the trial and the spouse of the accused are permitted to attend the trial.

- **Confidentiality** – All deliberations of the trial will be considered confidential. All participants in the trial will not discuss the case with anyone not participating in the trial before**,** during or following the trial.

- **Withdrawal** – If during the trial, the accused submits a letter requesting to withdraw from membership in the conference, the request will be granted and the trial will end.

- **Records** – The presiding officer will appoint a secretary, not a member of the trial committee, who will be responsible to keep complete and accurate records of all proceedings, testimony, evidence, documents admitted, together with charges, specifications, notices, citations and findings of the trial committee. When advisable, the services of a professional court reporter may

be engaged. The presiding officer will be the custodian of such records until the case is finished and then will deliver the records to the secretary of the Board of Administration for permanent filing.

- **Judgment** – The trial committee will deliver a decision within 30 days of the conclusion of the trial. The trial committee, by a majority vote, may affirm, modify or reverse the findings of the regional MEGaP committee in whole or in part.

- **Expenses** – The accused is responsible for his/her own expenses, for the expenses of the person(s) chosen to assist with advice or guidance and for the expenses of witnesses required by the accused to be present at the trial. Other expenses are the responsibility of the Canadian General Conference.

2. Appeal of Trial Verdicts

The sole grounds for appealing the verdict of a trial are limited to the following categories:
- New and important testimony really exists and has become available, and satisfactory reasons are given as to why it was not presented at the trial.
- The minutes of the trial are so inaccurate that the true merits of the case cannot be determined from them.
- There was illegal administration of The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.
- There was incorrect adherence to proper procedure by the presiding officer and/or the trial committee**.**

In order for ministers who have been tried and convicted by a trial committee to be entitled to an appeal to the next level of jurisdiction (the Canadian General Conference), they must not have been voluntarily absent from the trial. They must have given notice of intent to appeal within 30 days of the final action of the trial committee. Notice of intent to appeal must be provided in writing by registered mail to the secretary of the Board of Administration of the Canadian General Conference.

Upon receiving a proper request for an appeal, the Board of Administration of the Canadian General Conference will elect a presiding officer and an appeal committee of six members plus one lay and one ministerial reserve. The committee will be composed of three ministers and three lay persons who are members of a local society or of the Canadian General Conference. No person will be allowed to serve on the committee who has previously voted on the decision of the case or is in a position of conflict of interest.

The secretary of the Board of Administration will, by registered mail, inform the appellant of the names of the members elected to the appeal committee and of the date of the appeal hearing at least 30 days in advance.

The convicted minister must present to the appeal committee a statement in writing demonstrating the grounds for appealing the verdict of the previous trial committee. This statement must be received by the secretary of the Board of Administration, by registered mail, a minimum of 14 days before the appeal is scheduled to be heard. An *Order for conducting appeals* is found in *Appendix 2*.

Both the accused and the prosecutor have the right to receive advice or guidance from lay members or ministers of The Free Methodist Church in Canada and to have up to a total of two such persons serve as their assistants in the appeal. Neither the accused nor the prosecutor is entitled to, and in fact are precluded from, retaining professional legal counsel to participate in the appeal.

The appeal committee will promptly consider the appeal and deliver its decision within 30 days of the conclusion of the appeal hearing. The decision must pass by a majority vote of the appeal committee members. The appeal committee must confine itself to the grounds of the appeal, but it is entitled to all relevant information that is pertinent to the appeal as presented.

If a new trial is granted, it is an entirely new trial in which new charges can be brought (or the previous charges re-formulated) and new evidence and new witnesses may be introduced by both sides. The case will be tried by the appeal committee using the Rules of Procedure for a Trial as outlined above. The date for the new trial will be negotiated by the secretary of the Board of Administration and communicated to the appellant and prosecutor at least 30 days in advance by registered mail.

¶ 935 Discipline and Restoration of Non-Members

The conduct of persons who are regular participants in the life of the church affects the integrity of the Christian witness of the individual and the church. As such, these persons, although they have taken no formal vows of commitment or made formal covenant, must also be held accountable for their conduct insofar as it affects the integrity of the Christian witness of the individual and the church.

In the event of disciplinary action, every effort should be made through use of private and group reproof to bring repentance and restoration in these situations. In all cases, if the alleged offence is criminal or involving the abuse of children, the matter is to be reported to the police or, in the case of child abuse, to the appropriate child welfare authorities as outlined in the denomination's child abuse policy.

¶ 940 Discipline and Restoration of a Church

Citation of a Church to Show Cause

The Board of Administration of the Canadian General Conference shall have the power to cite the official board of a church to appear before it to show cause, why it should not be declared in a state of insubordination when substantiated information reaches the Board of Administration that the accused body is in a state of insubordination and disobedience to The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada. Notice of the order to show cause shall be given in a clear and definite statement of the facts constituting the state of insubordination so that the accused body may be properly informed of the grounds of the accusation. The order shall be served to the secretary of the accused body by registered mail. If the Board of Administration finds the accused body guilty or if the cited church admits guilt, the Board of Administration shall have the power to suspend the accused body of all rights and privileges as a Free Methodist body until the ensuing sitting of the Canadian General Conference. The Canadian General Conference shall have final disposition of the case.

If the convicted body shows contrition for its insubordination, reforms and pledges its loyalty to the denomination and to The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada, the Board of Administration shall have the power to reinstate it.

If the convicted body is found to be guilty of insubordination and is not reinstated, any property shall be dealt with in accordance with the guidelines published in The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada. See ¶350.3.

APPENDIX ONE

ORDER FOR CONDUCTING TRIALS

1) Devotions

2) Reading of the Board of Administration action by which the trial committee was appointed and the names of unchallenged members of the committee

3) The appointment of a secretary by the presiding officer. Consideration may be given to obtaining the services of a transcribing service, similar to a court reporter to record the proceedings in full and produce a transcript.

4) Reading of the charges by the secretary

5) Response of the accused

6) Statement of the case and of the line of evidence by the prosecution

7) Presentation of evidence by the prosecution and cross-examination by the accused

8) Statement of the case and of the line of defense by the accused

9) Presentation of defense by the accused and cross-examination by the prosecution

10) Summing up of the case by the prosecution

11) Summing up of the case by the accused

12) Instructions by the presiding officer to the trial committee on the format of the verdict

13) Trial committee is excused to deliberate and prepare a verdict

14) Announcement by the presiding officer of the verdict and, in the case of a guilty verdict, of the imposition of any penalty established by the trial committee. (**Note:** In the case of a guilty verdict of a lay person, there are no further appeals. In the case of a guilty verdict of a minister, the presiding officer shall advise the accused of his/her right to an appeal.)

15) Presiding officer's closing comments and prayer.

APPENDIX TWO

ORDER FOR CONDUCTING APPEALS

8:00 a.m. Pre-hearing conference

The presiding officer convenes a pre-hearing conference between appellant, appellant's assistant(s), and the respondent, respondent's assistant(s) to confirm agreements about how the appeal will proceed. The setting of the time schedule is determined in the pre-hearing conference. The time schedule provided in this appendix is a suggested guide.

8:30 a.m. Hearing Begins

Members of the appeal committee, elected by the Board of Administration, are seated and introduced. (Reserves will be in the room for the hearing, in case they are subsequently needed, but will not sit with the appeal committee itself.)

1) Devotions & prayer

2) Appointment of a secretary by the presiding officer

3) Roll call

4) The presiding officer asks members of the appeal committee: "Have you discussed with any member of the _____ ministerial education, guidance and placement committee, the prosecutor or his/her assistant, the appellant or his/her assistant, or the presiding officer, any fundamentals of this case since agreeing to serve as a member of the appeal committee?

5) Statement of the grounds of the appeal (The presiding officer will read the arguments presented in the appellant's statement.)

6) Instructions from the presiding officer from ¶920 (lay members) or ¶930 (ministers) of The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

   The appeal committee must confine itself to the grounds of the appeal but is entitled to all relevant information that will throw light upon the appeal as presented.

   Grounds for appealing the verdict of an official board/trial committee are limited to:

   - *New and important testimony exists and has become available, and satisfactory reasons are given as to why it was not presented at the trial.*
   - *The minutes of the official board/trial committee are so inaccurate that the true merits of the case cannot be determined from them.*
   - *There was illegal administration of* The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.
   - *There was incorrect adherence to proper procedure by the presiding officer and/or the official board/trial committee." While it will be important for the appeal committee to consider each of the bases for the appeal, it will not be ruling on any of them individually.*

Its deliberations must result in answering only the following two questions:

i. **"Have the requirements of The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada making provisions for an appeal been met (or those that have not been met, waived in writing) by both sides?"**
   - If the answer to this question is "**yes**", then the grounds of the appeal are heard.
   - If the answer to this question is "**no**", then the hearing terminates and the appeal is dropped or re-initiated by the appellant.

ii. "**Are there grounds for a trial?"**
   - If the answer to this question is "**no**", then the appeal fails and the decision of the official board/trial committee is sustained, including the penalty assessed. The matter is now closed for lay members. Ministers are entitled to appeal as provided for in ¶930.
   - If the answer to this question is "**yes**", then the appeal committee will try the case as provided for in The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

7) Reading (by the presiding officer) of the charges from which the appeal is taken and a statement of the final action of the trial committee.

8) Arguments
   - The appellant and/or assistant present arguments (limited to 45 minutes)

10:00 a.m. (approximately) Recess will be taken at the conclusion of an argument.
10:15 a.m. (approximately) Reconvene

- The respondent and/or assistant present argument (limited to 45 minutes)
- Rebuttal by appellant and/or assistant (limited to 10 minutes plus any time not used during the 45 minutes allotted for the original argument)
- Rebuttal by respondent and/or assistant (limited to 10 minutes plus any time not used during the 45 minutes allotted for the original argument)

Each party will be given a 5-minute warning and a 1-minute warning prior to the termination of the allotted time. When time is up, the argument or rebuttal must immediately stop.

The presiding officer shall remind the appeal committee of the two questions (in section six above) to be answered.

9) Prayer to conclude this portion of the hearing

10) 11:30 a.m. (approximately) Decision process of the appeal committee begins.

The interested parties shall retire while the appeal committee deliberates the two questions. It is proper to re-read the testimony or any part of it if necessary to refresh the memory, and to discuss the pending issue until all are able to make an informed decision.

12:00 Noon Lunch recess

11) 4:00 p.m. Conclusion of proceedings, or agreeing upon a plan to continue, so as to be able to present the report of the appeal committee. (A decision is required within 30 days).

12) Prayer

APPENDIX THREE

RULES OF ADMISSIBILITY OF WITNESSES AND EVIDENCE

1. **Admissibility of witnesses -** Every presiding officer shall rule as to who shall be admitted as witnesses in a case. Either party has the right to challenge any witness that may be called to the stand, giving reasons for the challenge, and the presiding officer shall decide whether the witness shall be allowed to testify.
2. **Sequestering of witnesses -** Witnesses who have not yet given testimony shall not be present during the examination of another witness or the presentation of written testimony.
3. **Admonition to be truthful -** Before giving his/her testimony, every witness is to be solemnly admonished by the presiding officer, that his/her testimony is given as before the Lord and that he/she is to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.
4. **Credibility of witnesses -** The credibility of witnesses, or the degree of credit to be given to their testimony, may be affected by their relationship to either of the parties, by interest in the result, by want of proper age, by weakness of understanding, by defect in any of the senses, by enmity toward the accused, by personal character, and by various other circumstances to which the trial committee should carefully attend and for which it should make due allowance in its decision.
5. **Questioning of witnesses -** Witnesses are to be examined in the presence of the accused or his/her assistant, who are at liberty to cross-examine them. The same privilege belongs to the prosecutor and to every member of the trial committee. All questions are to be asked with the permission of the presiding officer, and no frivolous or non-pertinent questions are to be allowed.
6. **Testimony by the accused -** The accused may be allowed, but shall not be compelled, to testify and no inference of guilt may be drawn from his failure to testify, on the demand of the prosecutor.
7. **Testimony by family members -** Husbands and wives, parents and children, shall not be required to testify against each other.
8. **Testimony from a different case -** The testimony of a witness in a different case in which the accused was not a party and had no opportunity to cross-examine shall not be admitted as evidence of the truth of the matters to which the witness testified.
9. **Corroboration of testimony** - When a charge depends entirely upon the testimony of witnesses, at least two credible witnesses shall be necessary to establish the charge. But the testimony of one witness corroborated by good circumstantial evidence may be considered sufficient to establish the charge when there is no conflicting evidence.
10. **Common report -** In cases of common report, the testimony of several different witnesses to different acts of the same kind may be considered sufficient to establish the charge.
11. **Hearsay evidence -** Hearsay evidence (i.e. evidence based on innuendo or rumor or information received from others rather than by personal knowledge) is not to be received.
12. **Circumstantial evidence -** Circumstantial evidence may be received either to corroborate positive testimony or as conclusive when it is of such character as to produce full conviction in the minds of the trial committee.
13. **Written evidence -** Private writings and correspondence, printed publications, formal sworn affidavits, and signed confessions or disclosures attested by the signature of a person who witnessed the signing, the genuineness and authorship of which are clearly established, may be received as evidence.
14. **Records of a previous trial -** The records of a previous trial, or any part of them, whether original or transcribed, shall be received as legal evidence in any other trial.
15. **Private knowledge possessed by members of the trial committee -** No private knowledge possessed by members of the trial committee shall be allowed to influence their decision. A member of the trial committee who is called on to testify in the case may not vote on any matter in the trial except with the approval of both parties.

APPENDIX FOUR

Paralleling the Disciplinary Processes Chart

Stage	Lay Process	Ministerial Process
1. **Private Counsel**	Pastor/Membership Care Committee	Bishop/Immediate Supervisor
2. **Discipline Recommendations**	Membership Care Committee	Bishop & Immediate Supervisor
3. **Discipline Administered**	Official Board	Regional MEGaP Committee
4. **Appeal of Discipline**	Appeal heard by Official Board	Appeal heard by Regional MEGaP Committee
5. **Trial**	Tried by Committee elected by BOA	Tried by Committee #1- nominated and elected by National MEGaP
6. **Appeal of Trial procedures**	None	Appeal heard by Committee #2 –nominated and elected by BOA
7. **Second Trial**	None	Tried by Committee #2

***CGC**
Revised 11/12/05

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THE MANUAL OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN CANADA

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