

Women in Free/Methodist Ministry

- **1748** Wesley refuses to allow Methodist women to preach vs. Quaker practices
- **1755** Wesley allows women to preach in limited ways (read Scripture, tell their stories, and invite response) but not administer the Lord's Supper
- **1771** Wesley, moved by Mary Bosanquet's argument and exegesis, was willing to make exceptions (privately) to the ordinary rules of discipline, recognizing God's extraordinary call and dispensation of certain women to preach
- **1861** B. T. Roberts argues for the inclusion of women in the work of building the kingdom of God at the Genesee Convention (FMC 1 year old)
- **1874** General Conference establishes a class of ministers called evangelists (both men and women licensed); called of God to preach the gospel and promote revival but not called to a pastoral charge
- **1878** Mary Crittenden and Frankie Davis are the first women to serve in Canada as itinerants under Charles Sage
- **1880** Jerusha Hagle and Martha Thomas are the first women to be under Conference appointment as pastors in Canada
- **1890** B. T. Roberts Resolution: *"That the gospel of Jesus Christ, in the provision which it makes, and in the agencies which it employs for the salvation of mankind, knows no distinction of nationality, condition or sex. Therefore, no person who is called of God, and who is duly qualified, should be refused ordination on account of sex, race, or condition."* (Vote 37 to 41 against)
- **1891** B. T. Roberts publishes *Ordaining Women—Biblical and Historical Insights*, stating in the preface: *"That truth may prevail, Christ be glorified, and His Kingdom be advanced on earth."*
- **1893** B. T. Roberts dies without seeing women fully released for work in kingdom of God through the Free Methodist Church
- **1894** General Conference acknowledges that women evangelists were also pastoring at this time by adding a paragraph on evangelists: *"When women have been licensed by the Annual Conference, and have served two successive years under appointment as pastors, they may . . . have a voice and a vote in the Annual Conference; and in the transaction of Conference business they shall be counted with the preachers."*
- **1911** General Conference grants a limited ordination to women; women could be ordained as a deacon with the provision *"that this ordination of a woman shall not be considered a step toward ordination as an Elder."* In short, women could preach and pastor, but they were barred from senior leadership in the church.
- **1974** the North American General Conference (FMCIC was a part of this) passed a resolution "giving women equal status with men in the ministry of the church. The vote passed unanimously
- Days after the General Conference resolution M. Jean Perry (Pittsburgh Conference) was the first woman ordained as elder. This was followed quickly by Ina Ellis, stepmother of Bishop Paul Ellis (Wabash). And then within the year, Mona McKeown was the third woman to be ordained (Pacific Northwest Conference)
- **1977** Marion Gilmer is the first woman in Canada after 1974 to be ordain as an elder after having been ordained deacon in 1945. Also, Edith Mainprize; ordained Deacon 1951, as Elder 1977
- **1990** The Free Methodist Church in Canada becomes a General Conference
- **1995** Mary-Elsie Wolfe is the first woman to serve on the FMCIC National Leadership Team under Bishop Gary Walsh
- **2019** Linda Adams is elected (US) as the first female bishop in any Free Methodist General Conference in its 160-year history
- **2024** Bishop Linda Adams voted in as Bishop serving the Free Methodist Church In Canada. Bishop Adams is the only Bishop to have ever been elected and serve two different General Conferences