

IS GOD CALLING **YOU**  
*to Ordained Ministry?*



*Working Together* in the 21st Century





## *Jesus invited* people to Himself.

*He called* individuals into a relationship of devoted following after Him. His promise was that fully devoted followers would experience an abundant life. We call such people disciples. *He also sent* selected disciples to represent Him in ministry: "The harvest is so great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest. Ask him to send out more workers for his fields" (Matthew 9:37-38, NLT).

## *Jesus sent* workers in His cause.

Paul wrote about how individuals become working partners with Christ in the field: "(Christ) gave gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers." Why did He do this? "Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church" (Ephesians 4:11-12, NLT).

## *The work* of equipping workers *continues.*

The task of equipping God's people to do Jesus' work and build up the church is a grand opportunity. When Jesus says to a person, "I want you to do that," there is no greater invitation or calling. When Jesus asks us to partner with Him, He asks us to do what He did through the power of the Holy Spirit: "... to preach Good News to the poor, ... to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed ... ." (Luke 4:18, NLT). The wondering and wandering of people in the 21st century only increases the need for leadership by called, competent and godly workers who equip the church for ministry.

Just as Jesus sent apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, so today He continues to draw near so as to send individuals far and wide in His work. Ultimately, God and only God can call such a minister.

# Jesus calls in various ways

## 1 The call may come through the spiritual insights of discerning Christians.

Often God calls women and men through the Spirit-guided prompting of other Christians. They may ask, "Have you considered becoming a minister?" Their insight could well constitute the beginning of God's call. Paul, for example, recognized the anointing and call of God on Titus, Silas and Timothy.

## 2 The call may come through seeing and responding to a need.

Many have moved into ministry because they saw a match between their gifts and the demands of ministry. God used this insight to call them.

## 3 The call may come through a challenge to serve or witness.

Christ called four of His disciples, who were fishermen by trade, by saying: "Come be my disciples and I will show you how to fish for people" (Mark 2:17, NLT). The image was clear. Fishermen by training, they were called to put their interests and skills to a higher purpose in His kingdom.

## 4 The call may come through a direct encounter with Jesus.

Paul said, about his encounters with Jesus: "I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't do it!" (1 Corinthians 9:16, NLT).

When such an encounter happens to you, it cannot be set aside for something less fulfilling.

God faithfully nudges us by any and many means. Our ready response puts us in the center of His will. That is a great place to be.



# What kind of person *might answer the call?*

## 1 One who is being made new in Christ.

Paul wrote to new Christians that, "... there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God's likeness — righteous, holy, and true" (Ephesians 4:23-24, NLT). If one has not moved beyond the old way of life, one cannot be a partner in Christ's work.



## 2 One who is living a Spirit-directed life.

"If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Let the Holy Spirit fill and control you" (Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18, NLT). If we are not willing to yield to God, how can we work effectively for God?

## 3 One who is growing toward maturity as a disciple.

Paul wrote to his young assistant and budding minister, Timothy: "Be an example to all believers in what you teach, in the way you live, in your love, your faith and your purity" (1 Timothy 5:12).

## 4 One who is a life-long learner.

Those who lead others must prepare themselves to do so. Again, Paul wrote to Timothy: "Work hard so God can approve you. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and one who correctly explains the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

## 5 One who is wholeheartedly dedicated to serving Christ.

Jesus said, "If you want to be my follower you must love me more than your own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters — yes, more than your own life. Otherwise you cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26, NLT).

## 6 One who loves and can work with people.

"Care for the flock of God entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly ... because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people ... lead them by your good example" (1 Peter 5:2-4, NLT). Even if you are not naturally high in relational skills, you can learn to love and lead people toward Christ.

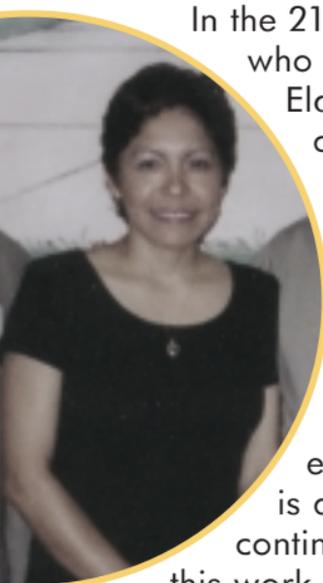
## 7 One who is flexible.

In an increasingly diverse culture the Christian faith must adapt methods and styles to the realities of its culture. Paul's life modeled it for us: "I become a servant of everyone ... I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ. I fit in ... " (1 Corinthians 9:19-23, NLT).

## In conclusion ...

In the 21st-century church, we call these workers who are called and sent by God, "elders."

Elders serve in a variety of ministries in the church, but their primary focus is on three major areas: ministry of the Word of God, the sacraments, and maintaining order and discipline. Some may serve as educators, evangelists, cross-cultural workers or chaplains, but the majority serve as pastors of local churches. This task of pastoring (leading, maturing and equipping a group of disciples) a church is a massive responsibility. We believe God continues to call and prepare individuals for this work. We also have experienced that when God calls, He provides.



You can read about the nature and implications of this ministry role in the *Free Methodist Book of Discipline* (see ¶5300, ¶5400) and the Ordination Ritual for elders (see ¶8400). If you sense that God is talking to you about ministering full time in kingdom work through the church, we encourage you to investigate these helpful materials.

In the New Testament church the call of God is confirmed by both the Holy Spirit and the church (Acts 13:3). Do you feel a sense of God's calling? If so, contact your local pastor, conference superintendent or the Ministerial Credentialing Services office of the Free Methodist Church (1-800-342-5531 or [www.freemethodistchurch.org](http://www.freemethodistchurch.org)). You may be on your way to serving in the greatest calling for the largest entity on earth: the church universal of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such a partnership with Jesus is a grand adventure.



## Ordained Ministry in the Free Methodist Church

Taken from the *Free Methodist Book of Discipline*

### Preamble

#### ¶5300

It is biblical for the church to set apart particular persons for special tasks of leadership. These persons bear witness to an inward call of the Holy Spirit. They are examined and set apart by public ordination, including the laying on of hands after the pattern of the early church.

These men and women ordained by the church are characterized by both gifts and graces. Gifts are special endowments of abilities. Graces are special qualities of character. Both have their source in the enabling Holy Spirit. Although the church must discern and cultivate those who have such endowments, ordination is always first and foremost an act of God's calling and anointing. In each assignment, the ordained minister follows

the model of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who gave His life for the sheep (John 10:1-18; Ezekiel 34), served willingly and selflessly (1 Peter 5:1-4) and commanded the undershepherds to feed the sheep (John 21:15-17).



Free Methodist ministers may carry out their task under appointment as pastors of particular congregations or they may be given other assignments. In either case, they are called to provide Spirit-filled leadership in the church to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. A healthy church, reproducing more and better disciples as well as new churches, will be characterized by vital worship, evangelistic and social action, Christian nurture and fellowship.

Ordained ministers commit themselves to equipping the whole body of believers to these ends. Biblically and historically, they are set apart for the study and proclamation of the Word of God, intercessory prayer, the winning of persons to Christ, the administration of the sacraments and the defense of the gospel.

Free Methodist ministers under appointment as pastors of churches are called to be leaders of God's people. Leadership requires vision, daring, moving people to action and living with the turbulence change brings. Pastoral leadership is rooted in a deep love for Christ and His compassion for human need. God's resources are abundantly available for all who embrace this task in courageous and radical obedience.

Ordained elders may be elected to lead the church at large as bishops or superintendents. Under the direction of the bishop they may also be given other assignments, such as those of general church administrators, chaplains, missionaries, evangelists or theological teachers in universities or seminaries.

# Qualifications for Pastoral Ministry

¶5310

**A.** A person called by God enters a vocation which through biblical tradition and Methodist heritage carries significant responsibilities. Dealing with the souls of people and leading the church in making disciples requires these qualities and skills: spiritual qualifications, personal characteristics, pastoral care, communication and leadership.

**B.** These qualities are intended to assist the church. Ordained ministers should examine themselves in light of these; conferences should publicly review these when designing evaluation and reporting instruments for pastors; ministerial education and guidance boards should consider these qualities and skills when interviewing and guiding ministers.

## 1. Spiritual Qualifications.

The candidate:

- a. is committed to Jesus Christ as Lord;
- b. shows evidence of integrity through holiness of heart and life;
- c. displays the fruit of the Holy Spirit;
- d. receives and gives forgiveness;
- e. possesses healthy self-esteem and maintains a positive attitude;
- f. demonstrates faith, creativity and initiative;
- g. respects people regardless of race, gender or economic status; and
- h. models a teachable spirit.

## 2. Personal Characteristics.

The candidate:

- a. is called to ministry;
- b. practices spiritual disciplines;
- c. is gifted for leadership;
- d. models a balanced life and a healthy self-discipline;
- e. maintains freedom from addictions;
- f. engages in life-long learning;
- g. submits biblically to authority;
- h. seeks professional and personal accountability; and
- i. has the support of his/her spouse, if married.



### 3. Pastoral Care.

The candidate:

- a. loves his/her family as Christ loves the church;
- b. responds appropriately and warmly to people;
- c. embodies a passion for making disciples;
- d. ensures appropriate care for the people of God;
- e. builds up people and inspires hope;
- f. demonstrates interpersonal skills; and
- g. resolves conflict effectively.

### 4. Communication.

The candidate:

- a. handles the Word of God correctly;
- b. calls people to faith in Christ;
- c. understands the culture, community and congregation;
- d. utilizes effective means of communication;
- e. affirms and articulates Wesleyan theology;
- f. prepares thoroughly for public presentation;
- g. persuades people to make godly, life-changing decisions;
- h. challenges the status quo in love, when necessary; and
- i. facilitates an environment of holy worship.



### 5. Leadership.

The candidate:

- a. leads out of personal and corporate prayer;
- b. articulates a vision from God;
- c. sets strategic goals to accomplish the vision;
- d. instills congregational ownership of vision and goals;
- e. mobilizes resources to fulfill the vision;
- f. practices sound principles in accomplishing change;
- g. identifies, attracts and equips leaders;
- h. fosters a positive atmosphere;
- i. participates in the denomination's mission; and
- j. promotes involvement in world evangelization.

## Steps Leading Toward Ordination ¶5320

There are four steps to becoming an ordained minister in the Free Methodist Church.

**A.** The person sensing the call of God and the church to pastoral ministry is first licensed as a local ministerial candidate (see ¶6500).

**B.** Step two involves acceptance by the annual conference as a conference ministerial candidate (see ¶5340).

**C.** Conference ministerial candidates, upon recommendation of the ministerial education and guidance board, are received into annual conference membership and elected to elders orders (see ¶5400).

**D.** Ordination as elder completes the process (see ¶8400).





*The Good Shepherd  
said  
"feed my sheep."*

— Paraphrase of John 21:17, NLT



This brochure is produced by Free Methodist Communications, a ministry team dedicated to connecting Free Methodist churches and people with each other, with our God-given identity and unique mission, and with the needs of the world.

For more information and ministry resources from the Free Methodist Church of North America, and to discover opportunities to interact with our churches and people, visit our Web site at:

[www.freemethodistchurch.org](http://www.freemethodistchurch.org)