

all that Free Methodist people do. Evangelism involves honest concern for others the Free Methodist Church as an aggressive plant or reaching people for Christ and planting new churches.

The Free Methodist Church maintains an active foreign missions program of evangelism and Christian education.

### **Free Methodists Are Family**

Free Methodists are a connected people sharing resources in order to do the Lord's work. *The Yearbook*, the *Light and Life* magazine, and *Missions People* magazine (formerly *The Missionary Tidings*), as well as many other printed resources help to create a workable communication network. *The Book of Discipline* helps to tie the church together with a common set of beliefs and a shared heritage. In organization there are local, district, conference, and general church levels. Whether from North America or Africa, Japan or Mexico, Free Methodists join under a common Constitution. We practice our faith by the same Membership Covenant. Free Methodists are definitely one family.



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# What Is a Free Methodist?

**F**ree Methodists are people who follow Christ's teachings. These are explained in the Holy Bible, God's Word. The Bible is the guide to a satisfying life. Free Methodists earnestly seek to spread His Word throughout the world. They proclaim Christ's love for all people. The Free Methodist Church is a well-recognized Christian denomination emphasizing holy living.

### **Why Free? Why Methodist?**

Historically, the Free Methodist Church was organized at Pekin, New York, August 23, 1860. The first bishop of the new church was Benjamin Titus (B.T.) Roberts. He was a champion for equal rights (especially for women), writer, publisher, Christian educator, and holiness preacher. The influence of his character and ministry continue today.

In 1860, the "free" in Free Methodist emphasized certain basic freedoms found in the Scriptures:

- ◆ Human freedom, upholding the right of every person to be free, denying the right of anyone to hold slaves;
- ◆ Freedom and simplicity in worship;
- ◆ Free seats in church, so the poor will not be kept out or discriminated against;
- ◆ Freedom and openness in relationships and loyalties so the truth may always be spoken freely (avoiding vows of secrecy);
- ◆ Freedom of lay persons to be fully involved at all levels of decision making;
- ◆ Freedom from materialism in order to help the poor.

The biblical principles on which these freedoms are based are as important today as ever.

We are “methodists,” believing in a disciplined, simple lifestyle. Our witness to the world is through enthusiastic, orderly methods.

## The Mission and Vision

The mission statement of the church is a declaration of purpose that explains our uniqueness.

◆ The Mission of all churches is the same and is shaped by both the Great Commandment and Great Commission. God is glorified when the church loves (The Great Commandment) and participates in His plan of redemption (The Great Commission). The mission of the church is for the whole church to achieve what God clearly directed us to do.

The church’s mission simply stated is *“To love God, and people, and to make disciples.”*

◆ Vision is each church’s unique contribution to the mission of loving and making disciples. The Free Methodist Church has a

unique history with a unique vision of how best to love God and make disciples: to focus on full salvation (holiness), live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, love practically, tangibly and profoundly as part of our Wesleyan call. Our vision calls us to love God and humanity and serve in ways that express this full salvation and activating love. The result is more than personal spiritual health. It is to realize the Kingdom of God on earth.

Our vision, simply stated is *“To bring wholeness to the world through healthy biblical communities of holy people multiplying disciples, leaders, groups and churches.”*

God has given us, throughout our history and even now, the charge to lead people into a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ which makes them whole people through holy living and holy loving. The results have been a Kingdom movement committed to wholeness of individuals and societies. To that end we have labored and continue to labor to address poverty, eliminate slavery, affirm the dignity of all persons, restore equality to women in all places — church and world — and help all people in bondage discover freedom in Christ.

The Free Methodist Church offers training for service, and membership in a group of people who share similar beliefs and values. The Free Methodist Church will help you find a relationship with Jesus. Through Him you can receive forgiveness and strength for living a holy life. In short, the Free Methodist Church will help you to be the best you can be.

## Distinctive Principles

The Free Methodist Church emphasizes certain issues and concerns in its preaching and activities. A church must have an identity if it is to be healthy and carry out its purposes.

Explanations follow of five of these emphases that have top priority.

### ◆ Scriptural Holiness

The Free Methodist Church recognizes the Bible as the rule for all matters of faith and life. Free Methodists practice a positive holiness that is a disciplined lifestyle motivated by Christian love. The holy life, a life of wholeness, is life lived at its best. It is the normal way for Christians to live.

### ◆ Practical Godliness

The Free Methodist Church is not satisfied with just talk. Rules of conduct, detailed in the Membership Covenant, spell out practical guidelines for living a truly holy life. In this way, walk and talk match up.

### ◆ Social Concern

Our Methodist heritage is lived out in social sensitivity, in Christian love shown through compassion and service. Both in North America and overseas, the Free Methodist Church sponsors programs to meet human need: hospitals, schools, homes for the elderly, and a worldwide child sponsorship program.

### ◆ Christian Education

The Free Methodist Church believes that Christianity and education go together. B.T. Roberts, a founder of Free Methodism, also started its first school, Chili Seminary, now Roberts Wesleyan College in North Chili, New York. Today there are six more church related schools of higher education. Concern for quality Christian education is also reflected in local churches through Sunday school classes and midweek programs for all ages.

### ◆ Evangelism and Foreign Missions

Winning people to Christ is at the heart of