

Chapter 4 General Administration

General Conference Free Methodist Church – USA

Preamble

¶4000 “It is desired that all things be considered as in the immediate presence of God; that every person speak freely whatever is in his heart. While we are conversing, let us have an especial care to set God always before us. In the intermediate hours, let us redeem all the time we can for private exercises. Therein let us give ourselves to prayer for one another, and for a blessing on our labor.” – John Wesley (Large Minutes)

Purpose

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- A. The General Conference shall have general organizational, legislative, judicial, promotional and supervisory powers over the activities of the Church. It shall have power to determine the number of its officers, their qualifications for office and the manner of their selection.
- B. The General Conference is the primary legislative body in the Church. It shall have full power to make rules and regulations for the Church, under the limitations and restrictions described in ¶210-213. *Robert’s Rules of Order* in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure in the General Conference sessions.
- C. It is the inalienable right of any annual conference, society or individual member of the Free Methodist Church to submit protests, petitions or resolutions to be processed by the Free Methodist Church – USA. Protests and petitions will be submitted to the General Conference Board of Administration. The Board of Administration will determine the appropriate body to consider such protests or petitions. Resolutions will be submitted for consideration through the General Conference resolution review process.
- D. Resolutions must be processed through the Resolutions Committees of the annual conferences. Those Committees shall review, rate and forward them to the General Conference Resolutions Review Committee, appointed by the Board of Administration, which will determine whether a resolution should be processed by the entire General Conference or by the Board of Administration of the FMC-USA. Those resolutions assigned to the BOA will be processed during its spring meeting immediately preceding the General Conference. The BOA will issue a report on the disposition of all resolutions it has processed. That report will be sent to all delegates in advance of the General Conference. At the General Conference, any delegate may

move that a resolution be considered by the Body. Such a motion must be approved by a majority vote of the General Conference.

Composition

¶4020 The General Conference shall be composed of the bishops and an equal number of ministerial and lay delegates to be elected by each annual conference at its last session prior to the session of the General Conference, except that conferences held within nine months of the General Conference may elect their delegates the year before.

Ministerial Delegates

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- A. Each annual conference and provisional annual conference shall be entitled to one ministerial delegate in the General Conference, and whenever an annual conference shall reach an aggregate of 800 adult lay members, it shall be entitled to two ministerial delegates, and to an additional ministerial delegate for every subsequent 600 adult lay members, provided, however, that in no case shall a person be counted more than once in the election of delegates.
- B. The Superintendent of a provisional annual conference or annual conference shall serve as first ministerial delegate of that conference by virtue of his/her position. Additional ministerial delegates shall be elected by the ministers of the provisional annual conference or annual conference by ballot. Delegates may be nominated by the Nominating Committee if the annual conference so chooses, not precluding nominations from the floor. They shall present at least one more nominee than available delegate positions. Using the nominees, both delegates and reserve delegates shall be elected by ballot. Candidates shall be elders and members of the annual conference that elected them, both at the time of their election and at the time of the General Conference. When a ministerial delegate leaves the conference from which he/she is elected prior to the time of the General Conference by accepting an appointment to serve another conference, he/she shall be automatically disqualified as a delegate.
- C. Ministerial delegates and reserve ministerial delegates shall be elected by separate ballot and each shall require a majority vote of those present and voting. In emergencies where neither elected nor reserve delegates can serve in this capacity, the Board of Administration (or its equivalent) of that annual conference shall have the authority to elect by majority vote the additional reserve delegates to serve.

Lay Delegates

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- A. Each annual conference and provisional annual conference shall be entitled to the same number of lay as ministerial delegates in the General Conference.
- B. Lay delegates to the General Conference shall be elected by ballot of the lay delegates of the provisional annual or annual conference they are to represent. Delegates may be nominated by the Nominating Committee, if the conference so chooses, not precluding nominations from the floor. They shall present at least one more nominee than available delegate positions. Using the nominees, both delegates and reserve delegates shall be elected by ballot. They must at the time of election and at the time of the General Conference be members of the Church in full relation within the bounds of the conference which elects them.
- C. Lay delegates and reserve lay delegates shall be elected by separate ballot and each shall require a majority vote of those present and voting. In emergencies where neither elected nor reserve delegates can serve in this capacity, the Board of Administration (or its equivalent) of that annual conference shall have authority to elect by majority vote the additional reserve delegates to serve.

Delegate Credentials

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- A. The secretary of each annual conference shall furnish certificates of election to all delegates, signed by the president and the secretary as the credentials upon which they are to be admitted to the General Conference.
- B. A delegate to the General Conference is not a member until present with credentials and seated.
- C. Conferences of mission origin may send their delegates to General Conference as provided in their several constitutions which have been approved by the General Conference.

Time and Place

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- A. The General Conference shall meet every four years. (see ¶4320.M).
- B. The bishop(s), or if there be none, the secretary of the General Conference shall, whenever two thirds of the annual conferences shall demand it, call an extra session of the General Conference, fixing the date and the time of assembling later than the next ensuing session of each of the annual conferences.

- C. The determination of venue for the General Conference shall be made by the Board of Administration serving in the quadrennium preceding said General Conference.
- D. The Friday preceding every General Conference shall be observed as a day of fasting and prayer.

Organizing Principles

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- A. The bishops shall preside at the sittings of the General Conference in such order as they may determine. If no bishop is present, the General Conference shall elect by ballot an elder to preside.
- B. The General Conference secretary (previously elected by the Board of Administration) shall continue in office until a successor is named and shall be custodian of the General Conference records and journals. A record of conscientious objectors shall be kept as reported by the annual conference secretaries (see ¶3331.B, ¶5130.B.8).
- C. At all times when General Conference is in session, two-thirds of all the delegates elected by the annual conferences shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The General Conference may recess from time to time until a quorum is present.
- D. The members of the General Conference shall deliberate and vote as one body; nevertheless, upon the call of one-fourth of the members present and voting, the house shall divide; and it shall require a majority of the ministerial and of the lay delegates to pass any vote or transact any business.

Study Commission on Doctrine

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- A. A Study Commission on Doctrine (SCOD) shall serve the General Conference by studying theological and social issues facing the Church, and make recommendations to the General Conference.
- B. The Study Commission on Doctrine will be composed of the Board of Bishops, plus seven additional members to be nominated by the Board of Bishops and confirmed by the Board of Administration and will serve for one quadrennium.

Bishops

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Bishops are the general overseers of the Church. They lead the Church to fulfill its mission which requires them to be holy examples with skill and experience to provide that oversight. They must understand the nature and purpose of the Church. They must also be able to communicate clearly the gospel, the mission and vision of the Free Methodist Church; possess a well cultivated understanding of other cultures; and, identify, develop, and lead godly, competent leaders. Each bishop shall be amenable to the General Conference for the discharge of his/her official duties and shall be responsible for his/her conduct to the annual conference to which he/she belongs.

The Nomination and Election of Bishops

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- A. The General Conference shall elect by ballot two or more traveling elders as bishops to serve as the pastoral overseers of various areas of the denomination who shall constitute the Board of Bishops. These are to be persons who exhibit exemplary character and leadership qualities, and who embody deep commitment to the mission, doctrine and theology of the Free Methodist Church. The term of office of bishops shall begin 90 days after the close of the General Conference at which they are elected. They shall remain in office for four years or until the 90 days following the subsequent General Conference and, unless the General Conference decides upon a lesser number of bishops, until others shall be elected in their places.
- B. The nomination and election process shall be as follows:
 1. Call to Prayer: During the year prior to General Conference, the Board of Bishops and the Board of Administration shall call the Church to prayer, specifically focused on the election of bishops.
 2. Search Committee: A Search Committee will be formed by the FMCUSA Board of Administration each quadrennium to prayerfully seek out qualified candidates and receive nominations from annual conferences. Members of the Search Committee must be spiritually mature. Some of them must also have experience in developing or searching for candidates of significant positions of leadership. The Search Committee must include at least one lay and one clergy member from the Board of Administration. Consideration shall be given to ethnic, gender, cultural and geographical representation across the breadth of the FMCUSA.
 3. Candidate Qualifications: The nominees should have fruitful leadership experience related to the spiritual life and leadership responsibilities noted in Par. 4100 and 4120. Ethnic, gender, cultural and geographical considerations shall be given due attention in selecting nominees for bishop. Potential candidates must grant their permission to proceed through the nomination process. Nominations from annual conferences to the Search Committee must be accompanied by supporting rationale on a form designed

and provided by the Search Committee. Sitting bishops, having already been previously qualified, who are willing to continue to serve, will be placed on the ballot with the other nominees.

4. Procedures: The refined list of nominees, with supporting rationale, will be forwarded to the Board of Administration of the FMCUSA. The Board of Administration may ask the Search Committee to consider (an) additional nominee(s). The total number of nominees for bishops forwarded to the Board of Administration will exceed by at least two the number of bishops currently serving. The General Conference secretary shall compile the nominee information in standardized format and distribute it, by paper or electronic means, to all delegates no later than thirty days prior to the opening of General Conference. The ballots for election of bishops shall consist of the names of these nominees and the incumbent bishops who are willing to continue to serve.
 5. Lead Bishop: Following the election of the bishops, the Bishops Search Committee shall convene to name a Lead Bishop and bring its recommendation to the General Conference for its affirmation prior to the conclusion of the General Conference.
- C. The Board of Bishops shall develop an internship plan for newly-elected bishops. The plan will include training in the duties and responsibilities of the bishop, debriefing on sensitive matters, transfer of materials, informing on pressing and current denominational issues, coaching on matters related to personal preparedness for the office and accompanying the seated bishops on necessary travel for the sake of introduction, transition and relationship building. Such training is to take place commencing upon the election of the newly elected bishop(s) and culminating in the full transfer of authority 90 days subsequent to the General Conference at which he/she/they were elected. Compensation for interning bishops will be determined by the Board of Administration.
- D. In the event of a vacancy on the Board of Bishops during the interim between sessions of the General Conference, the preceding General Conference shall fill the vacancy with an election held by paper or electronic ballot. Existing rules for the election of bishops by the General Conference shall apply.

The Role of a Bishop

¶4120 To assist the bishops in directing the Church, these leadership priorities are set forth.

- A. Regarding self and family, the bishop shall:
 1. feed his/her soul (heart, mind, spirit), diligently attending to the means of grace;
 2. love his/her spouse and family, maintaining a household of faith; and
 3. fulfill his/her vows as a baptized disciple and elder called to leadership.
- B. Regarding the General Church, the bishop shall:

1. lead in word, sacrament and order. The task of the “word” applies to bishops in two regards, to teach the apostolic gospel and to protect the Church from error. Regarding “sacrament” (and worship) the Church gives praise to God, pleads with Him for mercy and receives the grace God mediates to His people. Bishops lead the Church in its adoration and petition of God and in upholding the sacredness of the Lord’s Supper and baptism as means of grace. Regarding “order,” bishops lead the Church by articulating its mission and vision. Thus, bishops must have a deep commitment to the Church’s mission, insight into the complexities of human nature and skill at guiding others;
 2. cast the vision of the Free Methodist Church and inspire its leaders, members and attendees to advance the vision, live according to Kingdom values, love God and serve him sacrificially and faithfully;
 3. encourage every Church to be a healthy biblical community of holy people, multiplying disciples, leaders, groups and Churches.
- C. Regarding Annual Conferences. The bishop shall exercise or delegate his/her authority to:
1. multiply godly, competent leaders, who disciple and equip others;
 2. train, ordain, transfer, cite, or suspend pastors and leaders as need and circumstances require;
 3. serve with executive authority as the conference president;
 4. disciple superintendents and conference leaders to:
 - a. grow spiritually and develop professionally in their calling,
 - b. identify, recruit, equip, deploy and encourage godly, competent leaders,
 - c. encourage and equip pastors and leaders to achieve missional priorities,
 - d. develop growth strategies,
 - e. maintain our Wesleyan and Free Methodist distinctives.
 5. serve as chair of the Ministerial Appointments Committees of his/her assigned conferences (see ¶5220);
 6. form new provisional and annual conferences as the needs of the work demand, subject to approval of the General Conference Board of Administration;
 7. decide all questions of law at annual conferences, subject to an appeal to the General Conference. A bishop’s decision upon a point of law arising in annual conference session shall be the rule unless reversed by the General Conference.

Retirement of Bishops

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- A. A bishop may retire:
1. following his/her sixty-second birthday if the bishop so chooses; or
 2. at any time because of failing health. Disability status shall be determined by the Board of Administration upon recommendation from either the human resources department or the Board of Administration Benefits Committee, based upon medical evidence.

- B. When a bishop, or former bishop, retires he/she shall be given the title of Bishop Emeritus. Such shall be granted by the FMCUSA Board of Administration, provided he/she has given honorable and distinguished service to the Church as bishop for a minimum of six years.
- C. The title of Bishop Emeritus may, due to extenuating circumstances as verified by the conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board, be reviewed and/or adjusted by the FMCUSA Board of Administration.

Board of Bishops

¶4200 The Board of Bishops provides primary pastoral leadership of the denomination with ecclesiastical authority to lead and direct the Church, and develop and articulate the purpose, vision, values and expected outcomes of the Church. They shall convene immediately following the General Conference in which they are elected to determine their roles and titles on the Board of Bishops other than the role and title, "Lead Bishop," and their assignments for fulfilling their duties and responsibilities as articulated in ¶4120. They shall assume responsibility for the fruitfulness and vitality of the annual conferences and shall recommend to the General Conference Board of Administration changes in an annual conference's status resulting in merger, closure or realignment.

Board of Administration

The Nomination and Election of the Board of Administration

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- A. The General Conference shall elect a Board of Administration, determine its powers, and prescribe the qualifications of its members and manner of their selection. The Board shall be comprised of:
 - 1. all the U.S. bishops;
 - 2. sufficient additional elders to give a total of twelve clergy (equal representation from each U.S. area – Eastern, Central and Western);
 - 3. twelve lay members (equal representation from each U.S. area);
 - 4. such honorary members as the Board of Administration shall designate and approve.
- B. Each annual conference may, if it desires, submit up to two clergy and two lay nominees for election to the Board of Administration. Such a nominee shall:
 - 1. be widely known in the community, church and conference as a follower of Christ in word, wisdom, attitude and deed;
 - 2. have exercised leadership gifts in the Free Methodist Church;
 - 3. have provided quality leadership in both the local church and annual conference;
 - 4. have served, or be serving, as a delegate to or leader of an annual conference, or be an ordained elder in the conference;

5. have demonstrated strong ability to engage in a meaningful way on matters of mission and vision of the Church – locally and globally; and
 6. have demonstrated commitment to attend and positively participate in scheduled meetings.
- C. Submission of such nominees must be completed by the nominating annual conference no later than sixty days prior to the General Conference, and must be submitted on the provided nomination form, including biographical data. A one-paragraph introduction of each nominee may be attached to the nominating form.

Nomination forms from each U.S. area will be sent to the General Conference delegates from that area no later than thirty days prior to the General Conference. The forms will also be distributed prior to balloting for election of the Board of Administration.

The delegates from each area will caucus during General Conference as a regular part of the agenda with a current bishop serving as chair of the caucus for the purpose of nominating its representatives to the next Board of Administration. Prior to General Conference, and again during the caucus, the nomination forms will be distributed to all delegates within the respective caucus area and the candidates introduced. The General Conference delegates from each area shall select their nominees by ballot from the nominee slate and present them to the General Conference for election to the Board of Administration.

A majority of the Board of Administration members shall be delegates to the General Conference electing them.

Organization

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- A. The Board of Administration shall meet immediately at the close of the General Conference to organize itself by electing a chair, vice chair and the Nominating Committee, from its membership. The incoming Board of Bishops will nominate the chair and vice-chair of the Board of Administration.
- B. A Nominating Committee of not less than six persons, including two bishops and consisting of equal lay and clergy representation shall be elected by the Board of Administration to subsequently nominate the members and chairs of the committees and task forces of the Board. In the selection process, sensitivity to regional, ethnic and gender diversity should be demonstrated.
- C. The Nominating Committee shall nominate a person who is not a member of the Board of Administration to serve as secretary of the General Conference. This person shall also serve as the secretary of the Board. The Board shall elect the secretary, who shall serve with voice but no vote, unless his/her vote is needed to establish lay-clergy balance.

- D. It shall be the secretary's duty to make a full report of the proceedings of the Board of Administration to the General Conference.
- E. The Board of Administration may employ a general church secretary as a denominational executive who shall then assume all the responsibilities and authority of the secretary of the General Conference and other duties as may be assigned by the Board.
- F. Termination of membership in the Free Methodist Church shall automatically terminate membership on the Board of Administration.
- G. No General Conference officer other than the bishops and the secretary may be a member of the Board of Administration.
- H. The Board shall assign its work to committees and boards as it shall determine and may elect an Executive Committee. The Board may determine the rules and regulations for the conduct of its business.

Authority and Responsibilities

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- A. The Board of Administration shall be responsible for policy, procedural, financial, and legal issues during the interim between General Conference sessions.
- B. It shall meet at least annually and whenever the bishops or one-third of the members shall deem it necessary.
- C. A majority of the members elected shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.
- D. Each member of the Board of Administration owes primary duty to the Board and secondary duty to the committees to which he/she has been elected.
- E. The Board of Administration shall have power to accept resignations, fill vacancies and remove for cause any of its members during the interim between General Conference sessions, subject to the provisions of the *Book of Discipline*. Persistent neglect of duty and excessive absence of scheduled meetings qualifies as cause.
- F. The Board of Administration shall elect the Board of Directors of The Free Methodist Foundation. The Board of Directors of the foundation may suggest names to the Nominating Committee of the Board of Administration.

- G. The Board of Administration shall set the salaries of the bishops and the, Chief Operating Officer considering the recommendations from the Budget and Finance Committee.
- H. World Ministries Center Personnel
The Board of Administration shall have power to employ suitable personnel in the leadership of the various Church ministries and may delegate this responsibility to the Board of Bishops.
- I. The finances of the Church shall be administered by the Director of Finance under the leadership of the Chief Operating Officer. The Director of Finance shall be bonded.
- J. Financial Reporting
1. The Board of Administration shall employ a certified public accountant firm to audit annually the accounts of the General Church. The auditor will make an annual report in writing to the Board of Administration with recommendations, if any.
 2. The proper officers shall publish in the *Yearbook* annually full and detailed statements of the assets, liabilities, net worth and financial standing of the General Church and its corporations.
 3. Women's Ministries International and Men's Ministries International auxiliaries shall make and file annually their financial statements with the secretary of the Board of Administration.
- K. The Board of Administration shall oversee all church property (see ¶6400).
- L. The Board of Administration shall have the power to establish the time and place for the meeting of the General Conference. It shall make appropriate arrangements for the General Conference.
- M. Conference Boundaries
1. Any question of conference boundaries that may arise in the interim between General Conferences shall be referred to the Board of Administration.
 2. The Board of Administration may prepare proposals to merge two or more conferences or otherwise revise existing conference boundaries and recommend such proposals to the conferences involved and to the bishop of record. Changes will be made upon the majority vote of the annual conferences concerned and with the consent of a majority of the Board of Administration. In the event that the proposal is rejected, a written rationale for the rejection shall be submitted to the Board of Administration by the conferences. The Board of Administration shall have authority to revise the proposal if it deems it wise and resubmit it to the conferences. The Board of Administration may send representatives to the conferences to make a full explanation.

3. Conferences considering merger or the revision of their boundaries (except as provided in ¶6850) may initiate discussions with their concerned neighbors, keeping the bishop of record informed. The bishop shall inform the Board of Administration which may convey its thinking to the conferences through the bishop of record if it so desires. Approval requires a majority vote of the annual conferences involved, voting separately, and a majority vote of the Board of Administration.
4. When an annual conference merges with another annual conference, the bishop of record shall assure that the records and archival materials are conveyed to the merged conference or, in the case of the dissolution of a conference, that such materials are deposited in the Marston Memorial Historical Center for filing and preservation.

N. Christian Schools

The Free Methodist Church – USA shall encourage and promote the establishing of Christian day schools (see ¶5270 and ¶6340).

- O The members of the Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church – USA, elected by the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church – USA, shall constitute the members of the Free Methodist Church – USA Corporation (see ¶9100).

- P. The Board of Administration of the General Conference shall have the power to cite a society or an annual conference to appear before it to show cause why it should not be declared in a state of insubordination when reliable information reaches the Board that the accused body is openly in a state of insubordination and disobedience. 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 upon the secretary of the accused body. If the Board should find it guilty or if it should admit guilt, the Board shall have the power to suspend it of all rights and of recognition as a Free Methodist body until the ensuing General Conference, which shall have final disposition of the case.

If the convicted body should reform and pledge its loyalty to the Church and the *Book of Discipline* and show contrition for its insubordination, the Board of Administration shall have the power to reinstate it.

Finance and Pension

Budget and Finance Committee

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- A. The Board of Administration shall elect a Budget and Finance Committee of not less than five members. All members, including the chair, shall be elected with

nominations from the Nominating Committee. A bishop and the Chief Operating Officer (COO) shall be ex-officio members of the Committee.

- B. Terms of service shall be for the interim of General Conferences.
- C. In consultation with the Budget and Finance Committee, the Board of Bishops shall hire and oversee a COO who will make a report to the Board of Administration at each of its meetings.
- D. In consultation with the COO, the Budget and Finance Committee will:
 1. recommend policy to assure good stewardship of Church financial assets, assure appropriate levels of financial performance and debt levels, maintain appropriate financial flexibility, select investment managers, negotiate fees and review performance and assure proper accounting and reporting of all Church financial records;
 2. recommend to the Board of Administration compensation levels for the bishops and COO;
 3. provide a careful review and recommend to the Board of Administration the operating budgets of, the Free Methodist Church - USA;
 4. serve as the Audit Review Committee (less ex-officio members); and
 5. develop and recommend to the Board of Administration any changes in the model used to fund the work of the Free Methodist Church - USA.

General Church Funding

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- A. The portion of the General Church budget that pertains to world missions shall be funded by methods and programs devised by the Missions Resource Team, in consultation with the Global Advisory Team and the Missions Catalyst Committee, and approved by the Board of Administration.
- B. All other General Church ministries, including their administrative costs, shall be funded as determined by the Board of Administration upon recommendation of the Budget and Finance Committee.
- C. The Board of Administration may approve projects for promotion that are not included in the General Church budget. The Board of Administration shall develop guidelines for defining, approving, promoting and administering such projects.
- D. Approved projects outside of the General Church may be made available to individuals, groups, and organizations outside the Free Methodist Church.
- E. Contributions received at the World Ministries Center shall be applied to the Home Church Operations budget unless specifically designated otherwise by the donor.

- F. The proposed budget of each General Church ministry shall be prepared annually under the direction of the Chief Operating Officer and presented to the Budget and Finance Committee. The recommended budget shall be submitted by the Budget and Finance Committee to the Board of Administration for approval.

Social Security

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- A. The benefits available under Social Security are a part of the Church's plan for support of its retired ministers and missionaries, or their widows and orphans.
- B. It is recommended that each society, annual conference or other organization responsible for a minister's or a missionary's salary obligate itself to contribute, in addition to salary, an amount equal to at least one-half of the annual contribution, or assessment, for Social Security as a "self-employed" minister.

Pension Plan

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- A. The Board of Administration by authorization of the 1964 General Conference has established a defined contribution pension plan which became effective January 1, 1969 and covers ministers, general officers and other persons as described in the pension plan. On January 1, 1981 a defined benefit pension plan was added.
- B. The pension plan was created for the exclusive benefit of employees of the employer and their beneficiaries and shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with its being a qualified pension plan as defined in section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as the same may be amended from time to time.
- C. The trustees of the pension plans shall be the Board of Directors of the Free Methodist Church - USA, who shall be responsible for seeing that the plans are administered in accordance with the plan documents.
- D. The pension plans shall be administered by the Board of Administration serving as the Pension Board, in accordance with the rules and regulations of the plans. The details of this administrative responsibility may be delegated to a Benefits Committee that is elected from nominations from the Nominating Committee by the Board of Administration.
- E. If established, the Benefits Committee shall make recommendations concerning the administration of the plans, and shall regularly review the plans and their administration for needed clarification, procedural adjustments or amendments. The Benefits Committee's work is subject to the approval of the Board of Administration.
- F. Benefits Committee. The Benefits Committee shall:

1. administer and monitor the Free Methodist Church – USA Defined Benefit and Defined Contribution pension plans in a manner consistent with the definition of a qualified pension plan in section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 as amended. The pension plans may be amended by the General Conference or the Board of Administration. The text of such amendments shall be communicated to the participants of the plans in writing. No amendment shall abridge or annul the rights of members in respect to their accumulations as of the date of the adoption of such amendment.
 2. administer an overall policy regarding enrollments, contributions and retirement benefits that will ensure that all appropriate personnel receive a benefit;
 3. regularly review the plans' provisions and provide clarification, adjustments or amendments;
 4. receive and review annually the plans' audit and valuation for any possible benefit improvements;
 5. periodically meet with the plan actuary to review the plans' financial profile related to current and future plan participants and refer participants' issues to legal counsel when appropriate;
 6. periodically meet with the Free Methodist Foundation to receive and review reports of the plans' investment performance and fee structure;
 7. communicate with the plans' participants on a regular basis regarding plan changes and accrued benefits, and in conjunction with the Free Methodist Foundation, provide retirement financial planning;
 8. provide any necessary reports and recommendations for the plans to the Board of Administration which has ultimate responsibility for the plans' administration; and
 9. work with the administration of the World Ministries Center on benefit issues that are outside of the retirement plans.
- G. Each United States society shall contribute to the support of the defined benefit pension plan in accordance with the rules and regulations of the plan. The contribution paid by the society shall be in addition to the pastor's earnings, not a deduction from them.
- H. Any qualifying person serving a Free Methodist Church in another country shall be granted a leave of absence and shall not forfeit any pension benefits which have accrued.
- I. No participant in the pension plans shall have any right to assign, alienate, anticipate or commute any payments from the plans; and, except as otherwise prescribed by law, no payment shall be subject to the debts, contracts or engagements of any payee, nor to any judicial process to levy upon or attach the same for the payment thereof.

Free Methodist Communications

- ¶4400+ A. The purpose of Free Methodist Communications is to communicate the vision and core values of the Free Methodist Church to its constituents and to the world at large.

Free Methodist World Missions

- ¶4500+ The Free Methodist Church joyfully accepts responsibility to obey the Great Commission of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). Missionaries are sent into all the world to evangelize and make disciples, to build them together in His church (1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:20-22), and to engage in ministries of compassion and human development in the name of Christ. The Free Methodist Church initiates new Free Methodist Ministries, and services in partnership with the international church in evangelization, works of biblical justice, and church planting. Free Methodist World Missions defines its mission field globally, including the United States of America. Since the missional task is at the heart of the Church, Free Methodist World Missions is not an auxiliary of the Church but a facilitator and enabler of the Church, seeking synergies, communicating and teaching, and advocating for global and local missions.

General Missionary Board

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- A. The Board of Administration shall constitute the General Missionary Board of the Free Methodist Church – USA, which has authority over world missions functions. The General Missionary Board is incorporated and is used for special financial transactions for Free Methodist World Missions (FMWM).
- B. The objectives for which this corporation is formed are:
1. to receive, hold, pay out or dispose of any property, of whatever nature and situation as allowed by law, that may be obtained in aid of the general missionary work of the Free Methodist Church; and
 2. to acquire real estate or personal property and to hold or sell or convey the same as in its judgment may be necessary in the propagation of its missionary work.

Missions Catalyst Committee

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The Missions Catalyst Committee (MCC) is created by the Board of Administration to provide an avenue for the Missions Liaison Bishop, Missions Resource Team and Global Advisory Team to engage with people who understand and practice sound missiology and are effective in global and local ministry. As willing advocates, they share in the responsibility for the integrity and viability of the Free Methodist World Missions enterprise. The MCC serves as a sounding board for new ideas, provides counsel on

funding the mission, and offers feedback on operations. It brings FMWM policy recommendations to the Board of Administration.

Free Methodist World Missions Operations

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- A. Area Directors and the Board of Bishops are responsible for all missions work under FMCUSA oversight, regardless of the developmental stage of the church in each country.
- B. Free Methodist World Missions (FMWM) personnel shall be employed under the leadership of the Board of Bishops.
- C. The Board of Bishops, in consultation with the area directors and the Chief Operating Officer, will oversee the annual submission of a balanced budget for Free Methodist World Missions to the Board of Administration.

Global Advisory Team

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- A. The Global Advisory Team is composed of a bishop appointed by the Board of Bishops, area directors and additional FMWM leadership as determined by the Board of Bishops.
- B. The team shall oversee all missionary work originating in the Free Methodist Church - USA General Conference.
- C. Regarding general oversight, the team shall:
 1. recommend policy, strategy, funding, and goals;
 2. recommend partnerships and affiliations;
 3. serve the Church in developing and teaching a healthy missiology; and
 4. serve as an internal advisory board regarding country and area issues.
- D. Regarding field operations, the team shall:
 1. recruit, appoint, license and commission candidates for missionary service;
 2. appoint all short-term Volunteers In Service Abroad (VISA) personnel.
- E. Regarding expansion of ministries, the team shall:
 1. encourage and aid church planting among all population groups, in cooperation with a national church, whenever possible; and
 2. recognize that in areas not presently served by the Free Methodist Church, new work shall first be a mission district under the jurisdiction of Free Methodist World Missions before being established as a provisional annual or annual conference.
- F. The team shall function as the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board for mission districts under its jurisdiction.

Trustees and Property

¶4545

- A. Titles to land purchased for missions and institutions under the direction of Free Methodist World Missions shall be in the name of Free Methodist World Missions or deeded to trustees elected or approved by the General Missionary Board. Trustees may be missionaries, nationals, or both.
- B. Such trustees shall hold the property for the benefit and use of Free Methodist World Missions of the Free Methodist Church – USA. Where property cannot be titled or held in trust for Free Methodist World Missions, it shall be held for the benefit and use of the Free Methodist Church and its institutions in those countries.
- C. Any sale or disposal of property or use of funds from the sale of such property shall be with the approval and consent of the area director in consultation with the bishop of record of the Free Methodist Church – USA, and ratified by the Board of Administration.
- D. Whenever possible the tenure of the trustees shall be subject to Free Methodist World Missions and in all cases to the laws and regulations of the country where the property is located.

Mission Districts

¶4550+ When, in the judgment of the area director and the Board of Bishops, a church in formation reaches appropriate developmental markers, it may be organized as a mission district.

Provisional Annual Conferences of Mission Origin

¶4560+

- A. The normal minimum for the organization of a provisional annual conference is five ministers in full membership and three hundred lay members within its bounds.
- B. All provisional annual conferences of mission origin shall be under the jurisdiction of the Board of Bishops and the overseeing area director except where provisional annual conferences have been organized from an existing annual conference, in which case they shall be administered by the bishop of the originating annual conference.
- C. The Board of Bishops, upon the recommendation of the area director, approves the formation of a provisional annual conference from a mission district, it having adopted in principle the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church – USA and having filed the appropriate governmental registration documents (constitution), adapted to local culture and circumstances.

Annual Conferences of Mission Origin

¶4570+

- A. When a provisional annual conference has made marked advancement in national leadership, evangelistic outreach, self-government and self-support, and has reached the stage where it is able to operate satisfactorily under the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church – USA, and has a constitution that has been approved by the General Conference, or its Board of Administration, it shall be recommended to the bishop of record or the president of the conference to be organized into an annual conference as outlined in ¶4120.C.6.
- B. The normal minimum for the organization of an annual conference is ten ministers in full membership and six hundred lay members within its bounds.
- C. Any changes in constitutions of annual conferences of mission origin shall be considered by the bishop of record and area director with legal counsel for recommendation to the Board of Administration or General Conference for approval.

Provisional General or General Conferences of Mission Origin

¶4580+

- A. Requirements for forming a provisional general conference are found in ¶221 and those for a general conference in ¶222.
- B. To prepare for a new provisional general conference, the bishop of record shall form a provisional general conference task force of the superintendents, lay representatives from the participating annual conferences and the area director to prepare a provisional general conference proposal. It shall be presented to the participating annual conferences for adoption in principle.
- C. The governing body of a provisional general conference shall be composed of the suffragan bishop(s) and an equal number of lay and ministerial delegates elected by the participating annual conferences. The number of delegates shall be recommended by the bishop of record in consultation with the provisional general conference task force and be approved by the Free Methodist Church – USA Board of Administration.
- D. The Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church – USA shall elect an elder(s), a national citizen(s) of the provisional general conference country, as a suffragan bishop(s) from the nominee(s) presented by the annual conferences or the provisional general conference. A suffragan bishop is a bishop of a provisional general conference and serves under the supervision and counsel of the Board of Bishops.

- E. The suffragan bishop(s) shall provide a written annual report to the Board of Bishops of the FMCUSA.

- F. The provisional general conference shall have powers and duties conferred upon it by the Free Methodist Church – USA General Conference and as set forth in its *Book of Discipline* and/or its constitution, including:
 1. to constitute the Free Methodist corporation which shall hold in trust all real estate belonging to the Free Methodist Church for the use and benefit of its membership;
 2. to have general supervision of all matters pertaining to the functions of the Free Methodist Church;
 3. to be responsible for all activities such as: Bible schools, development projects, medical work, literature work, requesting and assigning missionaries, inter-denominational and cooperative relationships, legal representation, scholarships and other ministries as need may arise;
 4. to form a board of administration to carry on the work during the interim between meetings of the provisional general conference; and
 5. to establish budgets and raise funds to support the work, particularly the office of the suffragan bishop(s) and the process of legal representation.

- G. A provisional general conference, once formed, will move to general conference status within four years, unless an extension is granted by the Free Methodist Church – USA General Conference Board of Administration.

Free Methodist Foundation

- ¶4600+ The Board of Administration approves Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the Free Methodist Foundation which govern the business and affairs of the Foundation. These documents provide that the:
- A. Free Methodist Foundation is a separate religious and charitable corporation formed to establish, promote, fund, extend and maintain the Christian faith according to the tenets of, and for the exclusive benefit and support of, the Free Methodist Church – USA;

 - B. Board of Administration shall elect the Directors of the Foundation. Directors shall be laypersons and ordained ministers who are members in good standing of the Free Methodist Church. At least two members of the Foundation Board shall be ordained ministers, one of whom shall be a U.S. Bishop (see ¶4320.F).

 - C. Denomination may assign to the Foundation the management of appropriate activities related to estate planning, wills, trusts, estates and other types of deferred gifts;

- D. Denomination may assign to the Foundation the management of investments for the denomination, its departments, subsidiaries, and related agencies, pension funds and all other funds assigned by the Board of Administration;
- E. Denomination may assign to the Foundation the management of the Free Methodist Loan Fund; and
- F. Foundation reports annually to the Board of Administration, providing a statement of philosophy of operation, any significant changes in policies or procedures, audited financial reports and related federal income tax returns and other items requested by the Board of Administration or its Budget and Finance Committee.

Chaplains

¶4700

- A. The Free Methodist Church - USA provides ministry to persons in special situations beyond the local church, such as in the military, prisons, institutions and law enforcement agencies, through ordained ministers who are chaplains.
- B. Ecclesiastical chaplain endorsement procedures and guidelines of the Free Methodist Church - USA are established and approved by the Board of Bishops and the Board of Administration. Endorsement procedures are printed in the Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Chaplain Credentials.
- C. All ordained ministers wishing to serve as Free Methodist chaplains in the military, Veterans Affairs or civilian institutions must be approved by the Board of Bishops and credentialed by the Free Methodist Church Chaplain Endorsing Agent.
- D. All credentialed chaplains shall be appointed to denominational service. No non-credentialed ordained minister shall be appointed as chaplain by any annual conference.
- E. The Free Methodist Church - USA recognizes the association of chaplains, whose name is The Free Methodist Chaplains Association - USA, together with its constitution and duly elected officers.

Association of Human Service Ministries

¶4750+

- A. The Association of Human Service Ministries members accredited by and receiving support from the Free Methodist Church shall report annually to the Board of Administration.

- B. The Board of Administration shall:
 1. receive and examine the annual reports of each accredited ministry, including financial reports, their work and the general plan and scope of their ~~activities~~ administration with a copy sent to their sponsoring annual conference;
 2. determine if the ministry continues to qualify for accreditation by the Free Methodist Church; and
 3. regulate the establishment of new human service ministries so as to avoid jeopardizing accredited institutions.

- C. A new human service ministry shall not be approved without an official recommendation from its annual conference.

- D. Accredited members of the Association of Human Service Ministries shall be listed in the *Yearbook*.

- E. Pastors are encouraged to preach on the subject of practical charity, receiving offerings and providing opportunities for financial support. These offerings are to be used for the relief of the poor in that society or sent to an accredited human service ministry.

Educational Institutions

¶4800+ Educational institutions are responsible for promoting and helping to maintain adequate opportunity for college and graduate training of the people of the Free Methodist Church.

Denominational Institutions

¶4810+ The Free Methodist Church - USA recognizes as Denominational Institutions those colleges and universities whose commitments are consistent with the history, theology, mission and character of the Free Methodist Church.

- A. Leadership Commitments
 1. The president shall be a member of the Free Methodist Church who actively seeks to create a Free Methodist presence in the life and leadership of the institution.
 2. The chief academic officer shall be a member of the Free Methodist Church, or one who is in both conviction and spirit committed to Wesleyan theology and perspectives.

- B. Mission Commitments
 1. The Free Methodist educational institutions shall have articles of incorporation, bylaws or other appropriate governance documents which:
 - a. identify the college or university as a private institution of evangelical higher education affiliated with the Free Methodist Church - USA;

- b. define the relationship of the institution to the churches and conferences of the Free Methodist Church – USA; and,
 - c. specify Free Methodist Church - USA representation in the governing board.
2. The Free Methodist educational institutions shall have a Wesleyan statement of faith consistent with Free Methodist Church - USA doctrine which boards of trustees and executive leaders agree shall guide the policies of the institution.
 3. The Free Methodist educational institutions shall have a mission statement which includes an institutional priority to serve as an educational resource for the advancement of Christianity through the Church.
 4. The Free Methodist educational institutions shall have a statement of lifestyle expectations for the campus community, which is consistent with the principles and practices of the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church - USA.

C. Connectional Commitments

1. All trustees shall be committed Christians of whom no less than twenty-five percent shall be members of the Free Methodist Church.
2. No less than ten percent of faculty shall be members of the Free Methodist Church.
3. The school, division or department of religion shall have a majority of full-time faculty who are members of the Free Methodist Church or sister Wesleyan denominations with all members affirming Wesleyan theology and the Articles of Religion of the Free Methodist Church as its educational focus.
4. The Religion Department chair shall be Free Methodist or thoroughly Wesleyan.
5. The institutions shall offer courses in Free Methodist history, government, mission and theology.
6. The relationship to and presence of bishops and denominational leaders shall be defined.
7. The institutions shall have an intentional plan for Free Methodists to speak at chapel, colloquia and events.
8. The institutions shall participate in the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions.

D. Recognition Process

Based upon an application to the Free Methodist Church – USA Board of Administration in the year prior to General Conference, an institution of higher education which meets these leadership, mission and connectional commitments may be endorsed as a Denominational Institution. Denominational institutions shall be recognized at each General Conference.

Affiliated Institutions

¶4820+

- A. Other institutions of higher education may apply to the Board of Administration for endorsement as affiliated institutions. The minimal expectations for this relationship shall be that:
 - 1. the institution shall have Free Methodist representation on the Board of Trustees, administration and faculty; and
 - 2. provision shall be made for instruction in Free Methodist curricula of concern: i.e. Free Methodist history, doctrine, polity, mission and vision.
 - 3. All instruction shall be in harmony with and conformity to the teachings of the Scriptures and the Free Methodist Articles of Religion.
 - 4. The task of nurturing a Free Methodist presence on the campus, by welcoming Free Methodist clergy, educators, leaders and innovators to speak at chapel, colloquia and special events shall be assigned.

- B. Based upon an application to the Free Methodist Church – USA’s Board of Administration in the year prior to General Conference, an institution of higher education, which meets these criteria may be endorsed as an Affiliated Institution.

Associate Institutions

¶4830+

- A. Other institutions (see Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions Constitution and Bylaws) may apply to the annual meeting of the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions (see ¶4850) for endorsement as Associate Institutions. The minimum expectations for this relationship shall be:
 - 1. The institution shall have Free Methodist representation on the Board of Trustees.
 - 2. The institution’s instruction shall be in harmony with and conformity to the teachings of the Scriptures and the Free Methodist Articles of Religion.
 - 3. The institution’s mission shall connect to and support the mission of the Free Methodist Church – USA.

- B. Based upon a letter of request, with substantiating documents regarding how it meets these criteria, the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions, at its annual meeting may endorse such an institution as an Associate Institution.

Educational Funds

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All educational endowment funds, including the permanent endowment fund, designated to educational institutions (including John Wesley Seminary Foundation) and such as may be raised or otherwise received for the Educational Endowment Fund, shall be held for investment as directed by the Board of Administration. The income shall be distributed annually to the Free Methodist denominational schools in the United States as directed by the Board of Administration. When funds are available for operating budgets or capital

projects, the Board of Administration shall determine the appropriation for each school according to the numeric enrollment of full-time Free Methodist students in those institutions.

The Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions

¶4850+

- A. The denomination sponsors an association for denominational institutions of higher education: to advance their common mission as Free Methodist schools, to explore cooperative programs, and to define and maintain the quality of their relationship with the denomination.
- B. Denominational institutions shall be represented by the president and the chairperson of the Board of Trustees, each having one vote.
- C. Affiliated institutions shall be represented by the president and a Free Methodist member of the Board of Trustees. Each Affiliated Institution shall have one vote.
- D. Associate institutions shall participate as honorary members, having voice without vote.

John Wesley Seminary Corporation

¶4860+

- A. The John Wesley Seminary Corporation, doing business as John Wesley Seminary Foundation, offers scholarship aid for the post-college training of persons for the pastoral ministry and other types of Christian service within the Free Methodist Church - USA. This corporation shall be incorporated to secure the rights and privileges belonging to such educational foundations.
- B. The Board of Administration shall constitute the membership of the John Wesley Seminary Corporation.
- C. John Wesley Seminary Corporation shall be supported by the General Church Budget and special project funds, as approved by the Board of Administration.

Auxiliary Organizations

Men's Ministries International

¶4900+ Men's Ministries International of the Free Methodist Church is recognized as an auxiliary of the Free Methodist Church - USA, and is governed by its own constitution and bylaws.

Women's Ministries International

¶4910+ Women's Ministries International of the Free Methodist Church is recognized as an auxiliary of Free Methodist World Missions and is governed by its own constitution and bylaws.

In the following chapter, paragraph numbers and section letters with a plus sign + beside them indicate those items which may be changed by the Board of Administration. All others may be changed only by the General Conference.