

Chapter 5

Annual Conferences

Preamble

¶5000 Annual conferences, after the pattern of the Methodist Episcopal Church, have been a basic organizational structure of the Free Methodist Church since its beginning. After the first annual conference was organized in Pekin, NY, in 1860, twenty-two more were born in the next twenty-five years, as, in the words of Bishop Leslie Marston, early Free Methodism “marched across the nation.” Today, as then, the annual conference is the organization at the regional level that joins societies into a network. The annual conference ensures that pastors and congregations are counseled and encouraged, identifies those who are being called into the ordained ministry and promotes and oversees church planting and evangelism.

Organization

Ministerial and Lay Delegates

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- A. The General Conference shall organize the work at large into annual conferences. Each annual conference shall be composed of all ministers in full membership, and lay delegates elected by the several societies.
- B. One lay delegate shall be admitted from each society. If there is more than one pastor in full membership appointed to a society, the society shall be entitled to one additional lay delegate for each additional pastor. A society that has more than 100 adult members, may elect an additional lay delegate; and for each additional 200 adult members, an additional lay delegate may be elected. The election of a delegate and any reserve delegate shall be by separate ballot and each shall require a majority vote of those present and voting.
- C. Delegates are not members of the annual conference until they are present with their credentials and have been seated. Conference ministerial candidates are without vote except for those who are appointed as pastors in charge of a society.
- D. In consultation with the bishop of record, each annual conference shall provide for substantially equal ministerial and lay representation in its annual sessions.

Responsibilities of Delegates

¶5020 In the Free Methodist connectional system, annual conference delegates have a two-fold responsibility: to represent their societies and to act for the good of the conference. Delegates shall be considered as liaison between the society and the conference during the interim between conference sessions. They are expected to report significant actions of the conference to the society which elected them (see ¶6250.E.2).

Voting

¶5030 The ministerial and lay members composing the annual conference shall deliberate and vote as one body; but at the call of one-fourth of all the members present and voting, the house shall divide and the ministers and lay members shall vote separately. It shall require a majority of both branches to constitute a vote of the conference. *Robert's Rules of Order* in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure in the annual conference sessions.

Time and Place

¶5040+ Each annual conference shall appoint the place and, with the concurrence of the bishop, the time of its own sessions. If for any reason a conference cannot be held at the place appointed, the determination of the place shall be left with the superintendent(s) and the secretary of the last conference. The Friday preceding every annual conference shall be observed as a day of fasting and prayer.

Conference Year

¶5050 The conference year of each annual conference shall close automatically with the adjournment of that conference. The fiscal and statistical year for the local societies, conferences and the General Church shall coincide with the calendar year.

Limitation of Powers

¶5060 An annual conference cannot enact laws, nor can it interpret the *Book of Discipline* by resolutions or reports.

Organizational Structure

¶5070 In consultation with the bishop of record, the annual conference may organize itself in ways that more consistently reflect the operational values and desired outcomes of the Free Methodist Church. Organizational structures and function shall be reviewed periodically to insure missional priorities and to assess the conference in light of the benchmarks of conference vitality established by the Board of Bishops and National Oversight Team. When such assessment reveals failure or decline, the conference shall seek help in formulating appropriate strategic responses.

Nominating Committee

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A. Each annual conference will have a standing Nominating Committee approved by the annual conference of not less than six members, giving consideration to equal representation of ministerial and lay members. General considerations in the selection of the society Nominating Committee shall also apply to the annual conference (see

¶6310). Representation by districts/regions or other appropriate distinctions shall be determined in advance by the conference body.

- B. Nominating Committee members may be elected to rotating terms as determined by the conference. The chair shall serve the Nominating Committee.
- C. The Nominating Committee shall:
 - 1. prepare for the annual conference a list of nominations for positions vacated by either resignations or expiration of terms; and
 - 2. review board and committee memberships in light of the standing rules of the annual conference.

Officers

Presiding Officer

¶5100 The bishop is the presiding officer of the annual conference. In the absence of the bishop or his/her designee, the conference shall elect, by ballot, an elder from its own number to preside. All other conference officers must be members of the Church within the bounds of the conference.

Superintendent

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- A. Nomination
 - 1. When a superintendent is needed for an annual conference, that conference shall designate the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board or a special committee of not less than six plus the bishop of record as chair to serve as the Superintendent Selection Committee. The incumbent superintendent shall not serve on the Selection Committee.
 - a. The Superintendent Selection Committee shall determine the qualifications desired in a superintendent.
 - b. The Superintendent Selection Committee shall develop a list of candidates to be interviewed. The Board of Bishops may add any name(s) to that list and may veto any potential candidate on the list without comment or prejudice.
 - c. The Superintendent Selection Committee will be responsible to interview the candidates presented by the Nominating Committee and then recommend the superintendent to the Annual Conference.
 - 2. A prospective superintendent shall:
 - a. Have demonstrated at least five years of productive leadership in the Church.
 - b. Have a favorable result from a job-related professional evaluation.
 - c. Articulate a vision for the conference for review and approval by the bishop of record and the Superintendent Selection Committee.
 - d. Commit to fully participate in the Superintendents' Leadership Development Process.

- e. Commit to attend and participate in training events and the Global Overseers Team Meetings.
3. Should the nominating process fail, a new nominating process shall begin to bring another nominee to the conference for ballot vote either at an adjourned sitting or by electronic means, as determined by the Board of Administration in consultation with the Bishop of Record.
- B. Election and Terms
1. Each annual conference shall elect one elder as superintendent, except as otherwise provided (see ¶5110.B.5). A conference may elect, appoint, or make provision to employ one or more elders to serve as assistant(s) to the superintendent.
 2. Superintendents must be elected from among the ordained elders of the denomination upon due nominating process.
 3. Superintendents shall be elected by a majority vote for four-year terms, except for special arrangements approved by the assigned bishop for a shorter term.
 4. If two or more contiguous conferences so desire, they may request that they be under common direction of an area superintendent. The superintendent shall be interviewed by a committee composed of at least one lay and one ministerial member from each of the conferences with the bishop of record serving as chair. The nominee must receive a majority vote in each conference involved. Election shall be by ballot.
 5. A conference may propose to have a stationed superintendent and/or stationed assistant(s) to the superintendent.
- C. Special Circumstances:
1. If a vacancy should occur in the office of the superintendent between conferences, the bishop of record in consultation with the Conference MEG shall appoint an interim Superintendent until the next annual conference session.
 2. The conference may instruct a superintendent to work under the general direction of an advisory committee, provided that there is no infringement of the disciplinary powers of the superintendent.
 3. Recall of a superintendent shall be by a two-thirds ballot vote by any succeeding annual conference.
 4. Should the bishop of record not be available to chair an overseas conference for the vote of a superintendent, the Superintendent Selection Committee shall delay their recommendation until the arrival of the bishop, or Bishop designate. Upon their arrival a recommendation for the new superintendent would be presented to the annual conference for a vote
- D. Financial Support
1. Annual conferences in the United States are expected to demonstrate fiscal viability by providing a workable budget, including a base remuneration for the superintendent that is appropriate for a church executive overseeing the number of direct reports and managing a budget the size the superintendent oversees. Each society shall contribute its proportion as adopted by the annual conference.

2. Where this salary level is not attainable, the bishop of record shall assist the conference Administrative Committee in preparing a leadership plan that shall be presented to the Board of Bishops, and upon its approval, implemented.
3. Superintendents shall be supported by the conferences to which elected in the manner determined by the conferences. Stationed superintendents shall receive an appropriate portion of their support from the pastoral charges to which appointed. The conference shall remain responsible for assuring that the total compensation of a stationed superintendent is consistent with provisions of ¶5110.C.2. A conference shall provide for the superintendent's office and travel expenses, whether stationed or itinerant.
4. A home purchased for the superintendent can be rented to others only if the superintendent consents and receives the rent.

The Role of a Superintendent

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To clarify the role and responsibilities of the superintendent, the following leadership priorities are set forth.

A. Regarding self and family, the superintendent shall: (Also listed in 4120.A)

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 annual conference, the superintendent shall exercise his / her authority and influence in the following areas:

1. Vision Alignment and Implementation

- a. Promotes a Wesleyan theology and Free Methodist Distinctives.
- b. Encourages pastors and churches societies to develop specific plans to implement the Board of Bishops vision & strategic initiatives.
- c. Works as a part of the Global Overseers Team to coordinate and carry out the mission of Jesus and the Free Methodist Church.

2. Leadership Development

- a. Insures that the conference MEG Board has a system of spiritual formation, accountability and care for pastors.
- b. Identifies or recruits, the highest quality pastors to be recommended to the conference MAC for appointment.
- d. Challenges and equips pastors and leaders to insure that the local church has an ongoing process of discipleship and growth.
- e. Insures that the conference has a process that identifies, develops and deploys new leaders.

3. Order and Expansion

- a. Develops strategies for church planting and the multiplication of ministries.
- b. Promotes church health by encouraging every church to be a healthy biblical community of holy people that multiplies disciples, leaders, groups and churches.
- c. Provides administrative oversight for the annual conference. Works with the conference BOA to insure that the annual conference has systems in place to care for the financial, legal, property, and personnel, issues of the conference.

- d. Looks after the spiritual and temporal interests of the churches within his/her assigned areas; take charge of societies without pastors; and have general oversight of the work in his/her areas.
- e. Serves as ex-officio of all committees.

Secretary

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- A. The annual conference shall elect a secretary who shall continue in office until a successor is elected.
- B. The secretary shall:
 - 1. record in a suitable book the proceedings of the conference, excluding non-conference business matters;
 - 2. keep, in a book to be preserved with the journal, the original or so-called rough minutes as approved by the conference;
 - 3. keep on file the reports adopted by the conference and record in the journal financial and such other reports as the conference may order;
 - 4. be custodian of the conference records and journal;
 - 5. transcribe from the annual conference records all the decisions of disciplinary law rendered by the president, giving the number of the pages upon which those decisions are recorded and forward the transcript promptly to the secretary of the General Conference and, if there are no such decisions, to send a statement to that effect to the secretary;
 - 6. send a copy of the annual conference minutes following completion of each annual conference to the office of the Board of Bishops for examination on behalf of the General Conference;
 - 7. report annually to Ministerial Credentialing Services following the annual conference session the names of ministers whose ordination parchments are no longer valid, whether by issuance of certificates of transfer to other denominations, uniting with other denominations without Free Methodist papers, withdrawal, expulsion or death, listing the reason for such invalidation; and
 - 8. keep a proper register containing names, addresses, and dates of declaration of all members of the society within the conference who declare themselves to be conscientious objectors and to make a prompt report of these declarations to the secretary of the General Conference, who shall keep a complete record of them (see ¶3331.B, and ¶4070.B).

Treasurer

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- A. The annual conference shall elect a treasurer who shall be bonded. In case of a vacancy the superintendent of the conference may appoint a treasurer to act until the next conference session. All funds due the General Church shall be remitted monthly. The general church

treasurer shall, immediately after the conference session, notify the conference secretary of any deficit.

- a. The annual conference shall require each society to remit a financial report of its receipts and expenditures. This report shall be published in the *Yearbook*.
- B. Each annual conference shall have its financial records examined at least annually by an independent third party, with the result of such review being reported to the Board of Administration of the annual conference, with a copy filed with the FMC-USA.

Auditor

¶5150 The annual conference shall elect an auditor who shall audit the accounts of the treasurer and report to each annual session.

Pension Agent

¶5160+ The annual conference shall designate a pension agent who will be responsible to oversee the administration of the pension plan at the conference level in harmony with guidelines developed by the General Pension Board.

Standing Boards and Committees

Administrative Committee

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- A. Each annual conference shall elect a standing Administrative Committee of not less than four members, giving due regard to clergy/lay balance. It shall act as the standing Administrative Committee of the conference in the interim between annual conference sessions to care for routine business and items specifically delegated to it by the conference within the limits of the *Book of Discipline* (see ¶6400).
- B. The conference Administrative Committee shall give strategic planning attention to such ministries as world missions, Christian discipleship, church planting and social action. It may assign individuals, form task forces and create standing committees to carry out the ministries deemed appropriate for the health and growth of the church.

Superintendent's Cabinet

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- A. Each annual conference may establish a superintendent's cabinet, to meet at the call of the superintendent.
- B. The purpose of the Superintendent's Cabinet shall be:
 - 1. to serve as a forum for the superintendent, pastors and laity;
 - 2. to aid the superintendent in counsel, encouragement and evaluation; and
 - 3. to inform the societies concerning the nature and function of the superintendency.

- C. The members of the Superintendent's Cabinet shall be the superintendent and not more than six members elected by the annual conference, two-thirds of whom may be nominated by the superintendent. The superintendent may chair or name a member to chair the cabinet.

Ministerial Appointments Committee

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- A. Each annual conference shall have a standing Ministerial Appointments Committee (MAC) composed of the bishop as chair, the superintendent as vice chair, and one lay member. An annual conference may, if it so desires, increase the number of members by electing an additional elder and an additional lay member. The annual conference may ask the Nominating Committee or the Administrative Committee to prepare nominations for election; however nominations must also be allowed from the floor. Elections may be for three-year terms with provision for rotation and continuity. When a new superintendent is elected, the immediate past superintendent may not serve on the Ministerial Appointments Committee for the succeeding year.
- B. If for any reason a member is unable to serve during the conference session, the Board of Administration may appoint an elder or lay member to serve. No person who is recommended to the annual conference to be received as a conference ministerial candidate, nor a licensed pastor (see ¶5640), though acting as a delegate, shall be eligible to serve on the Ministerial Appointments Committee.
- C. The committee shall serve until the close of the following annual conference.
- D. The committee shall appoint pastors for an indefinite tenure. The committee shall monitor progress and make changes at each annual conference when deemed necessary.
- E. To assist in the assessment of the work, pastors shall be offered an opportunity to express themselves and shall be given opportunity every three years to participate in a ministry effectiveness evaluation (see ¶5800), which shall be considered by the Ministerial Appointments Committee.
- F. Proposed changes shall be discussed with both pastors and delegates of churches involved.
- G. In the event a change in pastoral leadership becomes necessary between annual conferences, the committee shall have authority to make appointments. Delegates of churches involved shall be consulted, but final authority rests with the Ministerial Appointments Committee.

- H. The Ministerial Appointments Committee report of appointments shall be announced at the annual conference session.
- I. The Committee may initiate church planting appointments, either by requesting a society to sponsor a church planting project or by creating a new church planting project by appointing a church planter in consultation with the conference Administrative Committee.
- J. The Committee shall follow the restrictions regarding divorced ministers or spouses (see ¶5650).
- K. The Committee shall have authority to suspend any conference appointee for cause (see ¶7130) according to due process (see ¶7150). This is not to be construed as conflicting with an ordained minister's rights as outlined in Chapter 7.
- L. The Committee planning to recommend that a pastor not receive a pastoral appointment the ensuing year shall notify that pastor at least sixty days prior to the session of the annual conference.
- M. When a pastor's appointment is concluded at a local ~~church~~ society (e.g., retired, left without appointment, requests release from appointment) he/she, along with ~~their~~ his/her immediate family, is to withdraw from the life of that ~~church~~ society. This would include serving in official or unofficial capacities, attending worship services or activities of the ~~church~~ society, or entertaining communication with staff, constituents or the larger community regarding the ~~church's~~ society's leadership, practices, or health. The former pastor and/or family, however, may re-engage with the local ~~church~~ society with the consent of
 ¶conference § superintendent in consultation with the newly appointed pastor.

Ministerial Education and Guidance Board

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- A. Each annual conference shall have a standing Ministerial Education and Guidance Board (MEGB), composed of the members of the Ministerial Appointments Committee and additional members as determined by the electing body.
- B. Such additional members may be elected to rotating three-year terms. Members of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board may be re-elected to multiple rotating terms, contingent upon their ongoing effective service.
- C. The total membership of the Board shall be established by the annual conference with due regard to a proper division between laypersons and ministers, and to provide

sufficient number of members so that at least four members can convene when needed and where needed to fulfill the responsibilities required by the *Book of Discipline*.

- D. When a new superintendent is elected, the immediate past superintendent shall not serve on the Board for the succeeding year.
- E. The Board shall be responsible to screen candidates for reception into the conference and/or for ordination.
- F. The annual conference, acting upon the recommendation of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board has final responsibility for the approval of conference ministerial candidates in keeping with the standards outlined in ¶5340.
- G. The Board, in consultation with the bishop of record, is the authority on the meeting of the standard criteria for ordination. Requests for waivers regarding any of these standard criteria shall be made to the Board of Bishops. (See ¶5410, for these standard criteria.)
- H. The Board shall guide and counsel those who are received so that they may be able to meet the demands of pastoral ministry.
- I. For instructions on administration of multiple staff, see ¶6700-6730 and the *Ministerial Education and Guidance Board Manual*.
- J. The Board may grant a certificate of standing with view to transfer to another conference during the interim between annual conference sessions.
- K. The Board shall give consideration to the integrity and Christian discipleship of each ministerial member and the performance of duty of each appointed pastor of the conference and shall present to the annual conference a statement to this effect: "The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board has given due consideration to the integrity and Christian discipleship of each ministerial member of the _____ Conference and affirms the integrity and Christian discipleship of each in accord with ¶5310 of the *Book of Discipline* (with the exception of _____)" (see ¶5220.K).
- L. The Board shall affirm the integrity and Christian discipleship of located deacons and located elders, reporting such action to the annual conference as follows: "Upon recommendation by the various pastors and local boards of administration of the societies where they are located, the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board reviewed and affirmed the integrity and Christian discipleship of the located deacons and located elders (except for _____)" (see ¶5220.K).

Finance Board

¶5240 Each conference shall elect a Finance Board with not less than five members. Its duties may include the preparation and supervision of the conference budget. It shall assist the superintendent in stewardship education and the promotion of the General Church Budget throughout the conference. The conference superintendent and treasurer shall be ex-officio members.

Social Issues and Ministries Committee

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- A. The annual conference may elect a Social Issues and Ministries Committee to assist churches in seeking justice for all, showing mercy to the poor, empowering the disenfranchised and maintaining openness and sensitivity to the social problems of all ages, race and gender.
- B. The Social Issues and Ministries Committee shall:
 - 1. articulate to the annual conference the denomination's position on social issues and study and recommend resolutions for General Conference;
 - 2. communicate to the societies and to the public the denomination's positions on social issues; and
 - 3. organize the resources of the conference, both human and material, to assist the ~~local~~ society in seeking justice for all, showing mercy to the poor and empowering the disenfranchised.

Local Global Partnership Team

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- A. The annual conference shall create a Local Global Partnership Team or Board to advocate for engagement in local and global mission. The annual conference shall designate a person to serve as a liaison to Free Methodist World Missions.
- B. Functions of the Local Global Partnership Team may include:
 - 1. coordinating conference-wide missions activities, advocating for cross-cultural ministry, and partnering with missionaries and national leaders in cooperation with Free Methodist World Missions;
 - 2. equipping churches to achieve effectiveness in and promotion of missional outreach and consistent promotion of missional outreach by such means as workshops for pastors and lay leaders; and
 - 3. empowering churches to participate in local, regional and global missions opportunities. This includes assistance in the recruitment of individuals for long-term

missionary service and Volunteers in Service Abroad (VISA) short-term activities and to increase the financial support of worldwide missionary outreach.

Christian School Board

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- A. Each annual conference is authorized to establish a conference Christian Schools Board which shall oversee the work of all Christian Schools within the conference in accord with guidelines established by the conference Administrative Committee and the annual conference (see ¶6340). The president of the conference shall instruct the Nominating Committee to exercise care in naming to this board persons competent to serve.
- B. It is the responsibility of each conference having Christian schools and of the local officials administering the schools to see that the appropriate trust clause is a part of each deed pertaining to school property, the same as other church property (see ¶6400.D).
- C. The leadership commitments, mission commitments and connectional commitments as found in ¶4810 for Denominational Institutions shall apply, as appropriate, to Christian Schools. Any complaint or violation of any of these principles shall be directed to the Christian Schools Board of the conference in which the school is located. Should the complaint be found to be valid, the Board shall apply such penalty to the school found guilty as it deems appropriate. Such school, however, shall have the privilege of appeal, with full hearing, to the conference Administrative Committee.

The Ordained Ministry

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

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- 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 a heart attuned to God and others, a mind appropriately informed for the work of ministry, and hands equipped for effective service.
- B. The Free Methodist Church prepares elders and leaders who will serve effectively in any context. Preparing for ministry with a solid education is a rich part of our heritage as Free Methodists and an integral part of developing leaders. A baseline of a Bachelor's degree (B.S./B.A. or equivalent) and some graduate work in theology is what we envision. We urge our candidates to entrust this part of their journey to one of our AFMEI institutions. While this may not always be possible or practical, still our

colleges and universities remain essential partners in shaping the future of the Free Methodist Church.

- C. Outcomes-Based Ordination emphasizes candidate proficiency in 15 areas of qualification for ministry (see ¶5410.B). Candidates will enter this process with varying degrees of preparation and readiness; as such, Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards have the freedom to design formation plans according to the needs of the candidate.
- D. 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.

Steps Leading Toward Ordination.

¶5320+ There are four steps to becoming an ordained minister in the Free Methodist Church.

- A. The person recognized by the Church as having the call of God to pastoral ministry is licensed as a local ministerial candidate (LMC) (see ¶6500).
- B. Acceptance by the annual conference as a conference ministerial candidate.
- C. Conference ministerial candidates (CMC), upon recommendation of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board, are received into annual conference membership and elected to elders' orders.
- D. Ordination as elder completes the process.

Local Ministerial Candidate

¶5330 A local ministerial candidate is a member of the Free Methodist Church who is seriously considering a call to full-time Christian ministry. Local ministerial candidate status provides the opportunity to explore the perceived call to ministry with the pastor in the context of the local church. The requirements and responsibilities of a local ministerial candidate are found in ¶6500.

Conference Ministerial Candidate

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- A. A conference ministerial candidate is a member of the Free Methodist Church who has been received by an annual conference in preparation for ordained ministry.
- B. The conference ministerial candidate shall:
 - 1. be a local ministerial candidate;

2. be thoroughly acquainted with the history and conversant with the polity of the Free Methodist Church, normally as provided in an approved course of study;
 3. have completed application for ministry appointment;
 4. be interviewed, certified and recommended by the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board and received by the annual conference upon satisfactory response to the questions (see ¶8710);
 5. be under the guidance of the conference superintendent and an assigned coach/mentor;
 6. maintain membership in a Free Methodist Society;
 7. maintain relationship as a conference ministerial candidate by annual recommendation of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board.
- C. A candidate who has been involved in a divorce, annulment or dissolution of marriage shall not be admitted to the conference as a conference ministerial candidate or in full membership until approved by the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board, the conference superintendent and the bishop. This shall also apply to a candidate whose spouse has been divorced. Divorce prior to conversion shall not in itself bar a candidate from consideration for conference membership.
- D. The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board shall examine potential conference ministerial candidates and determine readiness based on the 15 areas measured in the Outcomes-Based Ordination assessment (see ¶5410)
- E. A conference ministerial candidate shall be interviewed annually, for sufficient time to demonstrate proficiency and fruitfulness commensurate with ordination and conference membership. Normally this will be a period of 2 to 3 years.
- F. When a conference ministerial candidate is under appointment to a society as pastor-in-charge, he/she is considered “clergy” (to maintain a lay/clergy balance) when serving on committees and boards. In all other matters, including election as a delegate to general conference, he/she is considered a “lay person.”
- G. A conference ministerial candidate appointed by a Ministerial Appointments Committee to have charge of a society or with the superintendent’s approval may administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper and solemnize marriages in that place, if civil law permits.

Elder’s Orders

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- A. A minister may be received into membership, elected to elder’s orders and granted a seat in the annual conference upon providing satisfactory answers to conference

membership questions (see ¶8720) and receiving the recommendation of the MEG Board based on his/her demonstrated proficiency in the 15 Outcomes- Based Ordination areas (see ¶5410).

- B. Election to elder's orders constitutes the acknowledgement of the annual conference that the person so elected has met all the biblical (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1) and ecclesiastical requirements to serve as an overseer in the Church. Only an ordained elder may serve as a ministerial delegate to General Conference, a conference superintendent or a bishop.
- C. The elder shall administer baptism and the Lord's Supper, solemnize marriages, and lead in divine worship. When appointed to a society, an elder shall perform the responsibilities of a pastor.

Outcomes-Based Ordination

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A. Outcomes-Based Qualifications

A candidate shall:

1. be initially approved by the society and granted a local ministerial candidate's license;
2. be granted conference ministerial candidacy a the recommendation of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board upon review of his/her portfolio and Outcomes-Based Ordination Assessment interview;
3. complete the prescribed process of coaching, assignments, coursework, and assessment from his/her Conference Ministerial Candidate Formation Plan;
4. expand his/her portfolio with documentation showing his/her progress through the CMC Formation Plan;
5. be interviewed and recommended by the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board to elder's orders; and
6. be approved by the annual conference and ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee.

B. Outcomes-Based Assessment

Heart Formation:

1. The candidate is characterized by spiritual maturity and a strong sense of call to ministry
 - Shaped by the spiritual disciplines
 - Identity and calling rooted firmly in Jesus Christ
 - Models a life of holiness led by the Spirit
2. The candidate demonstrates a high level of self-awareness
 - Understands and is able to articulate their strengths and weaknesses

- Builds teams around blind-spots
 - Knows how their leadership/communication style impacts others both adversely as well as positively
3. The candidate lives a life that is balanced for the demands of ministry
 - Attends adequately to physical, emotional and mental needs
 - Schedules regular time for play and recreation
 - Lives a simple life free of addiction and compulsion
 4. The candidate lives a life shaped by love for others
 - Prioritizes spouse and children (if applicable)
 - Builds and maintains healthy, close relationships with people inside and outside of the church
 - Cultivates relationships of confession and accountability
 5. The candidate models humility
 - Remains teachable and accepts correction when needed
 - Maintains a non-defensive posture towards leaders, followers and peers
 - Willingly seeks the perspective of others

Head Formation:

1. The candidate demonstrates biblical understanding
 - Possesses holistic biblical knowledge
 - Has a Wesleyan hermeneutic that accepts the authority of Scripture
 - Demonstrates ability to root their Wesleyan worldview in the Bible
2. The candidate demonstrates a Wesleyan theological integration
 - Knows and embraces the history, polity, Articles of Religion and core values of the FMC
 - Articulates the Wesleyan distinctives compellingly
 - Understands and embraces Wesleyan relationship theology
3. The candidate has a theological education commensurate with ordained ministry
 - Has completed an undergraduate degree or demonstrates equivalent understanding of life and ministry
 - Has completed some graduate work in theology or demonstrates theological competence at a graduate level
 - Embodies a life-long passion for learning through modeling and encouraging others
4. The candidate has an ecumenical posture towards the Church and the world
 - Actively seeks to build and maintain bridges among fellow Christian groups
 - Demonstrates an appreciation for the contribution of other Christian traditions while wholeheartedly embracing our own
 - Demonstrates a growing appreciation for humanity and value of all people regardless of their believe system

5. The candidate processes the ability to practically apply learning
 - Demonstrates an ability to make complex theology understandable to all
 - Demonstrates an ability to find God's redemptive activity in daily life
 - Demonstrates an ability to deepen faith through real life experience

Hand formation:

1. The candidate demonstrates fruitfulness in ministry
 - Has a track record of transformational preaching/teaching/leading
 - Personally and corporately engages in evangelism
 - Able to build and maintain healthy and diverse faith communities
2. The candidate embraces the ministry of justice and compassion
 - Challenges injustice and discrimination wherever it is found
 - Engages local and global needs of the broken and poor
 - Continually focuses ministry on the margin, seeking to emancipate all who exist within enslaving systems
3. The candidate operates as a servant leader
 - Promotes the development of others
 - Serves the local and global church demonstrating cross-cultural competency
 - Creates healthy ministry environments characterized by safety and non-judgement
4. The candidate empowers others to discover and function within their God given design
 - Wholeheartedly supports the role of women in leadership
 - Facilitates and promotes multicultural community and staff
 - Actively helps others discover their brilliance
5. The candidate leads with creativity and vision
 - Seeks best practices of contextual and culturally relevant ministry
 - Envisions alternatives and successfully leads others towards more creative and effective outcomes
 - Casts compelling vision and develops strategic plans to accomplish it

Service Requirements for Ordination

¶5420

The spiritual formation necessary for healthy, effective, long-term ministry happens best in the context of a local church. In order to properly observe and assess the gifting, calling and brilliance of a potential ordinand, supervised experience in a local church or in a context beyond the local church as approved by the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board, is essential. Normally a candidate will move through this season of formation and supervision in 2 to 3 years.

Ordination Credentials

¶5430

- A. Ministers, whether located or itinerant, whose ordinations are recognized by an annual conference, shall be entitled to credentials from the president of the conference, certifying their ordination. Duplicate copies of credentials for ministers received after June 10, 1969, are remitted by the president of the conference for retention and permanent filing by Ministerial Credentialing Services.
- B. Ordained ministers in good standing who unite with another church or are granted permission to withdraw from the Free Methodist Church shall deposit their credentials with the secretary of the conference and receive a receipt for them. If the credentials are not deposited with the secretary of the annual conference from which the minister has withdrawn, the credentials shall be declared null and void by action of the annual conference.
- C. Ministers who are expelled from the Church or who are allowed to withdraw under charges must surrender their credentials. If they refuse or neglect to deposit them with the secretary of the conference from which they have been separated, the conference, by official action, shall declare them null and void.
- D. Credentials may be restored only by the annual conference to which they were surrendered or which declared them void.
- E. In the event of the loss of ordination credentials, a certified duplicate copy shall be made available through the Board of Bishops' office.
- F. After a period of three years, an ordained person neither appointed to nor actively seeking a recognized ministry function in the life of a Free Methodist Church shall deposit his/her credentials with the secretary of the conference and receive a receipt for them (see ¶5630).

Conference Membership Transfers and Termination

¶5500

- A. The licenses of conference ministerial candidates and credentials of ordained deacons and elders may be transferred from one annual conference to another. Transfers shall be by means of a certificate of standing from the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board or the annual conference. This certificate is valid until the next session of the annual conference to which the certificate is given.

- B. The annual conference or its Ministerial Education and Guidance Board may give a certificate of standing to a minister intending to join another denomination. Membership in the conference and the Church terminates upon the giving of such a certificate.
- C. A minister who unites with another denomination without having requested or received proper credentials of withdrawal from the Church may, upon satisfactory evidence of that fact, be declared withdrawn by a majority vote of the conference.
- D. The unauthorized founding of or the unauthorized assumption of a leadership role in an independent congregation by a Free Methodist minister is equivalent to joining another denomination. All rights and privileges of the minister cease and his/her credentials must be deposited with the secretary of the conference.
- E. A minister who is serving a conference and who plans employment elsewhere the succeeding year shall notify the superintendent at least sixty days prior to annual conference, or, failing to give such notice, shall apply to the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board for permission to withdraw from the service of the conference at the close of the current conference year.
- F. When a superintendent is elected and accepts office in another conference, the superintendent's membership shall be transferred to that conference. If a superintendent serves more than one annual conference, he/she shall choose membership in one of those conferences.

Reception from Other Denominations

¶5510

- A. Ministers from other evangelical churches who desire to unite with the Free Methodist Church may be received according to the church's procedures, provided that they:
 - 1. produce documentation of current ministerial credentials held in good standing from the previous denomination;
 - 2. give satisfactory answers to the questions which the Church proposes to:
 - a. lay persons for membership; and
 - b. ministers for admission to annual conference membership;
 - 3. indicate agreement with the Church's doctrine, discipline, government and usages and give evidence of appropriate gifts, graces and usefulness;
 - 4. participate in classes or a cohort to complete either Free Methodist History & Polity and Wesleyan Theology and Wesleyan Theopraxis;

5. complete an Outcomes-Based Ordination Assessment or equivalent interview with the MEG Board to ensure the minister's health and theological compatibility with the FMC;
 6. meet with a conference-approved clinician capable of assessing the candidate's emotional, mental, relational, and marital (if applicable) health, and
 7. receive the recommendation of the MEG Board and approval by the annual conference.
- B. No person may be ordained more easily by transfer from another denomination than through meeting the requirements of the *Book of Discipline* for Free Methodist ministers. Equivalency is the guideline. The candidates must qualify in both educational and service requirements.
 - C. Where immediate transfer of credentials is not possible due to one or more of the above steps being incomplete, a candidate may be licensed as a Licensed Pastor (see ¶5640.A) for the period of 12 months to be renewed annually by the conference, thereby providing the time necessary for proper acclimation into the conference.
 - D. The credential of ministers transferring from other denominations who have been divorced or are married to a spouse who has been previously divorced will only be recognized if the MEG Board votes to approve them for conference admission and such decision is approved by the conference superintendent and the bishop of record.
 - E. Upon completion of the process, they shall be issued credentials.

Termination of Conference Membership

¶5520

Conference membership ceases when:

1. an ordained minister is returned to lay status in a local society and the conference receives the minister's credentials (see ¶5630); or
2. an ordained minister voluntarily withdraws from the conference and denomination, having surrendered credentials (see ¶7170.C.4); or
3. a conference allows an accused minister to surrender credentials and return to lay membership in a local society (see ¶7170.C.3), or
4. a conference allows an accused minister to surrender credentials and withdraw from the conference and denomination under charges or complaints (see ¶7190); or
5. an ordained minister joins another denomination; or
6. an ordained minister is expelled.

Special Cases of Appointments

Left without Appointment

- ¶5600 An annual conference may, upon the unanimous recommendation of the Ministerial Appointments Committee, leave a minister without an appointment. Any ordained minister left without an appointment for more than two years in succession may be located or returned to lay status by vote of the annual conference.

Under Review

- ¶5605 The MEG Board may determine that a minister in conference relationship be placed “under review” (as per paragraph 7190.D) while the MEG Board determines the minister’s suitability for continued ministry. During the time they are “under review” they may not be given a certificate of ~~good~~ standing. After a reasonable amount of time, not to exceed a year, the MEG Board must either return the minister to ~~good~~ standing or proceed to terminate conference relationship. The time of review may be extended for up to one additional year if agreed upon by both the minister under review and the MEG Board.

Leave of Absence

- ¶5610 An ordained minister not in active relationship to the ministry of the Free Methodist Church may be given a leave of absence by the annual conference on the recommendation of the Ministerial Appointments Committee. After two years on leave of absence, a minister who is not restored to an active relationship shall be located to a Free Methodist society as a located deacon or located elder. One two-year extension of leave of absence may be granted by an annual conference, with further consideration for extenuating circumstances, upon recommendation of the Ministerial Appointments Committee. A minister so located to a society may be restored to the itinerant relationship only by the annual conference that voted the location. The published appointments of ministers on leave of absence shall designate the reason for the leave.

Located

- ¶5620 When an ordained minister is located by an annual conference, the Ministerial Appointments Committee shall fix the place of membership after consultation with the minister involved and the pastor and local Board of Administration of the society involved. Ordained persons in good standing shall be listed as located elders or located deacons as the case may be, and may be elected as a lay delegate to annual and General Conference.

Return to Lay Status

- ¶5630 An ordained minister may be returned to lay status. This may occur at the request of an elder after consultation with his or her Ministerial Education and Guidance Board, or as a result of evaluation of ministry effectiveness followed by the unanimous recommendation

of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board and subject of the Annual Conference, or when an elder leaves appointed ministry to pursue secular employment. In all cases, the elder shall deposit his/her credentials with the secretary of the annual conference where membership is held. Individuals who wish to again pursue active pastoral ministry must make application to and be recommended by the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board where their credentials are held. This does not pertain to special leaves of absence as authorized by the conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board.

Licensed Pastor

¶5640

- A. Any person appointed to a society who is not a member of the annual conference in which he/she is appointed shall be designated a licensed pastor. Though conference ministerial candidates who are appointed as lead pastor have a vote, licensed pastors do not vote at annual conference. A person becomes a licensed pastor when approved for ministry by the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board and appointed by the Ministerial Appointments Committee. Licensed pastor status shall be renewed annually. Licensed pastors have the right to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper and solemnize marriages in that place if civil law permits.
- B. No person may be appointed to serve as a licensed pastor who does not meet the qualifications of a minister outlined in ¶5310, ¶5650. Prior to his/her appointment, a licensed pastor, not currently a member of a local Free Methodist Church, shall answer affirmatively the questions for Free Methodist membership at a meeting of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board.

Divorce and Remarriage

¶5650 A clergy member of a conference who divorces or is divorced by his/her spouse shall enter into the care of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board which shall design for the member a process of healing and restoration as appropriate for the circumstances. That clergy member may not remarry until the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board determines that it is appropriate according to biblical guidelines in consultation with the Bishop of record. A clergy person who refuses to enter into such a process shall not be reappointed by the annual conference. This provision shall also apply to a minister whose spouse has been divorced from a mate who still lives.

Evangelists

¶5660

- A. Evangelists are men and women gifted by God to promote revivals and to spread the gospel of Christ abroad in the land, but not necessarily called to pastoral charges or to government in the church.

- B. All evangelists shall be approved by the conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board and appointed as evangelists by the Ministerial Appointments Committee. Securing work in local churches and other settings such as camps and retreats shall be the evangelist's responsibility.
- B. The evangelist shall seek the counsel of the superintendent whenever invited to minister outside the denomination in a region where there is a Free Methodist work. In such a case, the evangelist shall also initiate collegial contact with the pastor of the Free Methodist work.

Located Deacons and Located Elders

¶5700

- A. Located deacons and located elders (persons holding ordination but not itinerating) shall have their names listed in the records of the annual conference and shall be accountable to the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board with respect to their character, conduct, and doctrine. They shall be located to a particular society by the Ministerial Appointments Committee and shall function in ministry under the direction of that society (see ¶5620). Located deacons and located elders may be elected as lay delegates to annual conference and General Conference.
- B. A located deacon or located elder may be transferred to an itinerating ministry within the conference upon the recommendation of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board, having given satisfactory answers to the questions of ¶8720 and having received the approving vote of the annual conference.
- C. Located deacons or located elders who relocate into the boundaries of another conference shall approach the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board of that conference requesting that their membership be received. If and when a transfer is effected, it shall then be the responsibility of the Ministerial Appointments Committee of the receiving conference to locate the deacon or elder.
- D. Located deacons and located elders shall function as exemplary members of the society where they are located. Neglect of duty, including persistent refusal to participate in the life of the Free Methodist Church when such participation is possible, shall subject them to the discipline of the conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board. This discipline may include the request for surrender of ordination credentials. However, no located deacon or located elder shall be deprived of ordination credentials without due process.

- E. Located deacons and located elders shall be approved annually by the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board, upon recommendation by the pastor and local Board of Administration of the society where they are located.

Evaluation of Ministry Effectiveness

¶5800

- A. The evaluation of ministry effectiveness is intended to provide insight for the pastor and congregation on their effectiveness in ministry. In addition, the information gleaned from the evaluation is valuable to both the conference Ministerial Appointments Committee and Ministerial Education and Guidance Board as each carries out its work.
- B. The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board not only certifies pastors for work in the conference but also through this evaluation, identifies areas of pastoral ministry which need improvement and facilitates this training.
- C. The Ministerial Appointments Committee makes its decisions after reflection on information and perspectives from the delegate(s), recommendations from the superintendent, a confidential report from the pastor and the results from the evaluation.
- D. All who participate in the evaluation are encouraged to do so with Christian grace, prayer and fasting, as the Lord may lead.
- E. The elements of the evaluation of ministry effectiveness include:
 - 1. annual staff evaluations to be handled by the senior pastor and local Board of Administration. For each conference-appointed staff person, the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board will review the local Board of Administration's evaluation as well as the character of these individuals.
 - 2. a pastoral evaluation conducted annually by the superintendent to assist the pastor in setting goals and objectives for his/her ministry. The results of each evaluation shall be submitted in appropriate form by the superintendent to the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board and/or Ministerial Appointments Committee. Periodically, the superintendent will review progress with the pastor. The pastor will review the evaluation with the pastor's cabinet and/or the local Board of Administration.
 - 3. an evaluation of its ministry effectiveness by each society every three years with the society's participation. The superintendent or designee, with the pastor, will facilitate the evaluation. The results will be communicated to the society, and shared with the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board. If the stability or mission of a society is threatened, any member of the local Board of Administration may move to request

assistance from a conference intervention team. If passed by a majority vote of the local Board of Administration, then the pastor, Board of Administration vice chair or annual conference delegate shall make this request known to the conference superintendent who will respond within previously established conference guidelines.

4. an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of conference ministries, provided during the local church ministry effectiveness evaluation.
5. the use of evaluation tools developed by the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board in consultation with the bishop of record.

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.