

Introduction:

A national restructuring task force was formed as a result of GC19 Resolution 414,¹ in order to review organizational structures for missional effectiveness.

Those on the task force at this initial gathering included: Bishop Matt Whitehead, six superintendents, two pastors, and two lay member of the BOA. All three regions of the country were represented. All task force members fully participated in the discussion. Bishop Matt Whitehead and Superintendent Pam Braman co-chair the task force.

The task force began with prayer and prayer was woven throughout the time together. In addition, each task force member was asked to call others to intercede for the task force.

Discussion began with a time of “telling ourselves the truth” about some of the challenges we face, including numeric decline.

Our discussion in this initial gathering centered around these items:

1. While we thank God for his incredible faithfulness to the FMC we must also confess and repent of not realizing our full Kingdom potential as a movement.

As a denomination, we are thankful for our heritage and the life transformation that God has accomplished through the Free Methodist Church. While celebrating God’s work through us, we repent that we have not lived out our full God-given potential and commit ourselves to that end.

2. The FMC is in need of significant change here in the US.

We believe that the challenges and opportunities facing our denomination require significant large scale change in order to position us for health and reproduction. We believe that an incremental change process spread out over long periods of time would be unwise and risk the opportunity we have before us now. With our new BOB and BOA there exist a new willingness to undergo the systemic changes which are necessary to restoring our tribe to a dynamic disciple-making movement.

3. This change process in the FMC must be led by the Board of Bishops, as they cast vision for these changes and the potential impacts.

4. There is a sense of urgency to make these changes, but we also commit to a deliberative process.

¹ *Be it therefore resolved:

-That the new Board of Bishops (BOB) in consultation with the BOA and the Global Overseers Team (GOT) appoint a task force to explore the possibility of new structural pathways for the FMCUSA to organize its work that will allow us to gain greater missional traction.

-That the task force will engage in significant collaboration with our national superintendent team.

-That the task force be empowered to review funding structures for denominational ministries at all levels of the FMCUSA.

-That the task force will bring back its report with recommendations during the fall BOA meeting in 2020.

-That the new BOB in partnership with the BOA and the GOT be charged with designing a plan for implementation regarding the recommendations they deem prudent in order for the FMCUSA to become better positioned to achieve the desired outcomes of the General Church across all regions of the U.S.

As we have evaluated our situation, identified pinch points and organizational dysfunction, we are calling for a renewed spirit of deliberative urgency in order to face our challenges as leaders. We simply cannot wait for things to change. We must wisely and courageously create the change which is necessary to reach our full Kingdom potential.

5. One guiding principle is that we believe resources need to flow back from the denomination to the annual conferences.

6. Multiplication is biblical and expected.

We recognize that multiplication is biblical and should be normative.

Jesus said; “... *other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty or even a hundred times.*” Note that the seed possesses incredible potential for multiplication, that good soil is necessary for multiplication, and that God intends multiplication. Therefore, if multiplication isn’t occurring it isn’t the barrenness of the seed, it’s the condition of the soil.

7. We had significant conversation about national and regional leadership structure, which has been forwarded on for further discussion to the Board of Bishops.

Conversations about reducing the number of annual conferences and moving to regional annual conferences are best initiated by the three bishops working with the superintendents in their individual regions.

We recognize the critical need for annual conferences to possess sufficient organizational strength and health in order to support and energize our leaders and churches for multiplication. This requires us to re-envision new potential alignments of conferences so that every leader and every church is fully equipped to achieve their kingdom potential.

Discussion also included how to align national structures in a way that best serves our leaders and the local church.

8. This is a time for bold faith in our movement as we hopefully look forward to the future.

The task force believes the Free Methodist Church has a window of opportunity to realign our structures to effectively support the mission of multiplication. We recognize the changes required to accomplish the realignment will require faith in God’s leadership and provision.

This is a moment in time when the Lord has prepared us for a new season. We have three new bishops, many new superintendents, and a new BOA. We see the significant cultural shifts around us, and recognize this moment as a time to faithfully step into the future with more flexible systems and structures, able to adapt to changing needs.