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**PASTORS AND CHURCH LEADERS
MANUAL**

Pastors and Church Leaders Manual



Resources for Leading Local Churches

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Pastors and Church Leaders Manual

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Introduction

Welcome to this revised edition of *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual*. Through this manual, we aim to provide aid to all Free Methodist leaders with regard to the vision, mission, expected outcomes and strategies for building the kingdom of God through the Free Methodist Church.

In recent years, there has been a proliferation of materials on church health, church leadership, church growth and spiritual formation. This present volume offers a resource targeted uniquely to the Free Methodist family and sensitive to our history, mission and commitments. Obviously, it is not an exhaustive resource, but a denominational supplement, shaped in view of our own ethos and polity as a church.

We give thanks and credit to the Free Methodist Church in Canada for the sharing of excellent segments from *The Manual of the Free Methodist Church in Canada*. With permission, we have copied sometimes a sentence, sometimes a complete paragraph and sometimes an entire topical section.

Leadership must always assume responsibility for providing sound and helpful resources for the work of the ministry. In light of this responsibility we are pleased to offer this *handbook* to our colleagues and friends in the ministry committed to us by our Lord.

The Editors

Section I — Summary Concepts

Preamble to Section I

In the 21st century, the Free Methodist Church in the United States has experienced a great deal of leadership and ministerial change. There has been a natural but very significant turnover in our pastoral team. Hundreds of pastors have retired, transferred, moved into para-church or chaplaincy ministries or simply turned to secular work.

These have been replaced by the greatest influx in our history of new conference ministerial candidates, elders and transfers from other places of ministry. In light of this, we are challenged to transfer our beliefs, our mission, vision, practices and ethos to these new ones. Thus, Section I of this manual is designed as a survey of many critical elements that express our identity, theology and denominational culture.

We share these elements with the hope that those who are long-term among us will be reminded and refreshed in those things that are distinctive about being Free Methodist. We share them also with the hope that those who are newer among us will find many helpful guidelines, guardrails, concepts and perspectives.

A Free Methodist Perspective on Being and Doing Church

1. The Church — Its Characteristics

The church is the body of Christ in the world. The Holy Spirit oversees the life of the church, blesses, assists, prods and holds it strong. We are encouraged by the Word that the “gates of hell” ultimately will not be able to withstand the offensive thrusts of the church.

Yet, the local church is led day by day by people, some of whom are not yet all God intends. Thus, the church can be diverted by cultural and personal pressures and lose

its sense of direction. To assist in keeping the church on mission, we list the primary activities of the church. These should mark the ministry of each local church.

Worship

The worship of God is the central activity of God's people, the undergirding reality of all of life. The psalmist said, "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Psalm 34:1, NRSV). For thousands of years this life of continual worship has been shaped and nourished by special gatherings and by daily, weekly and personal worship in which God is praised and His saving acts recounted.

Evangelism

In worship God invites His people to enter into His own heart for people. Believers are called to share the good news of His love so that more and more people may come to know, love and worship the one true God. The vocation of God's people Israel was to be "a light to the nations ..." (Isaiah 42:6, NRSV). As that calling and vocation are fulfilled in the people of Christ, this call continues: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ..." (Matthew 28:19, NRSV). Likewise, there is the parallel call to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength ... [and] love your neighbor as yourself ..." (Mark 12:30-31, NRSV). Evangelism is also at the heart of the life of God's people. Healthy churches seek every way possible to reach people and bring them into the life of the Kingdom.

Fellowship

Those who come to God through trust in Jesus Christ are drawn into a shared life. The biblical term is "fellowship." Fellowship is more than socializing; rather, it is the sharing of our life together under the umbrella of God's grace and love. The call to a deeply shared life together comes from the New Testament and was stressed afresh in early Methodism. It is in the context of this life together that Christians worship God, share His love with the lost, serve the needy and broken, and build each other up toward maturity.

Christian Nurture

Images of growth and development abound in the New Testament. The Free Methodist Church seeks to help every believer grow up in Christ. The same commission of our Lord, which commands that we go and make disciples of all nations, explains that in addition to baptizing them the church is to teach them to obey everything He commanded. The Christian nurture process seeks to lead people to Christ and to identify with the people of Christ by a pledge of their love and loyalty to Christ and the church, through membership with a local congregation.

The local church then helps believers grow to become fully devoted followers of Christ, equips them with skills they need for ministry, fans the flames of their passions, and enlists them in the worldwide mission of sharing Christ and redeeming the world to Him.

2. The Church — Its Mission

The Mission of the Free Methodist Church is to love God, love people and to make disciples.

3. The Church — Its Vision

The Vision of the Free Methodist Church is to bring wholeness to the world through healthy biblical communities of holy people multiplying disciples, leaders, groups and churches.

4. The Church — Its “Permission-Giving” Environment

Non-negotiables

We may not:

- ◆ live in violation of the Scriptures.
- ◆ live in violation of the Articles of Religion, the Constitution, the Membership Covenant or the mission.

Our pastors may not:

- ◆ live in violation of ordination vows.
- ◆ lead the church in ways that detract from our mission.

Leadership Initiatives

Placing **mission** ahead of method, our pastors and churches are **free** to strategize and minister in ways that fulfill our *Expected Outcomes*.

5. The Church — Its Expected Outcomes

See the document “Earnest Christians On a 21st Century Mission” for elaborations of the ideas in segments 2 through 5. Find it online at fmcusa.org.

Chapter 15 of Luke’s Gospel reminds us that the Father’s heart passionately seeks those outside the Kingdom. Until the lost in any generation are found, God will attempt to win their faith and loyalty.

It is our expectation, in light of this loving, reaching heart of God, that pastoral and lay leaders will seek to develop every Free Methodist church so that it is characterized by the following outcomes:

- a. Being an **evangelizing congregation**: befriending spiritually lost people; presenting and explaining the gospel in culturally relevant ways; and inviting spiritually lost people to trust Christ as Savior.
- b. Being a **discipling congregation**: connecting all who wish to know Christ to groups or cells; nurturing believers toward Christ-like, obedient love; enfolding believers, welcoming them into membership; bringing disciples to a life pattern of holy living through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit; and taking and sending disciples into the world to serve.
- c. Being a **reproducing congregation**: developing the next generation of pastoral and lay leaders; establishing cells as core groups for new church plants; and planting new congregations.
- d. Being a **world-mission congregation**: engaging in Free Methodist World Missions; giving vital resources; sending cross-cultural evangelists; and providing diverse support teams.

These emphases have been high priority throughout our history and should continue to be so since they agree

with the evangelistic imperative of the Bible.

Benjamin Titus Roberts, the most influential person in the founding of the Free Methodist Church, wrote about the evangelistic impulse in his book *Pungent Truths*, paragraph 149:

The special work of an evangelist is to carry the gospel to the unsaved. It is his mission to go to those who are destitute of the means of grace and offer salvation to the lost. He is what is called in our day a missionary. . . . Everywhere there is need that the masses should be evangelized. In this greatly needed work all preachers should take a part. It was to a bishop that Paul wrote, "Do the work of an evangelist." It was not enough that he looked after the work that was already established. He must plant churches in other places. Brother, look at the masses perishing around you. Go to them, and try to get them saved. "Do the work of an evangelist."

In addition to these four characteristics, which focus the church in an outward-looking mode, there are four others, which provide the foundation of community life. We also expect pastoral and lay leaders to seek to develop these outcomes in each church:

- e. Being a **prayer-saturated congregation**: speaking to God on behalf of a lost world; praying first, acting second; interceding for individuals, rulers and nations to yield to the ultimate victory of Christ; and listening to the Holy Spirit and obeying Him.
- f. Being a **worshiping congregation**: celebrating the saving grace of God in singing; encountering God in prayers; reading and obeying the Word; preaching the Word; and observing the sacraments.
- g. Being a **culture-engaging congregation**: seeking justice for all; showing mercy to the poor; and empowering the disenfranchised.
- h. Being a **purpose-driven congregation**: organizing for essentials only; focusing on mission and vision to shape all ministry; and surrendering to Christ's mandated Great Commandment and Great Commission.

Defining Elements of a Free Methodist Ethos

An ethos (distinguishing character, tone or guiding beliefs) is created by a unique combination of specific doctrinal emphases and applications, and the pragmatic and cultural outworking of the same.

Doctrinal and Attitudinal Emphases of Free Methodists

1. **Orthodox Christian:** The truths of the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian creeds are fully embraced.

2. **"Catholic" in spirit:** "In essentials unity ... in non-essentials liberty ... and in all things charity" (Augustine). We are not "separatist" in spirit.

3. **Protestant:** Foundational concepts of the Reformation are accepted:

Sola gratia — We are saved by grace alone.

Sola fidei — We are saved through faith alone.

Sola Scriptura — Scripture is the primary authority as understood in the light of tradition, reason and experience.

4. **Evangelical:** All *must* be saved. This is a biblical imperative. God's grace does not save individuals regardless of their responses to Him. People are not "saved" simply by being, regardless of their responses or absence of responses to God in Christ.

5. **Wesleyan:** John Wesley's *via salutis* ("Way of Salvation") refers to the dynamic process of salvation as understood by Wesley. It expresses the components of our soteriology in a somewhat logical order.

Wesley's "Way of Salvation"

John Wesley had a clear view of the process through which people move from being dead in their sins to fully alive in Christ, mature and holy people. He spoke and wrote of gradual transitions and interrelationships. He resisted the more Reformed perspective wherein these components were seen as an ordered series of discrete states, which were "riveted together like the links of a chain" (Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p. 157). The following schema summarizes the major contours of Wesley's *via*

salutis, wherein people recover the holiness that God has intended. The following five topical summaries come from Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, chapter 7.

1. Regeneration: “Wesley came to emphasize that there was a crucial degree of regeneration *prior* to the New Birth: the universal nascent regenerating effect of Preventive Grace. It is only through ... this grace ... that anyone can turn to God in repentance and receive the more extensive renewal that comes from a restored pardoning relationship with God.” (p. 159)

2. Awakening: Wesley felt that individuals must first become aware of their need for renewal in Christ, since our spiritual senses are asleep. Such an awakening would be effected through tragedies, natural disasters, sermons and conversations, and by direct conviction of the Holy Spirit. Its consequence is a removal of one’s apathy about one’s spiritual condition. (p. 160-161)

3. Repentance: Wesley taught that there was a repentance *prior* to justification, which was a gift from God and was based on a conviction of being a sinner and helpless to save oneself. He taught that there was also a repentance *within* the Christian life, which showed itself in a cessation of doing evil and an allowance of God’s transforming work in our lives. (p. 161-163)

4. Justification: For Wesley, this meant that we were pardoned (forgiven) and received into God’s favor. He deliberately omitted from his definition an aspect that was standard in other Protestant definitions — the imputation of Christ’s active righteousness — because he was convinced that this aspect encouraged antinomianism (a careless disregard of obedience to the law by a believer). Rather, he emphasized the merciful grace of God that pardons us by virtue of the merits of Christ. He insisted that we never “earn” or “deserve” God’s pardoning favor, without calling into question our *responsibility* to respond to God’s *gracious* acceptance. Finally, he affirmed that we are *pardoned in order to participate* (Albert Outler) via a capacity for spiritual life. When we are justified, we are adopted into God’s family and, through the Holy Spirit, begin to be empowered to be obedient children. (p. 166)

5. Sanctification (actual moral transformation): Wesley held that the greatest value of justification (being pardoned and received into God’s favor) was that it was the doorway to the higher goal of sanctification (our recovery of the Likeness of God). Such that, as Miguez Bonino put it, Wesley actually transposed the Protestant theme of “justification by grace through faith” into one of “sanctification by grace through faith.” Quoting Maddox, “... our very capacity for growth in Christ-likeness (New Birth) is contingent upon God’s gracious pardoning provenience (initial justification), while the continuance of God’s acceptance (final justification) becomes contingent upon our responsive growth in Christ-likeness (sanctification — deliverance from the *plague* of sin, not just the *penalty* of sin).” “Christian perfection” was a primary phrase of Wesley to describe our recovery of the Likeness of God. He often defined it as “the humble, gentle, patient love of God, and our neighbor, ruling our tempers, words and actions.” It is important to note that love is not only said to be present, it is *ruling*. This love is weak, sporadic and offset by contrary affections in new believers. In the lives of the entirely sanctified Wesley maintained that it rules “to the point that there is no mixture of any contrary affections — all is peace and harmony.” (p. 177)

As Free Methodists, we commonly speak of spiritual “crisis” to describe points of repentance and saving faith in Christ or to describe acts of consecration to God’s purposes and the surrender of our ego or “false self” to God.

But we also commonly speak of “process,” when people move by degrees on a continuum rather than by sudden leaps of spiritual growth. Steady progress may even include an occasional regress. While each step has its own characteristics, in actual life the movement from one stage to the next may seem incremental, even painfully slow. We make place for both crisis and process in our understanding of the redemptive work of God.

The Wesleyan “Quadrilateral”

This term, coined by Albert Outler in 1964, was an effort to describe a Methodist methodology for theological formulation. It built on the Anglican Trilateral formulation

of Scripture, reason and tradition by adding “experience” as the fourth source for developing our understanding of truth and how to apply that truth. Together, these four become a dynamic conception of authority with regard to Christian faith and practice.

It is important to remember that these four are not thought of as co-equal sources of truth. Scripture is primary. Randy Maddox observes, “Indeed, Wesley’s so-called ‘quadrilateral’ ... could more adequately be described as unilateral *rule* of Scripture within a trilateral hermeneutic of reason, tradition and experience.”

1. Scripture: In Wesley’s introduction to his book *Notes on the New Testament*, he wrote, “I want to know one thing — the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end He came down from Heaven. He hath written it down in a Book. O, give me that Book! At any price, give me the Book of God. I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one Book.”

This knowledge comes through a “double inspiration,” since both author and reader are inspired by God the Holy Spirit. In spite of this declaration, we also pattern ourselves after Wesley, who was a scholar and learner in multiple fields of study and knowledge.

2. Tradition: In theological terms tradition means the insights, understanding and practices handed down from one generation to another, which have stood the test of time. This would include the Christian creeds and the writings of the early church fathers.

It includes the orthodox insights passed down through the centuries regarding the most helpful practices and principles for our common life in Christ; i.e., the historic revelation of knowledge from God is affirmed and refined over time. G. K. Chesterton, in *Orthodoxy*, put it, “This is not ‘traditionalism,’ which is the dead faith of the living, but ‘tradition,’ which is the living faith of the dead.”

3. Reason: God created human beings with a capacity to reason things through and to discern truth from error. Though our reason is marred by the Fall, still we can discern that the eternal power and deity of God can be seen

through the things He has made. We can trust natural revelation and gain empirical knowledge through our physical senses.

4. Experience: Though Wesley had been raised to utilize Scripture, tradition and reason, it was not until he had his Aldersgate Street experience of assurance that he blossomed spiritually into the influential revivalist. The revival that flowed from his experience was a “felt religion” — a religion of the heart, in which experience confirmed the truths Methodists were preaching. This component of the quadrilateral provides a doorway through which the Holy Spirit ministers to the believer. Wesley was wise to know and write that experience can never be the starting point; otherwise, thousands would be formulating their own religions.

A Wesleyan Perspective on the Responsiveness of God

(Written on behalf of the Study Commission on Doctrine by David R. Bauer.)

Free Methodists believe that we must take seriously the fact that Scripture presents God as both knowing the future and sometimes changing his mind. Some readers of the Bible take these two descriptions to be contradictory. After all, they would say, how can God change his mind on the basis of something that happens at a point in time if God had had full knowledge of the future and was thus aware of all that would happen? This consideration has led certain readers of the Bible to deny either God’s complete foreknowledge or God’s practice of changing his mind on the basis of what human beings do.

But the Bible affirms both of these descriptions of God, and does not consider them contradictory. Although the biblical writers do not argue explicitly for God’s complete foreknowledge, they do assume God’s foreknowledge and many passages describe God as knowing the future (e.g., Gen. 15:13; Dan. 2:21-49; Acts 20:23; 2 Thess. 2:1-12). In addition, there are several New Testament passages that

represent Jesus as knowing the future (e.g., Matt. 24:5-25; 13:11, 38; 21:18-19).

Other biblical statements describe God as changing his mind on the basis of what humans do (e.g., Ex. 32:1-34; Jonah 3:1-10; 1 Sam. 15:1-35; Matt. 2:20-22). The Old Testament describes this divine change as an instance of God's "repentance." This language does not suggest that God realized that what he intended to do was morally wrong, and therefore changed his behavior. Rather, it indicates that in response to specific human actions God reconsidered what he had intended to do. God's practice of answering prayer participates in this broader pattern of God responding to human initiation.

According to human experience and logic, these two perspectives appear contradictory; or they at least seem to imply contradiction. But at this point we must remember the fundamental claim of Scripture that God is holy. God's ways are not our ways and his thoughts are incomparably higher than ours (Is. 55:8-9). Scholars refer to this biblical understanding of God's holiness as "transcendence." From the human perspective, there is necessarily a paradox (i.e., an apparent contradiction) with the God who is above time and yet works within the temporal framework. What we humans might consider contradictory may be entirely consistent with God. There are certain cases in which the only way limited humans can approximate an understanding of God is to affirm two (apparently) contradictory things at the same time. Thus, God both knows entirely the future, and God sometimes changes his mind on the basis of what his human creatures do. Therefore, on the basis of God's holiness or transcendence, we resist the strong human tendency to reconcile the Bible's paradoxical language on God's foreknowledge.

Moreover, the Bible does not consider that God's practice of sometimes changing his mind in response to human initiative suggests a limitation of God's sovereignty. The Bible indicates that God's sovereignty is large enough to include a measure of human freedom and initiative. God sovereignly wills the divine-human relationship as described in the Bible, and has thus constituted his human

creatures as true persons who possess the capacity for moral freedom.

Free Methodists do not believe that the doctrine of the sovereignty of God means that God has predestined everything, in the sense that God absolutely and directly causes it to happen. Rather, God's sovereignty means that the universe has meaning and order. There are some things that must happen, such as the fulfillment of prophecy in accordance with God's purposes. There are many things that may happen, given the freedom God has bestowed upon humanity. But God is sovereignly at work in all these things, so that each in its own way contributes to the realization of God's good purposes (e.g., Rom. 8:28). The responsiveness of God, then, expresses God's sovereignty and serves the purposes of God's love.

Wesleyan Perspectives Regarding the Nature of Atonement

a. Universal Atonement

All may be saved. God wants to save all people. Christ died for all, not just a "select group" called the "elect."

b. Knowable Atonement

All may have assurance of their saving relationship with God. The Holy Spirit confirms it, "witnessing" to the inner person, "You are my child."

c. Comprehensive Atonement

Through the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the out-poured love of God persons may be transformed, being set free from the destructive self-centeredness with which they are born.

d. Grace, Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom

"God creates according to God's sovereign will, and governs justly all that has been created. God does not over-leap and displace human freedom by coercing human decision-making. Rather, God supplies humanity with sufficient grace to which freedom can respond and for which freedom is accountable." (Thomas Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity — A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine*, p. 117.)

Grace is not divided or compartmentalized: It is the outpouring of the love of God in Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit. This grace can be seen from different angles, depending upon the results it produces in individuals at different stages of their spiritual journey. That which we observe also depends upon the different situations in which that grace is experienced. In every circumstance God provides the aspect of grace with which we might cooperate, but against which we might also tragically resist. For example:

Prevenient Grace: “Enables one to choose further to cooperate with saving grace by offering the will the restored capacity to respond to grace, so that the person may freely and increasingly become an active, willing participant in receiving the conditions for justification” (Oden, p. 243). This is grace that goes before our more knowledgeable and overt responses to grace, preparing us to listen and drawing us to Christ.

Convicting Grace: Before a person comes to faith in Christ, God is constantly present and at work. The person is convicted by the law that is written on the heart and responds to the gospel, but this is not a purely human act. It is first of all a response to God’s grace, which has brought a revelation of truth. This truth convicts us of our own sin, of the possibility of righteousness and of the reality of judgment.

Resistible Grace: Persons as free moral agents may resist God’s grace at any stage of spiritual development. Such resistance delays repentance of sin and faith for years or for a lifetime, and thus either short-circuits salvation or hinders maturity. Instead of making what some believe are inevitable choices in response to divine decrees, persons may reject the gracious offer of forgiveness.

Justifying Grace: God sustains and assists us to have saving faith in the atoning work of Christ. Through the grace-given gift of faith, our saving relationship

with God begins, and we are released from the guilt and penalty of sin.

Sanctifying Grace: God, through the help and work of the Holy Spirit, nudges us toward yielding, submission, surrender or consecration to God and His purposes. In doing so, we take quantum leaps toward Christlikeness. We are no longer slaves to self-centeredness (Romans 6). Through the presence of the Holy Spirit, the sins that rise from “false self” are rejected (crucified) as the controlling impulse. The practical result is an increasing likeness to Christ. Likewise, in relationships we no longer need to control or dictate outcomes, manipulate people or fear God’s leadings. Attitudes soften and anger dissipates.

We are thus able to love God with all our being and love our neighbor even as we love ourselves. This deepened relationship with God results in a growing improbability of willful sinning. Wesley noted though that sinful affections may reemerge in the lives that had been ruled by love.

Renounceable Grace: The spiritual journey is a relationship with God in Christ sustained by the help of the Holy Spirit. This relationship is never static. We are progressing or regressing in love. Spirit-filled people may still sin. If repentance were to be neglected and forgiveness not sought, such sinning might become a habitual pattern, which hardens the heart. We are warned in Hebrews 3:7-15 and 4:7b-13 against such decisions to “test God,” through which some turn from faith.

Since God does not dominate free moral agents, apostasy is possible, though not likely and not common. Hebrews describes these persons: “... those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, since on their own they are crucifying again

the Son of God and are holding him up to contempt” (Hebrews 6:4-6, NRSV).

God’s love is steadfast. Likewise, God’s grace is never inadequate or withdrawn. Since God chooses not to dominate a person’s will, he or she may through either drift, decision or indecision move from trust to “un-trust” or unbelief relative to the sin-bearing work of Jesus Christ.

Glorifying Grace: After a life in which we have been changed “from glory to glory,” we enter into the presence of God, becoming like Him. We will see Him as He is. Then grace will have totally transformed our being.

Ecological Responsibility

“We are called to understand our present ecological accountability within creation as a final accountability to which we will be called on the last day. God’s mercy will finally extend over all God’s works. God’s justice continues in the midst of the alienation of creature life, and will eventually work itself out. Meanwhile, we are encouraged to be merciful as God is merciful. ... The promise of general deliverance softens our hearts to the hearts of those little ones and those oppressed ones for whom the Lord cares ... enlarges our heart towards those whom God does not forget” (Oden, p. 130).

Eschatological (“End Times”) Thinking

We caution against taking positions regarding the end times. For example, regarding the popular concept of the “rapture” of Christians, we do not require Free Methodists to take a pre-tribulation, a mid-tribulation or a post-tribulation position. Sincere Christians soundly disagree on these and related end-times interpretive issues; we respect each person’s ability to discern, but expect that none will thrust their point on others. Even as we suggest this, we remind all that the concept of the “rapture” as often interpreted these decades is a 19th century proposal.

We refrain from denominational interpretations of apoc-

alyptic material from Jesus, Daniel, Ezekiel or Revelation, especially when it comes to applying these to contemporary persons, nations or empires. We affirm that Christ is coming again, but we don't know when. In every age there are "Anti-Christ's" and "signs" similar to those described by Scripture. Thus, we call everyone to be about the Father's business of bringing the message to as many as possible. If we are faithful to the Great Commission, the much debated details of the actual return of Christ will unfold in ways such that we will not be embarrassed. We may well hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Christian Compassion and Justice Ministries

The God we worship has a heart for the lost and hurting. He is a God of justice and truth. The Old Testament prophets insisted that God always demands righteousness and justice. They kept reminding people that the people of *this* God must, as a part of life, leave space and resources for the needy and the hurting and the broken (see Deuteronomy 24:17-22). Talk of worshiping, praising and fearing God are found *alongside* references to compassion for the widow and orphan (see Deuteronomy 10:12-21).

When Jesus, the Son of God, appeared, He announced what His mission was: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19, NRSV).

He also taught that on Judgment Day true followers will discover that when they have lived out their lives in Him serving and helping compassionately, they have in fact been ministering to him! (See Matthew 25:31-46.)

The early church had a concern for the poor and needy alongside a passion to spread the good news of Christ and to invite new people to come to new life in Him.

Many years later John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, called people to experience personal salvation through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, while also

pursuing social change. He opened a free medical dispensary for the poor. He wrote against bribe-taking and smuggling. He supported the rise of education, particularly the Sunday school movement. He fought against the slave trade in every way he could. He supported prison reforms and the improvement of working conditions, and he freely gave his money in support of these various reforms. In his preface to a collection of *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, Wesley wrote, “The gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness. ‘Faith working by love’ is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection.”

The Free Methodist Church seeks both to evangelize and to serve, to be light and salt, and urges individual Christians and local churches to seek a variety of means to do both.

God’s people are called to a great generosity for those in need, especially for the weak and abandoned, the widowed and orphaned, and for those who are unable to defend themselves. This concern for the broken and the poor has long been an emphasis among Methodists. Since we are called to be light and salt to the world, creative initiatives must always be considered.

Identifiable Patterns in Methodist Behaviors

These behaviors combine to form what we might call our “community culture.”

a. Connectional spirit, open heart: Because we are “catholic in spirit,” we are connectional locally, nationally, globally and interdenominationally. We are strengthened most by our relationships based on truthfulness and grace over time in community. Wherever Christ is authentically present outside Methodism, we extend the hand of fellowship and cooperation.

b. Balanced worship, balanced people: Because we are “orthodox Protestant Christians” with an appreciation for tradition, reason and experience, our worship is warm (spontaneous) but ordered (employing the Scriptures and the sacraments), balancing holiness (transcendence) and the love (immanence) of God.

c. Mission driven, mission outposts: We believe that mission should drive everything we do. We view our local churches as mission outposts. Our pastors are appointed, not just to a local congregation and building, but to ministry and gospel proclamation to whole communities, towns or cities. We see ourselves as an apostolic movement. We are a “sent” people, charged with the task of reaching new territories and new populations for Christ.

d. Free grace, radical grace: We proclaim a grace that is free. Jesus said that the crowning work of authentic ministry is this: when the poor have the gospel brought to them. Hence, the destitute and disenfranchised deserve our particular care. This means that we seek to accept all who come to us, seeing the most desperate sinner with the potential to become a whole and devoted follower of Jesus. The grace of God has the power to radically transform people.

e. Mutual love, mutual accountability: We see small groups and cells within the body of Christ as the best environment for the birth, mentoring, encouragement and care of new and growing believers. Built on early Methodist groups called “classes, bands and select societies,” we seek to connect all earnest seekers and believers to groups small enough to know them well and love them remarkably.

f. Relevant gospel, passionate proclamation: We strive to make the message of the gospel relevant to our culture. There is no sin in being innovative and flexible in our evangelistic methods. Since we have been redeemed from significant sin, we are passionate that others experience the freedom we have found in Christ.

g. Holy God, holy people: Justification gives us the privilege to go to heaven, while holiness alone makes us fit for heaven. Our holy God calls us to be like He is. Our conduct and teaching are to reflect the holiness and love of God. We seek nothing less than the healing of mind, body and soul of all who come under our care.

h. Compassionate hearts, just actions: Because we believe in “ecological responsibility,” we experience anguish at Europe’s and North America’s ever-increasing affluence and our disproportionate indulgence in the world’s

resources. We also deplore the concomitant spiritual deterioration and unwillingness to make personal sacrifices for others. We are committed to tangibly helping as salt and light in the world.

Section II — Pastoral Identity

The Pastor's "Call" to Christian Ministry

Ordained Free Methodist ministers are called to provide Spirit-filled leadership in the church so as to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. This normally involves the work of preaching and teaching the Word of God, intercessory prayer, the administration of the sacraments and pastoral care. Central to this task is the communication of the gospel and the winning of people to allegiance to Christ.

Free Methodist ministers are called to be leaders of God's people. Leadership requires having 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 calling in courageous and radical obedience.

One of the most confusing discussions among clergy and laity alike is over "calling." In recent times, people have spoken about "calling" mostly as it refers to clergy or missionary vocations. Generally speaking, "calling" has been a term reserved for people with leadership gift sets. Such tendency strains the biblical notion of the equality of gifting. It suggests that some are more susceptible to the leading of God toward ministry than others. Or, that some are at least more likely to receive clarity as to their gifting and mission. It also suggests that the "call" is based largely on the subjective encounter with God by the called. Some of this confusion has surfaced due to a misrepresentation of a few texts of Scripture, pointedly Acts 16:6-10 and Ephesians 4:1-13.

In the first text, Paul has been "called" by the Spirit in a vision from one geographic area (Bithynia) to another (Macedonia). This cannot be understood as a parallel to an initial call to lifetime service, since Paul was already called to a ministry among the Gentiles (Acts 9:15, 13:2) and sent out by the church. It is the movement of Paul by the Spirit

of the Lord from one place to another. In Ephesians 4 the calling referenced in verses 1 and 4 is a calling to a life rather than a lifestyle or life gift. The gifting referenced afterward (4:11-13) is not limiting a called ministry to prophets, apostles, pastors, teachers or evangelists.

The danger of restricting the call to certain vocations or to those who have a unique experience with God potentially damages the body of Christ. If Paul were to serve as an example of someone “called” to a unique ministry, a broader perspective of his life informs us more clearly on these matters. The call would be seen, in his case, as a combination of factors that include the following:

1. The Spirit’s Leading

There is no doubt that Paul had a unique and compelling experience with the Spirit of Christ. At Paul’s conversion, a call came very early and very clearly. He knew what he was to do and why God had saved Him. Acts 9:15 records Ananias’ understanding, which Acts 22:21 indicates must have been convincingly communicated to Saul.

It was directly the Spirit’s leading, whether by the voice of Jesus or Ananias. But, he did not consider the call complete or to be acted upon at that point. Years transpired while the call was being completed.

2. The Confirmation of the Body

We often forget the crucial importance of the confirmation and witness of God’s people upon the called. Jesus was launched into ministry at His baptism by John and the witness of a large crowd. Who delivered the message about Saul’s mission and call? Christ gave the message of salvation. Ananias delivered the message or confirmed the word of the Lord (Acts 9:15). It was after time spent with the disciples in Damascus that he began to preach (Acts 9:19-20). Barnabas took him to the apostles in Jerusalem. The apostles sent him to Tarsus (Acts 9:30). The church in Antioch commissioned Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2-3).

We can never use Paul’s call as an isolated leading of the Spirit without the confirmation of the body. On five

levels, God validated, affirmed, restated or directed Paul in his call through others.

3. Gifts and Competencies Complementary to the Call

Paul was persuasive (Acts 9:22). Without such persuasiveness and effectiveness, the Damascus disciples, apostles, church in Antioch and Barnabas likely would not have been eager to endorse Paul's ministry. The disciples would have had nothing of it — that is, until they were convinced by hearing of his passion and competencies through communicating the truth in an unwavering way (Acts 9:27).

4. Fruitfulness

Paul's ministry was making a difference. People were saved through his preaching. The apostles would not have been praising God because of him had he not been fruitful in his ministry (Galatians 1:23-24; 2:8-9). The disciples won, leaders developed and churches started by Paul are matters of historic record.

Any discussion of "the call" must consider our connectional polity, Wesleyan heritage, understanding of the equality of all believers, and responsible exegesis of Scripture. The "call" of all believers will contain the four components of the call. Success in ministry is more certain when these components are all present in the lives of the believer.

The church follows the biblical pattern of setting apart particular persons for unique roles as servant leaders in ministry. These women and men who give evidence of the call of God and the church upon their lives are observed, guided and examined by the appropriate leaders as they move toward ordination.

Both gifts and graces characterize those women and men whom the church ultimately ordains. Gifts are special endowments of ability, and graces are those unique dimensions of character and temperament, which both find their source in the enabling Holy Spirit.

In light of the profound implications of the New Testament view of the role of women in the church as revealed in Galatians 3:28 — "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave

nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” — we ordain both women and men and view them as having equal status in the ministry of the church.

For a more complete explanation of the historical and biblical rationale for this practice, see “Women in Ministry” statement adopted by the 1995 General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America at [fmcusa.org \(resources/fmresources/SCOD: Study Commission on Doctrine\)](http://fmcusa.org/resources/fmresources/SCOD: Study Commission on Doctrine).

The Kind of Person Who Answers the Call

1. One who is being made new in Christ.

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

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

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

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

Paul wrote to his young assistant and budding minister, Timothy, “Be an example to all believers in what you teach, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity” (1 Timothy 4:12b, NLT).

4. One who is a lifelong learner.

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

5. One who is wholeheartedly dedicated to serving Christ.

Jesus said, “If you want to be my follower you must love

me more than your own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters — yes, more than your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26, NLT).

6. One who loves and can work with people.

“Care for the flock of God entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly ... because you are eager to serve God. Don’t lord it over the people ... lead them by your good example” (1 Peter 5:2-3, NLT). Even if you are not naturally high in relational skills, you can learn to love and lead people toward Christ.

7. One who is flexible.

In an increasingly diverse culture the Christian faith must adapt methods and styles to the realities of its culture. Paul’s life modeled it for us: “I become a servant of everyone ... I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ.” (1 Corinthians 9:19-22, NLT).

The Responsibilities of the Call

Elders have a unique role of leadership within the body of Christ. Tradition says that they take responsibility for three primary components of the life of the church: ministering the Word of God (teaching truth and resisting heresy), providing the sacraments (baptism and the Lord’s Supper) and maintaining order (guiding and discipline).

1. Word

The task of the Word applies to the elder in two regards: to teach the apostolic gospel and to protect the church from error. The first concerns such things as preaching, teaching and making disciples and raising up biblically alert leaders, making official statements to the church and the public at large. The second refers to the church’s protection from heresy or from trends that obscure the gospel. Thus, the elder must be theologically orthodox and an able preacher of the gospel.

2. Sacrament

In worship the church gives praise to God, pleads with Him for mercy and receives the grace God mediates to His people. The elder leads 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. The sacramental scope of the elder's tasks is extended to deep personal piety and intercession for the church and the world. Thus, elders must be people whose souls are nourished by public and private devotion and who can lead congregations into the renewing presence of Almighty God.

3. Order

Elders lead the church by articulating its vision. Thus, elders must have a deep commitment to the church's mission, insight into the complexities of human nature and skill at guiding others. As leaders of the church, elders give oversight to the pastoral care of the local church. Bishops, on behalf of the church, set apart those persons whom the church has determined are called of God and competent to feed the sheep. The elders comprise the general ministry of the church and help the church practice the Great Commandment and fulfill the Great Commission.

This normally involves equipping the people of God to do God's work and build up the church (Ephesians 4:12). In this regard it also involves intercessory prayer and pastoral care. Such leadership requires having vision, daring, moving people to action and living with the turbulence change brings. Too much order or too little order both tend to quench the freedom in the Holy Spirit, which is always essential in transformational congregations.

Elders may serve as educators, evangelists, cross-cultural workers or chaplains, or in para-church ministries, but most serve as pastors of local churches. Regardless, ordained leadership is rooted in a deep love for Christ and His compassion toward human need. God's resources are abundantly available for all who embrace this task in courageous and radical obedience.

The Consecrated Local Church Deacon: The New Testament

clearly provides for deacons who assist with more focused or specialized ministry in the local church. Please see the *Book of Discipline*, ¶s 6600 and 6610 for the more detailed explanations of this elder-supporting role. We believe both elders and deacons are essential for a healthily functioning local church.

Section III — Pastoral Character

Pastoral competence matters little without the foundation of personal character. We recommend the following ideas and urge attention to the development of character.

Key Components of Character

Effective pastors exhibit a profound personal commitment to modeling a life of deepening Christian maturity and responsibility. Before considering the various skills required for vocational ministry, the character and integrity of the pastoral person must first be addressed. Consider the following admonitions:

1. Spiritual Formation

Develop a healthy, joyful walk with God. Make private, family and public prayer a frequent habit. Let prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication and intercession be a daily means of grace. Develop the spiritual discipline of fasting as health permits. Search the Scriptures systematically for personal edification using commentaries and classic Christian literature to enrich your understanding. Meditate on what you read and put into practice what you learn. Avail yourself of every opportunity to partake of the Lord's Supper.

2. Family Life

If married, be faithful to your marriage vows (1 Timothy 3:2). Show honor to your spouse, children and parents in keeping with the teaching of Scripture. If you have children, parent them with loving discipline and raise them with appropriate spiritual instruction. Invest time and energy in building a healthy home life.

3. Collegiality

Build healthy, God-honoring relationships with your colleagues in ministry. Seek the counsel of and cultivate a

collegial spirit with your fellow pastors. Meet with them periodically for prayer, sharing concerns and mutual encouragement. Model loyalty to your denomination and its leaders.

4. Use of Time

Cultivate self-discipline and seek the fruit of God's Spirit, particularly self-control. Seek to live an orderly and balanced life, managing your time and energies well. Resist both laziness and workaholism.

5. Personal Health

Pursue and apply the practices of healthy living, especially with regard to food, rest and exercise. Set an example in this regard to those you lead.

6. Conversation

Listen patiently. Communicate clearly, stating your ideas with tact and kindness. Speak evil of no one and carefully guard your words of criticism or complaint. Keep confidences with appropriate care. Cultivate an appropriate sense of humor.

7. Financial Management

Manage your money wisely, keeping debts within bounds. Be wise in the way you spend and invest your financial assets. Do not borrow money from parishioners. Tithe to your local congregation as the starting point for a larger pattern of generous giving. Take good care of that which you have purchased, received or been provided.

8. Public Decorum

As a church leader and public figure it is important to remember the need for appropriate personal dignity and decorum, especially when in the public eye. Do your best not to bring embarrassment upon yourself and/or church. Propriety in demeanor, dress, language and attitude is essential, if one is to have respect from and authority with those you lead.

9. Personal and Professional Ethics

Keep your ordination vows and determine to model a lifestyle that is above reproach. Guard your heart and mind against inappropriate sexual attractions. Be particularly discreet in your dealing with members of the opposite gender, not allowing yourself to be placed in compromising or embarrassing situations.

Give appropriate respect to those in authority over you. Cooperate willingly with your superintendent and bishops. Honor the work of your predecessors. It is neither wise nor appropriate to return to a previous appointment to conduct weddings, baptisms or funerals or to provide other pastoral ministry without invitation or approval from the current pastor(s) to do so. It is also wise to honor the work of your successor(s).

Periodically, a minister experiences discontent with persons, procedures, polity or practice. Occasionally a pastor shares his/her complaints, leading to dissension and sometimes division. We deem it to be unethical for a pastor to leave and take parishioners for the purpose of starting another church in the immediate region. Ordained leaders who foster division in the body of Christ in this manner dishonor their own ordination vows.

See the *Book of Discipline*, ¶5500.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.”

Character According to Scripture

1 Timothy 3:2-10: *Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He*

must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons (NIV).

Titus 1:6-9: *An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless — not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it (NIV).*

Discerning Character in Yourself as a Leader

In addition to these shared by the Apostle Paul, there are other, often-overlooked characteristics that effective church leaders share. Here follow eight characteristics by which to evaluate your service in the church:

1. Can I handle information correctly?

Information is a power; someone fit for leadership will handle information as if he or she were driving a van of explosives. Jack Hayford, pastor emeritus of Church on the Way in Van Nuys, California, writes, "Controlling information is a process fraught with dangers, but it is vitally important to a ministry characterized by wisdom and integrity." Can you be trusted with inside information?

2. Can I defer judgment?

People who make hair-trigger judgments do not make effective church leaders. Can you stifle your first reactions and make decisions based on solid argument and evidence?

3. Am I willing to be directed by God?

Leaders need to listen to each other, but more important, they need to be able to hear God's voice. What is God saying through the board's discussion? Are you willing to obey it?

4. Can I confront appropriately?

Nobody likes conflict. But to lead with integrity, pastors and board members must be willing to confront — even one of their own. Unbridled anger, blatant deception and hurtful words are some things that demand a loving challenge. The two extremes are either to avoid conflict or to act like the Terminator. Where on the continuum do you fall?

5. Am I forward-looking?

Church tradition is life-giving; church traditionalism is life-threatening. The comfort of the familiar can also strangle church progress. Do you believe your church's best days are behind it? Or are you bullish on your church's future?

6. Do I have a “can-do” temperament?

Some people seem to be “blessed” with pessimism. People with a can-do attitude are different. Instead of “Why should we?” as their first response, theirs is “Why not?” How do you respond to new ideas?

7. Am I willing to own up?

Godly leaders take responsibility for their sins. They are human, and they know it. They're not like the person who said, “The only time I've been wrong is when I once thought I was wrong.” When was the last time you said to a colleague, “I blew it; I was wrong”?

8. Do I have the patience of Job?

In the church, getting things done always takes longer than you think. There is always one more committee or congregational meeting to run your proposal by. Can you handle the “hurry-up-and-wait” process of church life?

(David Goetz, “Building Church Leaders,” ©1998 Christianity Today, Inc., *Leadership Journal*.)

Section IV — Pastoral Competence

When a person is characterized by integrity, then competence can be developed on that foundation. The insights that follow flesh out our desire for all Free Methodist leaders, ordained or lay.

Leadership

The current strategic priority of our denomination is the multiplying of godly, competent leaders. The Christian model for leadership is centered in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. In Him we see prayer, solitude, soul-nurture, courage, daring and initiative along with gentleness and humility. The spiritual depth of the pastor is perhaps most crucial in all pastoral leadership endeavors. The servant's heart is essential.

Pastors must demonstrate a variety of competencies in order to effectively serve the Lord and His church. Hebrews 13:7 refers to the authority of leaders in the church as expressed in both their skill as communicators of God's Word and their exemplary patterns in ministry. Ephesians 4:11-13 indicates that effective pastors and teachers serve the church in ways that result in the body of Christ being built up. We would remind all through the insights of Bob Mulholland (retired Asbury Seminary professor) that:

“Leadership in a holiness community is *not* hierarchical. The only hierarchy is God over us. Servant-leaders see themselves as being available to the community for the purposes of God and the needs of people. They are mutual partners in the journey of Christ-likeness and of radical abandonment to God. They are partakers of the nature of God, being possessed by God, which is a radical mode of being”

1. Leadership and the Postmodern Dynamic

In almost every decade there are new “hot” topics or emphases in the church. We may not ignore these pressures, but neither should we fall for every passing fancy.

To assist church leaders in understanding the current cultural dynamic, we share these descriptors from Leonard Sweet about the postmodern church. (*Post-modern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century World*, © 2000.) His thoughts are framed by the acrostic E.P.I.C. — Experiential, Participatory, Image-Driven, Connected. To ignore these dynamics wholesale is to be much less effective in our mission of making disciples.

Experiential

Postmoderns crave experience (eBay, extreme sports, oxygen bars, the Internet, theme restaurants, the public dreaming of movie theaters, etc.) and the more “experiential” the better. Post-moderns are craving “spiritual” experiences and are looking to every possible place to find those. The church must offer the most authentic kind of experience; — that of relationships. Sweet calls these efforts to have spiritual experiences “Soul Quests.”

George Barna says that the number of unchurched adults continues to grow and is now approaching 35 percent. When asked their religious preference in 2000, 19 percent of boomers said “none.”

“Total Experience” is the watchword in postmodern worship. *Shekhinah* (the Hebrew term for “divine presence”) experiences in the Old Testament bring together all the senses — sound, sight, touch, taste and smell — into a full experience of God’s presence dwelling with His people. However, experience is not the final arbiter of truth (see the Wesleyan quadrilateral section in Section I). Experience cannot be trusted but is transfigured by Scripture, tradition (not man’s traditions) and reason. Postmoderns are hungry for experiences, especially experiences of God.

Participatory

Postmodern people take cues *not* from those “above” them but from those “around” them. Paul talked about the “priesthood of the believer.” This is a focus on team. The younger culture around us is becoming more “us” oriented versus the “me” orientation. The desire for the “experience” of “participation” may be the greatest boon to Christianity in America. Postmoderns exhibit three levels of engagement with life: fascination, exploration and

integration. The first is passive and the latter are active and interactive. This should help us recognize how we need to “do church.”

Image-Driven

“Cultures are symbol systems, intricate, interwoven webs of metaphors, symbols, and stories.” The shift for many is from word-based to image-driven. Images can be used effectively as tools to communicate about Jesus Christ. “Visual language (metaphor evangelism and metaphor preaching, etc.) is no longer an option. We are a print-saturated, word-based church in the midst of visual technologies that are creating a whole new visual culture.”

Poetry is on the comeback. Visual art is everywhere, and the Internet did not hit until the ability to generate graphics that would work on all platforms was created (GIF, JPEG, TIFF, etc.) so that we could “see” the content. Sweet says, “Metaphors are more than decorations. Metaphors are the most fundamental tools of thought. Metaphors are causes more than consequences of our reasoning.”

Postmoderns view images, metaphors and liturgies all as the way to communicate.

Connected

Sweet says, “EBay and its cyber-incredible world are bringing people together to do a lot more than goods. We are trading our hearts.” People are selling goods, but making new kinds of connections. Starbucks has developed by using the strategy of making itself the “Third Place” to connect, home and work being the first two places to connect. People are finding affinity groups and spouses on the Internet. The church must become the place where we “trade our hearts” with each other and with those who don’t know Jesus. God is the ultimate Connection: “I will never leave you or forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5b, NRSV).

If the church can help postmoderns understand what it means to be connected (so much more than social, sexual, etc.) to one another, to creation, to a gracious God and to the body of Christ (the redeemed community), it will be blessed.

This is our challenge: to create authentic experiences of

connectedness for those who have no connection to God. All “priests” must be shepherds and bring those skills up to the level of their preaching and teaching.

2. Discerning Whether You Are a Godly, Competent Leader

a. Leaders develop and cast a God-honoring vision.

They see what “is” as well as what “should be.” They talk about it in the larger group settings, creating a holy unrest while moving people toward maturity. They challenge an unhealthy status quo with biblical, reasoned and supportive appeals.

b. Leaders coalesce and align people to help fulfill the vision.

They develop a team and help them enjoy the journey as they inspire others to own the vision. They do not use people; rather, they involve them in a part of the whole that satisfies them in their giftedness. Leaders bring people to own the vision and then to be passionate in fulfilling the vision.

c. Leaders motivate and inspire co-workers.

They understand the needs of people and encourage them, calling out the person’s best through teaching, training, deploying, rehearsing, motivating, encouraging and challenging.

d. Leaders are able to sense the need for positive change and then bring it about.

They understand the landscape, seeing what needs to be done. They “have a nose for” change and bring it about in constructive ways.

e. Leaders establish core values.

Core values are the “ground rules” or “operating principles” for the group; e.g., “We do it in teams” or “We do it with excellence” or “Be on time” or “Gender is not an issue” or “We deal with conflict positively,” etc.

f. Leaders allocate resources effectively.

They guide the church to put the money on the mission, not just on “maintenance.” They have “savvy” in leveraging resources well. They see

resources as tools to be used for the mission.

g. Leaders have ability to identify entropy.

They carry in themselves an intuitive ability to see ahead to developing problems while they are still small. They have a sense of suspicion regarding decline and threats. They root out entropy and sense the threats before they become a crisis.

h. Leaders create a leadership culture.

They are counterintuitive, for outside the church and grace, people fear the young, up-and-coming leaders. Biblical leaders raise up others, especially the young leaders. They love to mentor the young so that synergism occurs. People in positions of influence who squash rising leaders either are not really leaders or they have a severe sin problem. (Adapted from a lecture by Bill Hybels. ©2002 Willow Creek Association.)

3. What Makes an Effective Pastor-Leader?

An effective pastor does not need to be a leader in the typical sense of the word. Some of the best leaders are not stereotypical leaders. They range from extroverted to nearly reclusive, from easygoing to controlling, from generous to parsimonious. What makes them all effective is that they are spiritually deepening, always praying and seeking God's help and counsel through the Holy Spirit.

With that as a given, they follow the same eight practices:

- 1) They ask, "What needs to be done?"
- 2) They ask, "What is right for the church in light of our mission?"
- 3) They develop action plans.
- 4) They take responsibility for decisions.
- 5) They take responsibility for communicating.
- 6) They focus on opportunities rather than problems.
- 7) They run productive meetings.
- 8) They think and say "we" rather than "I."

(Adapted from "What Makes an Effective Executive?" by Peter Drucker, *Harvard Business Review*, June 2004.)

The first two practices provide the knowledge they need. The next four help them convert this knowledge into effective action, for knowledge is useless until it has been translated into deeds. The last two ensure that the whole organization feels responsible and accountable.

Effective pastors know that they have authority only because they have the trust of the church. This means they must think of the needs and opportunities of the church before they think of their own needs and opportunities.

The ninth practice is so important that we elevate it almost to the level of a rule: Listen first, speak last.

The Kingdom demand for effective pastor-leaders is much too great to be satisfied by those few people who are simply born to lead. Effectiveness is a discipline. And, like every discipline, it *can* be learned and *must* be earned.

Leading Through Preaching and Teaching

The church at its best has given priority to preaching, whether during the apostolic era, the Reformation period or in modern times.

1. The New Testament Foundation

This priority emphasis on preaching is based for one thing in the ministry of Jesus. According to the Gospels, Jesus came preaching. Jesus proclaimed the coming near of God's kingdom. In the Sermon on the Mount, for example, Jesus taught how to live in the light of that Kingdom. Jesus' preaching was with a new authority, which had a powerful impact on those who listened.

The priority of preaching is also based in Jesus' commission of the apostles to preach and to heal. On the Day of Pentecost, the apostles' first act was to preach. From then on, in synagogues, town centers, jails and the Temple, the apostles carried out this task. They continued to proclaim the coming near of God's kingdom in Jesus. They taught the meaning of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension to the Father. They taught how the good news of Jesus should be lived out in the life of His followers. The apostles gave priority to teaching and preaching the Word.

2. The Methodist Heritage

Eighteen centuries later, the Methodist revival involved a revival of preaching. Large crowds listened to John Wesley and his colleagues. The theology of Methodism was incorporated in Wesley's sermons. As the movement spread, converts who had neither special training nor ordination also began to proclaim the Word of God with convincing force. These "local preachers" became a major factor in the growth of Methodism.

The rapid spread of Methodism in America involved the work of the circuit-riding preacher. The social and spiritual reforms called for in the founding of the Free Methodist Church were communicated through the preaching of its leaders.

The Free Methodist Church today builds on this heritage of preaching. We believe that preaching is a foremost activity of the Christian ministry. In a larger sense, the whole church is God's proclaiming agent.

This conviction has important implications. It implies that the hard work of preaching must have priority in the time and energies of the Free Methodist pastor. We invest ourselves in preaching that is primarily the exposition of God's Word and that communicates clearly and convincingly to today's culture.

3. Effective Preaching

Effective preaching in the Methodist tradition is clearly based in Scripture and in keeping with orthodox Christian faith.

Effective preaching in the Methodist tradition highlights the gospel, the good news of what God has done for us in Jesus.

Effective preaching in the Methodist tradition is experiential and practical, filled with life applications for those who listen.

Effective preaching in the Methodist tradition calls for response and commitment leading to life transformation.

4. Balanced Ministry of the Word

Preaching should be both theologically sound (ortho-

dox) and personally compelling. Competent preaching expounds the Scriptures systematically, practically and powerfully. Ask God for wisdom in the selection of topics. Maintain a record of the topics and texts you use. Review your preaching calendar at least semiannually in an effort to create a balance between Old Testament and New Testament as well as horizontal, person-to-person and vertical, God-to-person teaching themes. Consulting the lectionary and various print and online sermonic collections can also bring greater breadth to your teaching.

5. Teaching the Word with Integrity

In addition to public proclamation usually in worship services, the pastor will function as teacher of the Word in other settings. Instruction in biblical truth and its application to life will take place in classes for children, youth and adults.

We advise a periodic review of our Articles of Religion so that one does not go stale or astray in the systematic instruction of the whole counsel of God. Competent pastors are assigned the task of teaching God's Word in ways that communicate clearly the claims of the Christian gospel and protect the church from error. Effective preaching and teaching require the investment of adequate uninterrupted time in study and prayer. Seek the anointing and power that God's Spirit provides when His word is preached.

Today's pastor should be cautious about the wholesale and unattributed use of other preacher's sermons. We may benefit from the insights of other preachers, thus enriching our own preparation of sermons. However, plagiarism is not acceptable in academic and church situations. Nor does widespread use of other people's materials develop the capacity of a preacher to speak God's Word to the needs and culture of one's own congregation. For more specific guidelines, please note the following content.

6. Plagiarism

Competent pastors always give proper source credit to things written or published under their name, or spoken by them from the pulpit. In this digital and Internet era, we must not pretend that simply because we are encouraged

by online ministry resource sites to use their materials, we can let others believe that all these ideas are ours.

Black's Law Dictionary, 5th Edition, defines plagiarism as, "The act of appropriating the literary composition of another, or parts or passages of his/her writings, or the ideas or language of the same, and passing them off as the product of one's own mind. To be liable for plagiarism it is not necessary to exactly duplicate another's literary work, it being sufficient if unfair use of such work is made by lifting a substantial portion thereof. ..."

The implication for a pulpit or teaching minister is that when using other people's sermon outlines, concepts and quotations, we will in some contextually appropriate way acknowledge the same. This could be through a spoken comment, a footnote in the bulletin, or a footnote on the digital media screen that shows your notes.

We will also be people of integrity when it comes to the use of digital media (music, movie clips, drama vignettes, etc.). We expect Free Methodists to pay all appropriate usage or license fees.

To quote from the *Evangelical Ministries to New Religion Manual of Ethical and Doctrinal Standards*:

"We recognize that plagiarism can be committed unintentionally, such as when the original source for a stream of ideas and concepts has been forgotten or lost and the source is not physically before the writer as it is worked into a new document. Quoting clichés, catchphrases, or data of common knowledge (which can be found in three or more reference sources) is not cause for action. However, plagiarism of substantial portions of another writer's (or preacher's) material" would be considered as grounds for disciplinary discussion."

Leading Through Public Worship

"The worship of God is the central activity of God's people; the undergirding reality of all of life. The Psalmist said, 'I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth' (Psalm 34:1, NRSV). Worship in

this life is rehearsal for the ceaseless life of worship in the world to come. In the Revelation we read, “Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, “To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might, forever and ever!”” (Revelation 5:13, NRSV).” (Excerpt from *The Manual of the Free Methodist Church in Canada*.)

Leaders plan services of worship with care and a commitment to excellence. See that those planning the various aspects of the services of worship place the focus on God in all His attributes. As the lead worshiper, model and teach the art of worship. Assure that prayer, Scripture reading, singing, preaching and the sacraments are incorporated in fresh and meaningful ways. Involve others including lay persons in the service and remember to give appropriate attention to children. Anticipate fresh encounters with God both for yourself and the congregation.

The pastor and/or church leader submits to the Word of God, both the Word experienced personally and the Word experienced in the worship of the believing community. While often a leader in worship, the pastor and/or church leader is most basically a worshiper. The pastor should see himself or herself as the “lead worshiper.”

All public worship shall be in the language of the people.

In order to worship well and lead appropriately in worship, the leader will think clearly and biblically about *what worship is*. This requires that we are also clear about *what worship is not* in contrast to very individualistic and consumer-oriented expectations of today.

1. Worship is not ...

- ◆ Biblical worship is not *merely entertainment*. At the same time, something is seriously amiss if our worship is tedious, dull or lifeless.
- ◆ Biblical worship is not *merely music*, offered in a particular style and fashion. At the same time, music has been from the beginning and continues to be a

powerful medium of worship, often going beyond words to the unspoken response of the heart.

- ♦ Biblical worship is not *merely what we do or say*, but is rather a response on our part to what God has done and to what God has said and is saying to us. At the same time, worship is something we engage in with our whole being.
- ♦ Biblical worship is not *merely individualistic*. Regardless of being alone or in a gathered congregation, worship is based in one's identity as a faith-community member. At the same time, worship is personal, engaging one at the deepest levels of one's being.
- ♦ Biblical worship is not *merely a feeling*, sought after, celebrated and sometimes artificially produced. At the same time, worship does include the whole of who we are, including our emotions.

What, then, is worship?

2. Worship is ...

- ♦ *Worship is* encountering God, then offering to God, with the believing community, what God is uniquely worthy to receive — honor, praise, thanksgiving, adoration, petition, expressed in word, song and action.
- ♦ *Worship is* retelling and celebrating the good news story of what God has done for us in Jesus, with the resultant affirmation of our identity as people of God through Christ, and by the Holy Spirit.
- ♦ *Worship is* offering the works of our hands, and the living out of our whole lives in obedient service to God.

Isaiah 6:1-9 provides one model for biblical worship. Isaiah, a leader in the faith community of Israel, is in the place set aside for the worship of God. There, Isaiah encounters God “seated on a throne, high and exalted” (v. 1, NIV). Isaiah hears and, perhaps, joins in with the angelic worship of God. “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory” (v. 3, NIV). But as he encounters a holy God, Isaiah also sees himself.

He becomes aware of his unholiness and cries out for cleansing. Isaiah receives cleansing from God. His guilt is atoned for. But then, out of this experience, Isaiah hears the call to serve God. Worship on the model of Isaiah 6 concludes with the worshiper's response to God's call and God's commissioning for service.

One vital metaphor for congregational worship is the drama. In the drama of worship, the actors are the congregation, playing its part, speaking its lines to the audience, who is God. The leaders of worship are the prompters, who assist the actors in their parts.

The pastor and/or church leader prayerfully selects words, readings, songs, meditations, messages, visual images and actions; orders them in a meaningful sequence; and guides the congregation in their use. Whether in traditional or contemporary formats or in creative blends of traditional and contemporary, the order of worship should have intention and meaning, thus assisting the congregation in its offering of worship.

The wise leader will not primarily call attention to himself or herself while leading in worship, but will make every effort to direct the focus God-ward. Worship is not primarily about us, but about God.

While the primary direction of worship is vertical, it also has vital horizontal dimensions. The wise leader will point to the community formed by the gathered believers and seekers. He or she will be sensitive to the dynamics of community, facilitating a welcoming, enfolding, including of others with whom they worship.

The wise leader will give careful attention to the flow and unfolding of worship. We begin with the entering into worship and engage in the offering of praise to God. In worship, we move into hearing from God in the Word, and conclude with our response to what God has said as we leave the worship gathering to be God's people in the world.

In everything the "lead worshiper" will offer to God the highest level of excellence of which he or she is capable. Our God is worthy of the best we can offer to Him. In this context, the pastor and/or church leader will tend to "the

ministry of checking,” reviewing details of the worship environment and transitions in the flow of worship ahead of the service.

3. Worship and the Christian Year

a. The Calendar (The Christian Year)

“The observance of the Christian calendar is an ancient feature of the Church’s life. It enables us, in an ordered way, to hear the great story of salvation, celebrate God’s mighty acts, and be led into a deeper knowledge and love of Christ.

“The calendar begins with Advent, a season of penitence and preparation. This leads to Christmas and Epiphany when we celebrate the Incarnation, God’s supreme self-revelation. After a period of ‘Ordinary Time’ comes the preparatory season of Lent, a period of forty weekdays which reflect the forty days Jesus spent in the desert.

“Passiontide begins on the fifth Sunday of Lent and culminates in the commemoration of the crucifixion on Good Friday. The great fifty days of Easter are a celebration of Christ’s resurrection. Following the chronology in Acts, the Ascension is the fiftieth, the Day of Pentecost. The following Sunday has developed into Trinity Sunday, after which we return to Ordinary Time until Advent begins again.

“Liturgical colors are used in some churches to recognize and reflect the movement and moods of the Christian Year. A scheme in common use is: violet for preparation and penitence; white or gold for celebration and rejoicing; red for the blood of Christ and the fire of the Spirit; green for Ordinary Time.” (*The Methodist Worship Book*, p. 519.)

b. The Lectionary

“The lectionary is a collection of Old Testament and New Testament scripture lessons arranged to guide us through the Christian Year. It guarantees broad exposure to all parts of the scriptures by setting forth lessons keyed to the church year. Together, a lectionary and church year guide the congregation in edifying worship of God.

“The Free Methodist Church has been influenced both

by liturgical and nonliturgical Protestantism. John Wesley, the father of Methodism, was a member of the Church of England. All his life Wesley observed morning and evening prayers found in the *Book of Common Prayer*. But the free church movement from the other end of the Reformation has also influenced the Free Methodist Church. Many fear that any planned approach will imperil worship's true nature. This fear is unnecessary for those willing to seek a balance between order and spontaneity. Because these two approaches are in our history, Methodism at its best provides for order in worship that leaves opportunity for response to the Spirit's leadership" (1998, Revised Fourth Edition, *Pastor's Handbook*, p. 9-10).

"Public worship in our churches shall seek a balance between freedom and form" (1999 *Book of Discipline*, A/376).

c. Using the Lectionary

"Pastors should make sure their congregations regularly hear the unity of the Scripture's message through its various witnesses. Reading at least two lessons in the morning worship service enlarges the impact that God's Word can make. This, in fact, draws on our heritage, for the 1910 hymnal of the Free Methodist Church suggested that an Old Testament and a New Testament lesson be read in each worship service.

"Approaches most certainly will vary. Pastors may use the whole of the Scripture lessons or abbreviate them. They may follow the lessons in the morning and veer from them in the evening in favor of personal selections. Beyond these options, ... portions from a psalm ... may be read in the call to worship or elsewhere.

"Pastors may discover that preaching through a book of the Bible is valuable. Others may find it helpful alternating between following a book series (for example, in Pentecost) and following the church year and lectionary" (1998, Revised Fourth Edition, *Pastor's Handbook*, p. 11).

The theme of worship may also arise out of the particular Sunday in the historic church year. For suggested readings for every Sunday in the church year (i.e., the lectionary) go do Appendix D in this manual or access The

Revised Common Lectionary (a service of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library) at their web site: <http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu>.

No one combination of components or styles or format will result in a balanced worship experience for all groups of worshipers. Worship leaders in every place need to exercise great discernment in creating worship services that reflect balance and wholeness for the people involved. In contextually appropriate ways, both ends of the tensions listed below are worked into healthy worship.

Vital worship is balanced, holding together the following tensions, striking both notes in a harmonious blend:

<i>Both</i>	<i>And</i>
worship in the Spirit	worship in (biblical) truth
praise (for who God is)	thanksgiving (for God's mighty saving acts)
God is love	God is holy
God is near (immanent)	God is wholly "other" (transcendent)
feeling	understanding
freedom	form
joy, celebration	mystery, awe, reverence
encouragement, comfort	rebuke, challenge
reformation	tradition
shaped by trained pastors	shaped by lay teammates

4. Orders of Worship

Most public worship gatherings will include at least the following worship elements:

a. The Call to Worship

What has historically been referred to as the "call to worship" may be music or spoken word or media images, or a combination of these, which call us to turn from other preoccupations and enter into the presence of God.

b. The Invocation

We continue to enter into God's presence through what has been called the Invocation. In what is often a spoken prayer, rather than asking God to be in our midst (we believe that is so!), we invoke God's help to make God's presence real to us as we enter into worship.

c. Music and Singing

Worship gatherings usually include “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Ephesians 5:19, NIV). The “lead worshiper” will make every effort to see that these musical offerings are appropriate for worship, i.e., speak truth to God, about God or from God.

We are called to use songs that are full of truth (about God, His salvation and purposes, and about our responses to Him); and heartfelt, in language and modes that people can “feel” and with which they can identify.

While some music may be an offering by those specially gifted on behalf of the people for their blessing and edification, much of the music of worship should be participatory.

Qualified persons whose character and life reveal the scriptural principles shall be selected to lead the singing and to play the instruments.

Criteria for selecting music are:

- ◆ Are the lyrics theologically sound? Review the lyrics carefully and ask if they say anything about God that is not biblically sound.
- ◆ Is the worship song being considered musically pleasing with a singable melody and rhythm?
- ◆ Remember that popular songs from theological traditions may not be appropriate within our Wesleyan context.

d. The Celebrative Arts

Increasingly we are realizing that worship needs to engage the senses. Thus, visual art, media, drama, even movement may be included either in the elements of the service or in the worship environment.

e. The Prayers of the People, or Pastoral Prayer

Worship gatherings include the prayers of the people, or a pastoral prayer. Whether through prayers that arise from the congregation or through prayers offered by a leader, the offering of our petitions to God is central to Christian worship (1 Timothy 2:1-8).

Those with prayer concerns may be invited to come forward to use the kneeling rail. “The prayers of vital worship will reflect a balance of adoration, confession, thanksgiving

and supplication (making requests). Well planned worship includes all four approaches to God" (*The Manual of the Free Methodist Church in Canada*).

f. Reading from God's Word

Worship gatherings give attention to reading from God's Word. The Word may be read by an individual, by the congregation in unison or in responsive readings. Scripture may be sung and/or dramatized. As in the worship of God's ancient people and in the early church, reading and/or singing the Psalms should play a vital part in today's worship. Today's worship leaders will give attention to Paul's exhortation to Timothy: "devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture" (1 Timothy 4:13b, NIV).

g. Hearing God's Word Preached

Worship gatherings include hearing God's Word preached. The Word is the basis for the message, whose purpose is to explain and apply the ancient Word in the contemporary world. The sermon should be seen as a part of the entire worship gathering, not something distinct from worship.

"Proclamation in Free Methodist worship services will not be in contradiction of the core beliefs laid out in our 'Articles of Religion' ..." (*The Manual of the Free Methodist Church in Canada*).

h. The Offering

Worship gatherings usually include the receiving of an offering. This may take place in the earlier part of the service as an offering of praise to God for His good gifts. Or the offering may come later as a response to God's Word in the message. Though our traditions call for an offering to be part of the worship service, it is acceptable to use an offering box into which tithes are placed as worshippers come and go from worship, especially if the primary services are targeted toward seekers.

i. Invitation to Commitment

Worship gatherings give opportunity and challenge for response. There may be invitations to Christian commitment and to request prayers for healing. People may be invited to stand, fill out a commitment card or come forward to the kneeling rail. There may also be the offering of

a personal story, a witness to what God has done. Some see the offering in this light.

j. The Benediction

Worship concludes with the benediction, or closing blessing. This is not so much a closing prayer as a blessing and a sending forth from corporate worship with the assurance of God's presence.

k. Sacred Actions

Worship gatherings also provide opportunity for the sacred actions of the Lord's Supper, baptism, infant dedication, marriage and the funeral.

See sample calls to worship, invocations, prayers for the offering and benedictions. For additional samples go to the resources section at www.fmcusa.org (pastoral resources/pastors and church leaders manual).

5. Samples of Worship Components

a. Calls to Worship

(These are in the form of responsive readings, inviting congregational participation.)

*Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.
Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth
and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us;
establish the work of our hands for us — yes, establish the
work of our hands.* (Psalm 90:1-2, 17, NIV)

*Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.* (Psalm 95:1-2, NIV)

*Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.
Sing to him, sing praise to him;
tell of all his wonderful acts.
Glory in his holy name;
Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.*
(Psalm 105:1-3, NIV)

Praise the Lord.

Praise God in his sanctuary;

Praise him in his mighty heavens.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord.

(Psalm 150:1, 6, NIV)

b. Invocations

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit that we may perfectly love You and worthily magnify Your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Adapted from the seventh century Gregorian Sacramentary)

O God, author of eternal light, lead us in our worshiping this day; that our lips may praise You, our lives may bless You, our meditations may glorify You, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Adapted from the 11th century Sarum Breviary)

We humble ourselves, O Lord of heaven and earth, before Your glorious majesty. We acknowledge Your eternal power, wisdom, goodness and truth, and desire to offer to You thanks for all the blessings which You pour upon us. But, above all, for Your inestimable love in Your redemption of us by our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Adapted from John Wesley, 18th century)

Great God, Creator of all that is; Giver of all good gifts; we give You praise for who You are; for Jesus and His saving death; for love so freely given; for life, Your life that dwells within.

We give ourselves in worship. May our spirits encounter Your Spirit. May we be renewed and empowered for Your kingdom's work in this world. This we pray through Jesus' name. Amen.

(Contemporary)

c. Contemporary Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into Hades; the third day He arose from the dead; He ascended into

Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

d. Prayers for the Offering

O Lord, our God, send down upon us Your Holy Spirit, we pray, to cleanse our hearts, to hallow our gifts and to perfect the offering of ourselves to You, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord Jesus, who for our sake became poor, that by Your poverty we might become rich: Grant to Your people so to give of their substance as to acknowledge that they belong wholly to You; for Your own sake. Amen.

Heavenly Father, giver of all good things, who has taught us that it is more blessed to give than to receive: We dedicate these our offerings to the service of Your church, humbly praying that all our gifts and energies may be consecrated to the extension of Your kingdom on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

e. Biblical Benedictions

Hebrews 13:20-21

Romans 15:13

2 Corinthians 13:14

Jude 24-25

Numbers 6:24-26

Ephesians 3:20-21

6. Worship and The Lord’s Supper

In obedience to Jesus’ own words, “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19, NIV), the early church made the Lord’s Supper central in its worship. Increasingly today in Free Methodist churches, the central character of this sacrament is being recognized again and its use made more regular and frequent.

There is the recognition that when one partakes of the Lord’s Supper frequently and in a faith-filled manner, one’s life is open to God’s grace. We recognize that more goes on in the Lord’s Supper than meets the eye.

“Christ, according to his promise, is really present in the sacrament. But the body is given, taken, and eaten only

after a heavenly and spiritual manner. No change is effected in the element; the bread and wine are not literally the body and blood of Christ. Nor is the body and blood of Christ literally present within the elements. The elements are never to be considered objects of worship. The body of Christ is received and eaten in faith. ...

“In Communion we look *in* at ourselves and confess the things that have gone wrong. We look *back* to Calvary and praise Jesus for his death for us. We look *up* to his risen presence longing to nourish us through the bread and cup which he said were his body and blood. We look *around* in love and fellowship with other guests at God’s table. We look *forward* to his return at the end of all history, the marriage supper of the Lamb, of which every Communion is a foretaste. And then we look *out* to a needy world; Communion is battle rations for Christian soldiers.”
(*The Manual of the Free Methodist Church in Canada.*)

People’s hunger for meaning and mystery, as well as the contemporary desire to belong, make the use of the Lord’s Supper vital in connecting with today’s believers and seekers. Among Free Methodists, the Lord’s Table is open to all who earnestly seek for God. Wesley even contended that Communion could be “a converting ordinance.” Among Free Methodists, children are not excluded from the sacrament. When parents are convinced their children are ready and understand at least the basics of what the sacrament means, their children are welcome to partake.

While conventionally served in the pews or kneeling at the altar or kneeling rail, the ancient practice of intinction is being increasingly observed. In the latter method, communicants take a wafer or piece of bread from one of those who are serving, dip it into a goblet, and partake.

The means of distributing the Communion elements is left to the discretion of those administering the sacrament.

While prayers for healing may take place whenever they are requested, they may be naturally and meaningfully linked with the observance of the Lord’s Supper. They are prayers of intercession offered on behalf of those who express the need for healing for themselves or for others. They usually include the laying on of hands and anointing

with oil (see James 5:14-16).

Healing is the binding together of that which is broken, whether in the physical, emotional, relational or spiritual arenas of life. When we pray for healing, we place our need into God's hands, asking Him to pour out the grace of healing in ways that God knows are best for us. See also *Book of Discipline*, ¶3260.

Though rituals are provided for observing the Lord's Supper and for other special services, "appropriate variations in forms of worship may be used with propriety to enrich the worship experience. Pastors are exhorted to prayerfully consider making every service involving a ritual a fresh means of grace for the worshiper" (*The Manual of the Free Methodist Church in Canada*). Pastoral leaders are urged to make the use of ritual an opportunity for instruction in its meaning and significance.

On one hand, we desire to avoid the stuffy and meaningless repetition of words. On the other hand, we desire to avoid the devaluing of sacred moments when words and actions are overly casual and unduly ad lib.

Included in this manual is the service of the Lord's Supper traditionally used by Free Methodists, as well as the alternate liturgy and a biblical liturgy.

Find additional Communion liturgies online at [fmcusa.org](http://fmcusa.org/resources/pastoral-resources/pastors-and-church-leaders-manual) (resources/pastoral resources/pastors and church leaders manual).

7. Views on The Lord's Supper

There has developed, over the course of church history, a variety of ways in which to understand the Lord's Supper. Sometimes a view has been shaped in the heat of controversy. More often it has evolved gradually, almost imperceptibly. The end result of all this is the present situation of views so diverse that they might seem hopelessly confusing. However, the differences are not quite as great as they would appear. We can, without doing violence to their meanings, divide them into two major groups.

The largest and oldest group centers on the idea of "real presence." By this is meant that in some way Christ is really present and graciously gives Himself to those who participate in Holy Communion. How He is present

may be explained in different ways.

The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches teach that, when the bread and cup are consecrated, they are mystically changed (“transubstantiated” is the Roman Catholic word) so that they become, in fact, the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The Lutheran churches teach that, when the bread and the cup are consecrated, the presence of Christ enters and surrounds them (the Lutheran word is “consubstantiated”) so that Jesus Christ is really there, although the elements are not themselves changed.

Calvinist churches pay less attention to the bread and the cup and spiritualize a bit more. They simply say that Christ is spiritually present. The views of the Anglican and Methodist churches have generally fallen somewhere between those of the Catholics and Calvinists, with Anglicans leaning more in the Catholic direction and Methodists more in the Calvinist. All of these churches, however, affirm that the Lord’s Supper is a sacrament through which Christ gives grace by giving Himself.

There is another great tradition within the church that does not accept the sacramental character of the Lord’s Supper. Anabaptists of the Reformation era and their present-day descendents prefer the word “ordinance.” They suggest by this that the church, in obedience to Christ’s command, performs a ritual that has spiritual value but is not of unique, grace-giving power. They emphasize the phrase “in remembrance of me” and interpret this to mean that in Communion the church brings to fresh remembrance Christ’s saving death in the past. We could call this the “memorial” view. Another possibly more radical form of this approach is found in the classic Friends Church. Here there is no actual ritual, but only a spiritual remembrance.

Not all people, of course, who belong to a denomination necessarily understand the Lord’s Supper in agreement with their historic tradition. There are many in the Free Methodist Church, for example, who see Communion more as a “memorial” than a participation in the “real presence” of Christ. They may, in fact, believe that their

view is the historic Methodist one. This suggests that there is a great deal of crossing of the lines. In any case, the two views that we have described, the “real presence” and the “memorial” views, represent the basic options that are possible, whatever refinements with them might be made.

8. Worship and Infant Baptism or Dedication

Two Principles:

Adults and the parents or guardians of every child to be baptized shall have the choice of immersion, sprinkling or pouring. We will on no account whatsoever charge a fee for administering baptism.

Baptism and the Lord’s Supper have long been held as the sacraments of the church. The Free Methodist Church practices the sacraments openly and for all adherents of the faith. As such, the Free Methodist Church agrees with the universal practice of the early church (through A.D. 800) and with the common implication of Scripture that infants and children not be denied the privileges of the body of Christ. We hold that clergy are not arbiters determining the age of acceptable communicants for the sacraments — baptism or the Lord’s Supper. We realize that “the promise is for you and your children ...” (Acts 2:39, NIV).

To become arbiters in matters so arbitrary as to establish age criteria of awareness or accountability and determine levels of understanding and depth of faith is precarious at best. And, since Scripture does not seem to intend to grant the clergy decisive authority in this matter, we must recognize the strain placed upon those who believe it is the clergy’s responsibility to exercise such selective and discriminative decision.

The Bible records households that were baptized together. The Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33) and Stephanas (1 Corinthians 1:16) were among the households baptized without discrimination of age or delineation of qualification. As with Cornelius (Acts 10), the entire household seemed to benefit without arbitrary qualifications or queries of the baptism candidates’ acceptability. In some Prot-

estant churches, baptism and the Lord's Supper are denied until an arbitrary age of awareness or accountability as set by the governing body or clergy preference. No such prohibition or restriction is implied or explicitly stated in Scripture.

Many Protestant traditions insist that baptism is only for those who have come to faith. Nowhere in the New Testament, they point out, do we read of infants being baptized. On the other hand, nowhere do we read of children raised in believing households reaching the age of reason and *then* being baptized. The only explicit baptism accounts in the Bible involve *converts* from Judaism or paganism. For children of believers there is no explicit mention of baptism — either in infancy or later.

This is especially striking in view of what “baptism” meant to first-century Jews. Water baptism was not invented by Jesus or John the Baptist; Gentile converts to Judaism had long been “baptized” as well as circumcised. But this baptism was only for the first generation of converts; subsequent children and grandchildren were considered Jews and only circumcised, not baptized.

“Baptism,” to Jews, was a rite of conversion for those raised outside the faith — *not* for children of believing households. (That's why John's “baptism of repentance” was so controversial: It implied that even lifelong Jews had come to need “conversion” like pagans!)

This poses a problem for those who deny baptism to children: *On what basis do they require children of believers to be baptized at all?* Given the silence of the New Testament regarding any divergence from the historic Jewish practice, why not assume Christian baptism is only for adult converts?

The New Testament itself, while it does not explicitly say when (or whether) believers should have their children baptized, is not silent on the subject. Luke 18:15-16 tells us that people “were bringing even infants” to Jesus, and He Himself related this to the kingdom of God: “Let the little children come to me ... for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs” (NRSV). Since exclusionary dialogue about baptism is omitted from Scripture

on the specific matter of infant baptism (no prohibitions, commands or warnings), and it is implied that children were included in the rights and privileges of the believing household, the tradition of baptism of children was carried on in the early church. Even prior to the advent of Catholicism, early church leaders (Origen, Irenaeus, Cyprian, Hippolytus, et. al.) were outspoken in their teaching, reinforcing the affirmation of the baptism of infants and children.

Sentiments include strong opposition to the practice in some segments of the church, but not until a millennium after Christ ascended to heaven. John Wesley recorded some outstanding thoughts on the matter that should be consulted by any clergy in the Wesleyan family. They are found in “A Treatise on Baptism” in his journal.

In the Great Commission, we are instructed to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19a, NIV). Baptizing and teaching are the explicitly stated activities involved. Age and level of maturity or understanding are left outside of the discussion. “Repent and be baptized” was the instruction to the early church (Acts 2:38). It must be assumed that children and women were included among the 3,000 converts at the first Pentecost. From the command of Jesus to the practice of the early church, baptism has always been universally tied to the body of Christ. We must answer, “Who is included in the body of Christ?”

9. Guidance Regarding Requests for Infant Baptism/Dedication

a. The Nature of the Baptism and Dedication of Children

The presentation of a child to the Lord for baptism or dedication is a significant act, for the parents, for the church and for the child. This is to be a community of faith event done in the context of the worship service when God’s people are gathered. The covenant calls for the church to make promises to the family that are not possible if the baptism/dedication is performed in a private setting.

The presentation of a child is a mark of belonging in the community of faith and a celebration of the fact that God’s grace is already at work in the life of the child as part of

a Christian family and as part of the family of God. This aspect is particularly emphasized by parents who choose infant baptism.

It is also a moment of public covenant (by family and church) to be good stewards of a precious gift from the God we worship — in the care and training of the child. This is particularly emphasized by parents who choose infant dedication.

An article more fully explaining the history of the two traditions and the truth embraced by both is found in a discussion paper online at [fmcusa.org](http://fmcusa.org/resources/pastoral-resources/pastors-and-church-leaders-manual) (resources/pastoral resources/pastors and church leaders manual). A statement regarding our rationale for providing infant baptism or infant dedication at the request of parent(s) or guardian(s) is included.

b. Blessing the Children of Unbelieving and Nonattending Families

The church must always respond with warmth and pastoral concern to seekers who are prompted to think about spiritual matters when a child is born into their family.

At the same time, if the parents are not committed to Christ and a congregation of His church, it would be rash for them to stand before the Lord and the church and take the covenantal vows of an infant baptism or dedication, when clearly their hearts are not yielded to Christ and they do not participate in the life of His body, the church.

Yet, this request can be seen as a wonderful pre-evangelistic opportunity for a pastoral person to meet with the family in their home and talk openly with them out of the Scriptures about the things of God and the wonderful privilege of living life in relationship with Him. He or she could impress on them how wonderful it would be if this little baby grew up to be a person who knows God personally and lives with the knowledge of how much God loves him or her.

The pastor could then take the baby in his or her arms and say a prayer for the baby, asking the Lord to bless the child and the parents and to open the way for the child (and the parents) to come to know greater spiritual blessings through a personal relationship with the Lord.

In this way, the parents are not making a covenant with God that they are not in a place spiritually to keep. Neither are they given a false sense of security that their baby has been “done.” Neither are they given a certificate (a legal document) certifying to a ceremony in which they could not spiritually participate.

At the same time, they are responded to lovingly, and hopefully follow-up visits will result in the eventual opening of their hearts to the Lord.

10. Worship and Christian Marriage

a. Guidelines for Conducting Marriage Ceremonies

While Christian marriage services may be held outside the church building, they should be understood as services of worship and conducted in that light. Christian marriage is not merely a private ceremony to which others are invited. It is rather a public making of covenant in the presence of God and the gathered community in the context of worship.

In an era when the meaning of marriage is being radically reinterpreted, pastors should reclaim Christian marriage as a sacred ordinance of the church, to be understood and practiced in light of Scripture’s clear teaching.

While the registration of marriages with the state is appropriate for civil and legal purposes, it is the exchange of covenant vows in the presence of God and the gathered community and the pronouncement of marriage by an ordained pastor that joins a man and a woman in Christian marriage.

Pastors should agree to marry a couple only when they involve a man and a woman; they are willing for the process of marriage preparation; they are of legal age or, when under the legal age, parents or guardians have given consent; and they are willing to work through and resolve issues relating to faith compatibility and divorce in their history in a manner compatible with the provisions of the *Book of Discipline* (§3440).

b. Communion at Weddings

In keeping with our practice of open Communion, all believers present are invited to partake of the Lord’s Sup-

per, but with the following provisos as stated in former *Book of Discipline* editions:

- ◆ Let all our ministers exercise due care to see that no person known to be living an immoral life, or to be guilty of any disreputable practice be admitted to the Lord's Table among us until satisfactory evidence of repentance and amendment of life has been given.
- ◆ All persons properly included in the general invitation may be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper among us. However, a special exception to this practice is allowed at the discretion of the officiating pastor as follows: A Christian bride and groom may request to be served alone as part of the wedding ceremony as a public witness to their faith in Christ and their determination to establish a Christian home.

The placement of the Communion service in the ceremony should be after the vows have been exchanged. The following introductory comments shall be made immediately prior to the serving of Communion to the wedding couple:

"For as much as _____ and _____ wish to confess before this assembly their desire to establish a Christian home founded upon Christ and to make their initial action as a married couple to be a visible Communion with Him, please join with them in silent prayer during this solemn moment."

The service to the couple shall include (if using the Traditional Ritual):

- ◆ An Adapted Invitation:
"Gratefully acknowledging God's loving grace in sending His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross, providing for us forgiveness of sins and newness of life, draw near with faith and receive the holy sacrament. Please humbly kneel and make your honest confession to Almighty God."

- ◆ The Affirmation of Faith
- ◆ The Collect
- ◆ The Prayer of Consecration of the Elements

Other portions may be utilized if the Alternate or Biblical Ritual is chosen.

c. Same-Gender Marriages and Blessings

We hold that Christian marriage can only be the union of “one man and one woman” who have made a public covenant and vow before God and the state (Genesis 2:20-24; Mark 10:6-9). Therefore, it would be a breach of the doctrine and polity of our church for ministers or members of the Free Methodist Church to conduct a Christian blessing of a union between a same-gender couple, or to perform the marriage of a same-gender couple. In light of our beliefs, ministers and members reserve the right of conscientious objection and do not perform marriages of same-gender couples.

We hold that our congregations are stewards of the church property. The blessing of a union between a same-gender couple or the performance of a same-gender marriage in any Free Methodist Church building or on any Free Methodist property would be a violation of consecrated Free Methodist property. Therefore, such blessings or marriages may not be performed at Free Methodist churches or on Free Methodist properties.

A service of Christian marriage is included in Appendix A.

11. Worship and Funeral or Memorial Services

Rather than being merely a private ceremony, a memorial service or funeral is a service of the church. The pastor will take leadership in planning from a clear theological perspective. We strongly advise that since this service is a worship service, congregational singing be planned, as well as adequate Scripture readings.

In a memorial service, two stories are being told. One is the story of what God has done for us in Jesus. It is the Gospel story and is the primary theme of the pastor’s meditation. The other story is that of the person being honored and remembered. This story is told in a tribute or tributes offered by the pastor and/or others. If only the

first story is told, the service may be distant and impersonal. If only the second story is told, the service may be overly sentimental and lose its distinctly Christian context. It is when both stories are told that God is honored and thanked for the gift of life, and the one who has died is remembered warmly and well.

We will not charge for funeral services. However, if the family were to voluntarily give an honorarium, the minister need not refuse the same.

Leading Through Pastoral Care

Healthy pastoral leadership assures that the congregation is cared for, particularly in times of crisis. Not all pastoral care need involve the direct contact of the pastor, but effective pastors find creative ways to ensure that a full range of pastoral care is given through visits, phone calls, notes, etc. from a variety of staff and/or volunteer persons.

Give care and attention to the bereaved, sick, elderly, confined and distressed. Moments of personal crisis or transition such as the birth of a child, marriage, the bestowment of honors, accident and death require special attention from you or an appropriate representative.

Make provision for the pastoral counseling of those seeking guidance. Ensure that any counseling you offer personally takes place in a professional manner and in an appropriate setting. Know the limits of your own counseling competencies and capacities and make responsible referrals as appropriate.

Assure that believing newcomers, new believers, children and teens are encouraged to join the church in membership. Provide regular, careful instruction for prospective members and frequent opportunities to receive them into membership.

What biblical essentials are assigned to this role?

1. Modeling and Vision-Casting

Hebrews 13:7 describes those in authority over the people of God as “leaders,” as those who speak the Word of God, teaching what is in accord with sound doctrine (Ti-

tus 2:1), and holding firmly to the “trustworthy message” (Titus 1:9).

These elders lead as a prophetic and visionary voice, speaking the Word of God and expressing the nature and heart of God. Biblical leaders also lead as servants of the church without lording it over the people (1 Peter 5:3, Mark 10:42). It is inherent in the very nature of sheep to graze and to wait for a leader. Without leadership, the people of God tend to meander and flounder.

When it comes to fulfilling the mission of the church (to make disciples of all people everywhere) and the vision of the church (to be a healthy biblical community of holy people, multiplying ...), sheep will not usually accomplish God’s desired ends without visionary leadership.

The pastor “gets out front” and inspires the people of God to do what Christ wants: make disciples. Paul wrote, “elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching” (1 Timothy 5:17). Notice the direct connection in his mind between directing and preaching/teaching. Hebrews 13:17 admonishes followers to obey their leaders, submitting to their God-given authority.

2. Nurturing and Healing the Wounded and Broken

- ◆ The elder is called to manage or take care of God’s church (1 Timothy 3:5).
- ◆ Sometimes this implies “straighten[ing] out what was left unfinished” (Titus 1:5).
- ◆ Sometimes this implies caring for and serving the flock (1 Peter 5:2) to bring healing, rest and hope.
- ◆ Sometimes this implies guarding the flock from wrong teaching by refuting those who oppose the message (Titus 1:9).
- ◆ Sometimes it implies correcting, rebuking or encouraging (2 Timothy 4:2).
- ◆ But the greatest motivational tool in the pastor’s arsenal is authentic love (note John 21:15-17, where Jesus reinstated Peter).

3. Equipping and Training

The pastor is not called to do the work of ministry alone, but to prepare, equip and train God's people to do the ministry. Therefore, a pastor must develop complementary, self-directed teams of workers.

Ephesians 4:11-16 calls each member to be equipped to serve, rising to maturity, to the full measure of perfection found in Christ. Each member is called to do his or her part. A pastor focuses on relationships and vision-casting more than methods, systems, programs and procedures. The pastor seeks to be effective, not just efficient.

For additional insight or study see also: the *Book of Discipline*, ¶5300 – The Ordained Ministry and ¶8400 – Ordination of Elders.

4. The Right to Confidentiality

All people have a right to safe, respectful, confidential spiritual care. This care of individuals is central to the Christian life, but the care of the church as a whole is also our concern. In addition to bringing redemptive forgiveness and healing to the individual, we have an obligation to create healthy communities within our churches, conferences and general conferences, helping to prevent the damage unhealthiness can cause. As individuals become healthy and whole through God's work in their lives, they become ministers of healing and reconciliation in the lives of others, keeping confidences and being open in their church life. Seeking to continually improve both individuals and churches through monitoring and correcting unhealthy behaviors is an ongoing responsibility, while seeking to do no harm in our efforts to bring about healing and wholeness to both individuals and churches. Being open, honest and trustworthy is vital in the spiritual life.

The following statements are taken from ¶7160-¶7180 in the *2011 Book of Discipline*.

Confidentiality

The confidential care of personal information is a necessary aspect of spiritual care and congregational life. The responsibility to treat personal information confidentially extends not only to ordained pastors, but also to all per-

sons working within the organizational and institutional life of the church. The need for confidentiality exists in two general areas: spiritual care and personnel matters.

Confidentiality in Spiritual Care

In providing spiritual care, our elders and members maintain a relationship of trust and confidentiality, holding in confidence all information revealed to them whether it is formally or informally shared. If a person gives express consent to reveal confidential information, our elders and members may, but are not required to, reveal this information.

- ◆ Elders have a responsibility to keep confessional confidences inviolate, breaking this confidentiality only if the risk of imminent bodily harm to any person is present. The exception to this confessional confidentiality includes any confession of sexual abuse of a child or any other conduct required to be reported under federal/state law.
- ◆ The confession of one elder to another is an inviolate confidence, unless the conduct is both ongoing and unrepentant. This conduct by any elder who continues to take advantage of any person under his/her care is an abuse of position. The confession is not confidential, but a request to be helped to stop this abuse and removed from the temptations and responsibilities of his/ her position until repentance and healing occurs.

Confidentiality in Personnel Matters

Respecting the privacy of church personnel requires confidentiality in personnel matters. This confidentiality extends not only to the discussions required in the interviewing, approving, appointing, supervising, disciplining and dismissing of personnel, but also to all records pertaining to these matters. (See *Book of Discipline* ¶7190 for exception.)

- ◆ The requirement that all financial records be public includes all salary and compensation figures of paid personnel.
- ◆ The appeal of a personnel decision by a committee or board assigned with this responsibility is not confidential. The decision to appeal a decision

requires the information on which the decisions were made to be made public at the appeal. All appeals are held in open session.

Leading Through Mentoring Other Leaders

Pastoral leaders are at their best when raising up other leaders. Ask God for discernment in identifying and challenging young and new leaders in His church.

Frequently challenge your congregation to consider vocational ministry as a worthy endeavor.

Offer personal encouragement and training opportunities to those indicating an interest in vocational ministry. Ask God for the privilege of mentoring at least two new pastoral leaders — one who will one day take your place and another who will expand the ranks of Kingdom servants.

1. Responsibilities of Mentors

Grant Access

Mentors will bring apprentices into their lives, allowing access to the inner workings of themselves and their congregations. Apprentices need access to the skills, attitudes, wisdom and frustrations of pastors. Through observing policymaking, planning and execution, their own abilities deepen.

Stimulate Processing

Mentors give a listening ear. As novices observe their work, there will be a need to process it, understand it and then react to it. This ongoing processing will be enhanced through written journal entries and oral interaction. This will assist in the discovery of the novice's own beliefs about ministry and the implications of his or her particular profile, passions and giftmix. The apprentice will shape his or her own ministry by being in close proximity to and dialoguing with the mentor.

Speak the Truth

The mentor speaks the truth in love and nurtures courage in the apprentice, helping him or her to overcome fears and insecurities. Discussing his or her own leadership style, preaching and interactions will teach much. Mentors

need to model gentleness, perseverance and creative problem solving, allowing apprentices to learn of the problem people in the church as mentors respond to them.

Facilitate Spiritual Growth

Mentors observe apprentices' strengths, but also their immaturities, fears and hesitations. It is important that mentors take responsibility to help mentees deepen their love for Christ, feed their souls habitually on the Word and prayer, and develop a love for the lost and a servant's attitude.

Provide Hands-on Ministry

Mentors assign hands-on ministry and monitor it, so that they may use what they observe to teach in a directive manner, modeling and guiding. Mentors will allow for the possibility of lower-quality preaching, teaching and facilitating during this process. The apprentice learns most by regularly ministering, stumbling, getting up and doing it again, better.

2. A Schematic Summarizing the Mentoring Process

(by Les Krober)

KEY BELIEFS	KEY DEFINITIONS	KEY CONCEPTS
<p>Relationship (directive in nature) is essential for character development (teaching, guiding, discipling)</p>	<p>Disciples? People who are being matured, taught to follow (i.e., shown the “who” – Christ) TRANSPARENCY required</p>	<p>Face-to-Face Focus Dispensing truth with accountability, calling the believer to Christlikeness</p>
<p>Access (exploratory and regular) to the skills, attitudes and knowledge of an “expert” is essential for leadership development (apprenticeship of shared life and work)</p>	<p>Leaders? People who are being mentored (i.e., shown the “how” and “what”) PROXIMITY required for active listening and question-asking by the mentor</p>	<p>Hand-to-Hand Focus Nurturing courage to implement the implications of: being (character growth or spiritual formation); doing (skill (acquisition)); and knowing (cognitive learning)</p>
<p>Group (life-transformation type) is essential for values transfer leading to multiplication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - community - accountability - confidentiality - flexibility - reproducibility 	<p>Groups? People who are being molded into ministry practitioners (i.e., shown the “why”) INTERACTIVITY required as mission-driven concepts are installed in the life</p>	<p>Heart-to-Heart Focus Transferring values within a mission practicum: orient, involve, equip (Just In Time [JIT] training with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reflecting - refocusing - resourcing)
<p>New churches are the most effective means of winning the lost (i.e., shown obedience to the</p>	<p>Churches? People who are being marshaled into mission-active persons toe to toe to reach “when” and “now” — mission) OBEDIENCE required to overcome fear, lethargy</p>	<p>Toe-to-Toe Focus Obeying the mandate with never-say-die tenacity, fighting the lost for Christ</p>

3. Questions Mentors Ask

- ◆ How is your ministry affecting your own relationship with God?
- ◆ How is your sense of God's call being clarified?
- ◆ Where are your skills being tested?
- ◆ Where is your character being tested?
- ◆ What are your hopes and dreams for your future ministry?
- ◆ How can I help you?
- ◆ What evidence can you point to of the presence and power of God in your ministry?
- ◆ How is your relationship/communication style impacting your ministry?
- ◆ As you assess your growth, where do you see areas you need to work on?
- ◆ What are your felt deficiencies?
- ◆ What are some new things you could try?
- ◆ What are some things we could do that would help you to be more a person of integrity?
- ◆ What pain have you experienced and what were some of the effects of that pain?
- ◆ How has that shaped who you are?
- ◆ How might God use your past to prepare you for ministry in the future?
- ◆ Let's pretend that God knows what He's doing in your life, even though things haven't worked out as you'd hoped. What might He be teaching you through it all?

(Leadership Journal, Spring 2000; "How to Be An Effective Mentor")

Leading Through Administration and Order

If a pastor is not gifted or well trained in the administrative task, it is extremely important for that pastor to respond in two ways: (1) to admit it and seek personal development; (2) to delegate these things to skilled lay leaders.

We call for shared leadership within the congregation by the development of a team of Spirit-empowered leaders to whom you entrust various aspects of ministry according

to their spiritual giftedness, maturity, skill and availability.

Recruit, train and mobilize lay persons for ministry both within and beyond your congregation. Work closely with a variety of boards, teams and task forces to oversee and expand the ministries of the local church. Assure that the church's administrative structures are carefully aligned to serve its mission. It is wise to periodically review and streamline structures to assure efficiency.

See that proper records are kept in each major department of the church. Ensure that all financial procedures and record keeping are done with scrupulous care in keeping with *Book of Discipline* guidelines. Especially, make sure that the counting and depositing of all offerings are done by two or more persons, and that signatures from two or more are required on all financial documents.

See that all requested reports are sent promptly to conference and/or denominational offices. Whenever practical use denominational resources. Participate fully in funding the conference and denominational budgets (Equal Participation Plan – EPP) by ensuring that the local church contributes its fair share.

We recommend Howard A. Snyder's (with Daniel Runyon) book *Decoding the Church* (Baker Books, 2002) for biblical guidance and theology on church structure and organization.

1. Organizational Structures

See that the organizational structures are as simple as can be, streamlined and focused on the mission and vision of the church. For example, follow this acrostic, which suggests that structure F.E.E.D.S. growth when it is:

F – Flexible

Structure is subject to change whenever the mission requires it.

E – Efficient

Stewardship of resources is essential (always valuing people above buildings, vans, carpets, etc.). The greatest "efficiency" is to equip and empower "the people" to minister in love (via gifts, passion and temperament). Radical grace calls for radical people radically investing themselves and their resources for Christ and His cause.

E – Effective

Leaders retrain, reassign or replace Christians who render mediocre service for Christ by confronting mediocrity with compassionate courage. The cause of Christ demands it. The mission supersedes one's right to render shoddy service.

D – Decentralized

Ministry and the authority to carry it out are distributed to the godly, competent persons closest to the need. The sacred cow of "control" is killed, butchered and barbecued. The doctrine that "sacred cows" may be reincarnated is rejected as unbiblical. The concept of equipping and empowering around gift-oriented ministries is nurtured. Since a single-cell mentality inhibits growth, diversity and team ministry are valued at all levels.

S – Simple

Leaders ask, "If we were brand-new, would we do this?" Leaders ask, "Does this aid in our mission?" If not, they seek to align it, refine it or eliminate it. Leaders are encouraged to rightsize, streamline or simplify structures to "essentials." The essentials are — making disciples who make disciples who make disciples of Jesus Christ. (Adapted from teaching by Les Krober.)

2. Getting Things Done

Churches, being human organizations as well as divine in nature, tend to bog down, slow down and conserve, when at times they should be risking and advancing. Without interventions that deliberately resist "boggling," inertia develops. Healthy life and process get impeded. Pastors and lay leaders are the doctor and sociologist as well as the shepherd and therefore must understand some key components: people, strategy and operations, if they are to discern and address such impediments. Unless leaders attend to all three, they will not get things done in a timely fashion with majority support. Here are some crucial steps:

a. Define Reality as you determine the church's strengths and weaknesses (obstacles to growth). These are the typical major obstacles:

- ◆ spiritual immaturity or shallowness
- ◆ buildings — ugly/unpainted/leaking/cold/hot/antiquated
- ◆ lay ministry — few trained/few willing
- ◆ financial shortfall — few tithers? This is a discipleship issue.
- ◆ ministry deficiencies — no babies/no youth/no young adults
- ◆ no converts — few prospects

b. Develop Strategy as you seek to determine where you are going, why you are going there and how you will arrive. Utilize the board of administration, a special task force or the pastor’s cabinet. Decide what to do in what sequence.

c. Define the Operational Plan as you develop a “coalition of the committed” and delegate the tasks to them. This calls for enthusiastic support, adequate funding and full authority for them to do what the leadership has approved.

- ◆ Develop a coalition of the committed.
- ◆ Support them enthusiastically.
- ◆ Fund them adequately.
- ◆ Authorize them fully.

d. Calendarize It. Hold yourself to deadlines. Shift the deadlines only reluctantly.

e. Go Public. Provide accountability through the expectations of the church at large. Celebrate the beginning.

f. Follow Through. Dot the I’s and cross the T’s. Don’t get sloppy in the process. Care for the details. (If you are not a detail person, get someone who is to work with you.)

g. Honor the Key Player. Recognize the leaders and workers. Set the stage for future endeavors and the willing involvement of others in future ministries or projects.

3. Knowing What to Change

The latter part of the 20th and the first part of the 21st century have been defined by many as a hinge point in church history, at least in the cultural and social adjustments being experienced in North America and Europe. Numerous congregations have been stressed by the pres-

sure to make changes, so as to continue being relevant and able to reach the unchurched and the unbelieving seeker.

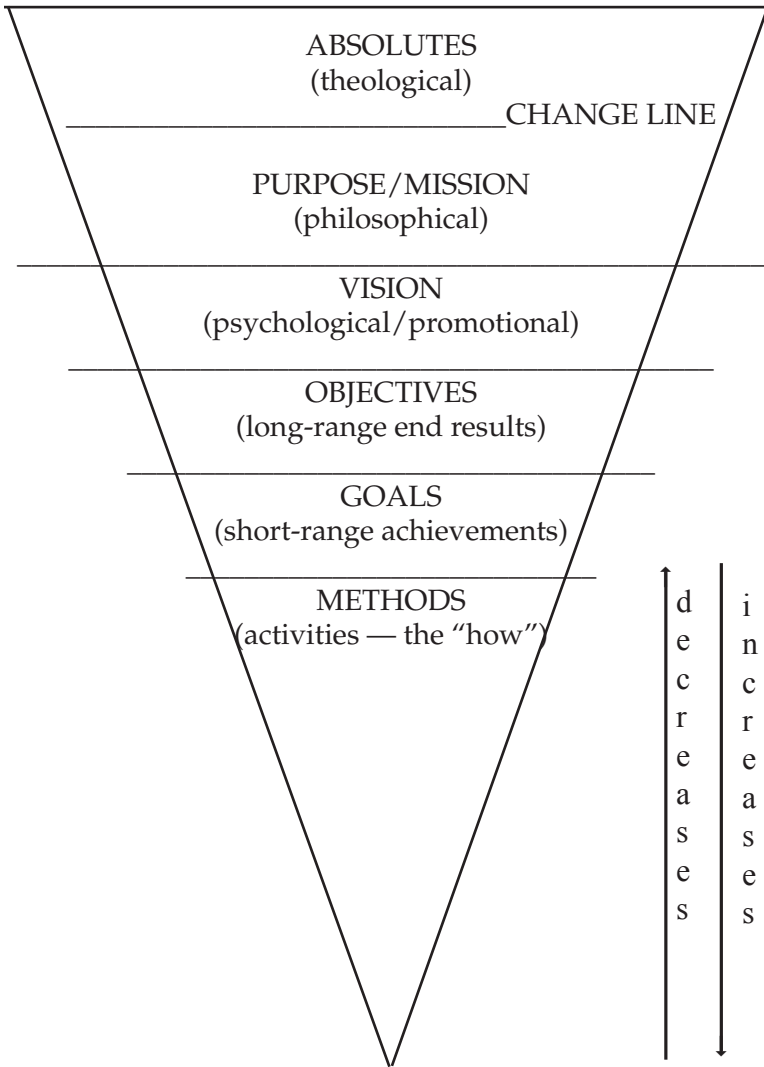
Having the wisdom to know that which should be secured and maintained in the midst of change is difficult. Olan Hendrix provides a helpful template as we seek to discern these things. His ideas are conveyed to us in the concept of a change triangle. The category listed at the top of the change triangle is the things that never change. He calls these “absolutes.” Absolutes are the revealed and theological truths rising from the written Word of God and from the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ. These absolutes determine our purpose.

Immediately below that top segment of the change triangle is what we call the “change line.” Close to the change line, very little changes from age to age. But further removed from the change line, things change more and more as we descend down the triangle.

Thus, though the purpose of the church universal does not change (i.e., to make disciples of every nation, tribe and ethnic group, baptizing them in the name of the triune God and teaching them to obey everything that Jesus taught us), the manner in which we say or write it does vary from place to place. So, there could be changes or tweaks here and there as local churches express the purpose of making disciples who make disciples.

Then, just as absolutes determine our purpose, so our purpose influences vision. Then, our vision molds our objectives, and our objectives shape our goals even as culture, context and personnel influence the methods we use to reach our goals.

The important thing to remember is that we should not fear changes in vision statements, objectives, goals and methods. These are simply tools to be used in helping a congregation fulfill its purpose. It is important for pastors and leaders to make these distinctions clear, whenever change is being proposed. Help the people discern these concepts, and the resistance to change will be lowered.



(Concept from Olan Hendrix, 1984 Ministry Leadership Seminary)

4. The Eight-Stage Process for Creating Major Change

Establishing a Sense of Urgency

- ◆ Examining the community and cultural realities
- ◆ Identifying and discussing crises, potential crises or major opportunities

Creating the Guiding Coalition

- ◆ Putting together a group with enough power to lead the change
- ◆ Getting the group to work together like a team

Developing a Vision and Strategy

- ◆ Creating a vision to help direct the change effort
- ◆ Developing strategies for achieving that vision

Communicating the Change Vision

- ◆ Using every vehicle possible to constantly communicate the new vision and strategies
- ◆ Having the guiding coalition role model the behavior expected of church members

Empowering Broad-Based Action

- ◆ Getting rid of obstacles
- ◆ Changing systems or structures that undermine the change vision

Generating Short-Term Wins

- ◆ Planning for visible improvements in ministry or “wins”
- ◆ Creating those wins
- ◆ Visibly recognizing and rewarding people who made the wins possible

Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change

- ◆ Using increased credibility to change all systems, structures and policies that do not fit together and do not fit the transformation vision
- ◆ Hiring, promoting and developing people who can implement the change vision
- ◆ Reinvigorating the process with new projects, themes and change agents

Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture

- ◆ Creating better performance through people- and productivity-oriented behavior, more and better leadership, and more effective management

- ◆ Articulating the connections between new behaviors and organizational success
- ◆ Developing means to ensure leadership development and succession

(Adapted from John P. Kotter, “Why Transformation Efforts Fail,” *Harvard Business Review* (March-April 1995): 61. Reprinted with permission.)

5. Access to Donor Information

To allow them to provide official donation receipts for income tax purposes, local churches must keep accurate, ongoing records of the amounts given by individual donors. These records are normally kept by the treasurer or a financial secretary/recording secretary (if one is appointed).

The information on the specific amounts contributed by individual donors is confidential, private, personal information. Only the treasurer and/or the financial secretary/recording secretary should have access to this data. Information on the amounts contributed by an individual donor should not be divulged to anyone other than the donor.

Because the giving pattern may reflect an individual’s attitudes toward Christ or the church, the local board of administration (LBOA) may approve a policy allowing the treasurer or financial secretary/recording secretary to inform the pastor of any significantly poor stewardship or a dramatic change in an individual’s giving pattern (without providing specific information on the amounts donated), to assist the pastor in fulfilling his or her role as spiritual shepherd.

We direct your attention to the *Book of Discipline*, ¶6310, which states that there is a procedure for review of church officer and leader nominees by the pastor and/or cabinet for potential removal from the final ballot of those who are showing inadequate growth in Christian practice or Christlikeness. One of these factors could be spiritual issues revealed by failure in or by a dramatic change in an individual’s giving pattern.

6. Insurance, Deeds and the Trust Clause

Normal procedures now are for the LBOA to also serve as the legal trustees of the church property. As such, they are to be elected by ballot. It is of paramount importance that as part of these responsibilities the LBOA provide for the following:

- ◆ adequate property and liability insurance
- ◆ proper deeds on all buildings and/or land
- ◆ the Trust Clause (legal ownership of the church property is the Free Methodist Church of North America) properly inserted in all deeds (see *Book of Discipline*, ¶6400.D)

7. Review of Children's and Youth Ministry Volunteers

Given the legal climate in America and given the increase in the number of sexual abuse offenders in our culture, it is of paramount importance that the LBOA adopt a policy of formal review (with signed documents of review) of all children's and youth ministry volunteers.

There should also be a policy that volunteers never work/serve solo in these ministries.

8. Use of Free Methodist Church Facilities

It is the policy of the Free Methodist Church that the facilities of Free Methodist churches, if rented, shall be rented to or used by individuals or groups with purposes that are compatible with the mission, vision, policies, values and statements of the Free Methodist Church – USA.

9. Fundraising

We direct your attention to the *Book of Discipline*, ¶6430, which clarifies that though our standard for the support of the church is the biblical tithe, along with offerings and gifts, which together define "generosity," other methods for the raising of funds may be used.

Especially is this so in the typical activities of our youth and young adult ministries in which students are traveling in order to attend conferences, seminars and inspirational events, as well as to engage in mission and ministry trips.

It is acceptable for local churches to offer such things

as garage sales, meals, car washes, lawn care, etc., where the value of work and service is exchanged for financial support. We do not find bingo, raffle and lottery types of activities to be acceptable. These call for a modicum of risk to constituents or donors involved in gaining the financial resources. We find these kinds of activities incompatible with our beliefs and values.

Local Church and Conference Records

Records and archives of churches and conferences are a treasure of the denomination and provide irreplaceable resources for historical research and analysis. When conferences merge or churches close, however, these important records are sometimes lost, stored improperly, or destroyed.

Procedures have been established at the Marston Memorial Historical Center to store and preserve these important records. We encourage pastors, conference historians, and superintendents to contact us when records are to be merged or re-housed. The Historical Center can offer guidance in the best way to proceed and can accept those records churches and annual conferences cannot maintain.

Here is our contact information. history@fmca.org and 800-342-5531, ext 281 or 282.

Leading Through Evangelism and Discipleship

Pastors are called to lead their congregations in the pursuit of the Great Commission, seeking and winning the lost to Christ and teaching them to obey His commands. Pastors should work to maximize their own gifts and graces in the area of evangelism, modeling and teaching a variety of evangelistic methods and styles so that by all means we may win some to Christ. It is important to note, though, that we think in terms of broad categories and processes when we think evangelism and discipleship.

Because the Great Commission has application at home and abroad, and because we can more easily provide for the cross-

cultural and overseas aspects of Great Commission work when we combine our efforts, local church leaders will work cooperatively. It shall be the responsibility of every pastor in charge of a local church to promote Free Methodist World Missions (see The Church — Its Expected Outcomes, p. 16, point d. of this book) through a year-round program of missionary emphasis and financial support of the church's missionary outreach through the denominational funding processes. Churches could consider having a local missions coordinator and/or a missions task force as need may require.

1. Salvation Is More Than Conversion

The modern church has tended towards a theology of evangelism that focuses primarily on conversion, emphasizing the role of the believer to "win others to Christ." It is important to reaffirm a broader view of God's desire for "salvation" not just conversion. John Wesley describes salvation as follows: "So the Salvation which is here spoken of might be extended to the entire work of God, from the first dawning of grace in the soul till it is consummated in glory" (*Scripture Way of Salvation*).

Wesley took a broader view of "salvation," which includes "all that is wrought in the soul" by grace. God by His grace acts to draw us to Himself: from a "natural" state in which we have little understanding of spiritual things, to an "awakened" state in which we are conscious of spiritual need of a relationship with God, to a point of conversion and subsequent growth to maturity in Christ.

Evangelism is not simply proselytizing and converting the lost; rather, it is our cooperation with the Spirit of God already at work in the lives of those within our sphere of influence. The parable of the sower and the seed provides a useful model of this process of cultivation, sowing and harvesting (Mark 4:1-20) as illustrated in the table shown on page 93.

Practical Application

Understanding evangelism as *process* rather than *event* only frees the church to continuously work creatively to cooperate with the Spirit at each step of grace. Christian evangelism ultimately results in the multiplication of dis-

ciples and involves the following:

- ◆ Presence — individual believers, small groups and churches engage in the lives of their communities, both individually and corporately, being Christ to those around them.
- ◆ Presentation — ensure that believers are equipped to clearly enunciate the essentials of the gospel. Provide events attractive to spiritual “seekers” so that believers and small groups can develop relationships with them.
- ◆ Persuasion — within the context of relationship and community, there is a commitment to make clear, purposeful presentations of the gospel.
- ◆ Participation — the harvest is incorporated with new believers being led to maturity in Christ and to be effective witnesses of the gospel.

“Becoming a Contagious Christian” seminars are also recommended for training people to understand themselves and how they can be natural witnesses. The seminar identifies the following six styles of evangelism and helps people understand what their natural style is and how it can be used effectively:

Confrontational style	Interpersonal style
Invitational style	Serving style
Intellectual style	Testimonial style

The table on page 93 provides examples of these types of evangelistic activities.

The Hourglass Model

Various models have been developed to illustrate the manner in which secular people become Christians. John Wesley’s “order of salvation” is one such model, as is the traditional model of a single confrontational conversation in which the seeker makes a commitment to Jesus Christ.

Saddleback Community Church (CA) uses the model of a baseball diamond: first base is membership (“knowing Christ”), second base is maturity-directed (“growing in Christ”), third base is ministry (“serving Christ”), and fourth base is mission (“sharing Christ”). Other Christian

Phases of Evangelism

Phase	I. Cultivation	II. Sowing	III. Harvesting	IV. Multiplication
Picture	Soil = Human Hearts	Seed = Gospel	Grain = Reproduced Life of Christ	Crop = Christian Community
Explanation	Speak to the Heart — relationship and caring	Speak to the Mind — communication and clarity	Speak to the Will — conversation and commitment	Speak to the Whole Person — maturity and completion
Emphasis	Presence of the believer — building friendships	Presentation of the gospel — giving understanding of the truth	Persuasion — encouraging a meaningful decision	Participation — integration into the body
Obstacles	Indifference Antagonism	Ignorance Error	Indecision Love of World	Isolation Inward Focus
Examples	Nicodemus — John 3; Woman at well — John 4	Ethiopian Eunuch — Acts 8; Woman at well — John 4	Philippian Jailer — Acts 16; Woman at well — John 4	Jerusalem Converts — Acts 2; Samaritan awakening — Acts 8
Application	- community involvement - personal relationships - church presence in community - small groups	- "Fishing Pool" events - evangelism training for believers - small groups	- personal and corporate presentation of the gospel - small groups	- small groups

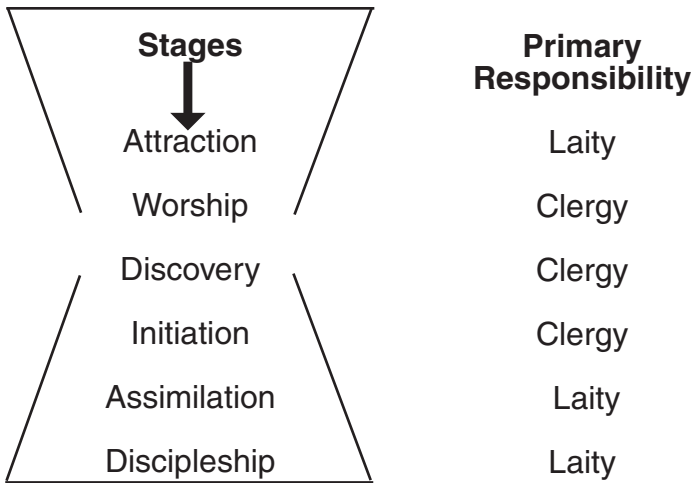
(Table adapted from K.C. Hinckley, *Living Proof: A Small Group Discussion Guide*, NavPress, 1991.)

models exist, but perhaps the most effective one for illustrating the complete process of evangelism is the hourglass model, so called because it starts with a broad opening through which to attract the seeker, narrows in its preparation of the disciple, and expands again to send the disciple back into the world. The hourglass model consists of six stages, each building on the one that precedes it:

1. Attraction
2. Worship
3. Discovery
4. Initiation
5. Assimilation
6. Discipleship

The model is appropriate for any mainline denomination and is particularly powerful in its description of the components, sequencing and individual roles involved in missionary work. This model clearly shows that evangelism is a process that begins with the efforts of the laity, ultimately involves the whole congregation, and is centered in worship. It also clearly shows that disciples are created individually in community, just as Christ converted indi-

The Hourglass Model of Evangelism



(Reclaiming the Great Commission, Bishop Claude E. Payne and Hamilton Beazley, pp. 126-127)

vidually in community. In this sense, seekers in the process of becoming disciples are like grains of sand that must make their way through an hourglass, one at a time.

2. Christian Fellowship

Life in Christ is a shared life. The term “fellowship” comes from a word meaning “common.” It can also mean “to share,” “to *have* a share,” “to *give* a share.” Philippians 3:10 (NIV) says, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.” Hebrews 13:16 says, “do good and ... share [fellowship] with others.”

It can also mean “taking part” or “participating.” Paul uses it in this way in 1 Corinthians 10:16 (RSV): “The cup of blessing [referring to the Lord’s Supper] which we bless, is it not a participation [fellowship] in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation [fellowship] in the body of Christ?”

Fellowship involves giving a part of oneself to such an extent that Bible writers can actually use the word for “the offering.” In Romans 15:26 (NLT) Paul refers to “an offering [fellowship] for the Christians in Jerusalem.” And in 2 Corinthians 9:13 he writes that “your contribution ‘fellowship’ was generous. ...”

The word is also used for “partnership”: “thankful for your partnership [fellowship] in the gospel” (Philippians 1:5, RSV).

This call to a deeply shared life together comes to us from the New Testament (see the many “one another” and “each other” commands) and was stressed afresh in early Methodism. It is in the context of this life together that Christians worship God, share His love with the lost, build each other up toward maturity, and serve the needy and broken.

There is likely no clearer description of the church in Christian fellowship than that given in Acts 2:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42-47, NRSV).

In spite of nearly 2,000 years of cultural change the image of the church is clearly that of a living, growing organism rather than an organization, fulfilling in community the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39) of Christ. Two facets of this picture of particular note are the church in community and the church in evangelism. In the truest sense, they should not be separate since they function fully intertwined; however, in order to provide resources to our church each is described separately.

3. The Church in Community — Small Groups

Biblical Principles

The example of the early church clearly highlights the centrality of community in the life of the church. It is in the context of community that we are drawn to Christ, we hear the gospel proclaimed, we are built up and grow in maturity, and we take up lives of service and ministry to others. It is in Christian community where all the “one another” (Hebrews 10:24-25) exhortations can be fulfilled.

A second, equally vivid description of Christian community is that presented in Paul’s description of the “body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:15-16). As we live in community we are not just *like* the body of Christ, we *are* the body of Christ. It is within the context of the body for the edification of the body that the gifts of the Spirit are provided. It is as “living stones” that we are called to be built up as a temple, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5).

Finally, we have the example of Christ and the disciples. In the context of a community we see a rather ragtag group of mismatched individuals grow up into spiritual leaders.

Thus, we see that “small groups” are not simply a program within the church. They are the church as the body of Christ. Their key purpose is not simply teaching or support. Their key purpose is “building one another up” (Romans 15:2; 1 Corinthians 14:12; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Jude 20) as the body of Christ.

Organizational Principles

Numerous resources for providing an organizational structure for small groups are available, and some are cited below. The clearest biblical direction for the organization of small groups is the guidance of Jethro to Moses (Exodus 18:1-27). Principles of organization that can be derived from this model include the following:

- ◆ Organize a systematic approach to leadership.
- ◆ Enlist qualified and trustworthy people.
- ◆ Create a clear chain of communication so everyone has access to a leader for authority and support.
- ◆ Train your leaders.
- ◆ Delegate the work so that it is more evenly distributed.

(Adapted from the Ginghamburg United Methodist Church *Leaders' Training Manual*.)

In such a model the lay leader or coordinating pastor would develop a strategy to discover and nurture a group of leaders, often referred to as coaches. These leaders in turn are responsible to give care and guidance to five to 10 small-group leaders they are developing. They also assist the small-group leaders in training (often called apprentices) that will then be available to provide leadership to new groups that form as each small group reproduces itself. The small-group leaders facilitate and nurture a group of generally six to 15 people as they grow together towards spiritual maturity. These communities are the church at the most intimate and caring level.

The structuring of the church in this type of model

serves two primary purposes:

- ◆ Leadership development happens continuously and systematically.
- ◆ Everyone is cared for, and no one cares for more than 10.

Recommended Resources

- ◆ Carl George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future* (Fleming H. Revell Publishing, 1992) — a very practical guide to developing the cell/small group church.
- ◆ Dr. Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr. and Associates developed numerous resources for cell or group based ministries through TOUCH Outreach Ministries (713-861-6629).
- ◆ Check with our customer service/distribution partner Wesleyan Publishing House (wponline.com) for current small group resource options. Other resources exist in books, magazines, journals and online for developing full-orbed theology and practice for fellowship and life together in small groups. Denominational leaders and others who demonstrate discernment and understanding regarding fellowship theology and practice can guide people to these resources.

We highly recommend the numerous books by a Free Methodist scholar: Howard A. Snyder, who is one of the foremost biblical thinkers on issues of church structure, small groups, body life and community. See any and all of his books, but especially the following:

- ◆ *The Community of the King*
- ◆ *Decoding the Church*
- ◆ *The Radical Wesley*

Leading Through Free Methodist World Missions

Our Mission

To love God, love people and make disciples.

Our Vision

To bring wholeness to the world through healthy biblical communities of holy people multiplying disciples, leaders, groups and churches.

Missions begins in the heart of God; missions beats in the heart of the church. The story of God in Scripture is the story of a God who searches for a messenger people, for a missionary people, to share Him with the whole world. We are charged to tell everyone everywhere that their Creator longs for them to be restored to right relationship with Him. This is the missional task.

Free Methodist in the U.S. today understand that missions is not just far away, it's also near by. Every Free Methodist Church is charged to have a missionary mindset: To love people; understanding them, their language and their culture well enough to be able to tell them the story of Jesus in ways to which they can respond.

Free Methodist World Missions (FMWM) consists of experienced cross-cultural workers engaged in the complex task of ministry that crosses boundaries of culture, language, race, class, and geography.

The work of generations of FM missionaries together with countless leaders of the international church has resulted in astounding fruitfulness. The global Free Methodist Church now numbers more than one million members. We celebrate this growth that means that only one twelfth of the world's Free Methodists live in the United States.

The challenge of being a world Christian is also great, sometimes overwhelming our sense of scale. One of five people on planet Earth does not have enough to eat, an adequate place to live, clean water to drink, or the basics of education. A similar number — often the same people — will live and die never having had a reasonable opportunity

to say “yes” to Jesus. We face the huge challenge of knowing how to share the information and resources — spiritual and material — we have received. We face the challenge of how to make disciples not only in our own neighborhoods, but also in the neighborhoods of the global village in which we live. Our partnership with the global Free Methodist Church is what makes these challenges feasible.

World Missions from God’s View — God’s Story is Big Enough for All

Global Local Churches

Every local church can touch the world with the love of Jesus — living out the promise of our Lord: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NIV).

Churches that extend their witness through those concentric circles are global local churches. They will:

Have a hunger to understand God’s world and to know what He is doing in His world

Churches that cultivate an awareness of the complexities of culture as well as the commonalities of humankind will find that reports of God’s work in the world energize the church and motivate individuals to become involved in Kingdom work.

Ensure that public prayer transcend our own needs

Through television, radio, newspapers, magazines, the Internet and a multitude of other means, we are daily presented with the critical needs of the global family. Worshipers will quickly relate to worship that reaches out in prayer to a fractured world.

Give to a level that reflects its participation with God’s mission

Every congregation is encouraged to make faith commitments to support specific missionaries or countries ministries. Some congregations also dedicate a specific percentage of their offerings to be used for world missions efforts.

Develop a coordinated strategy that touches the church’s

own neighborhood, its city, its “Samaria” and the ends of the earth

Every congregation can reach from its own ministries, through its own community, to the very ends of the earth. Global local churches share God’s heart for the lost in ways that spontaneously overflow into the needs and possibilities, both nearby and far away.

Partner strategically to leverage their investments and involvements

Our key strategic partners are the leaders of the international Free Methodist Church. In a literal sense, every international Free Methodist is really an embedded missionaries in their own place and culture. Free Methodist World Missions intentionally seeks to minister alongside of these key partners, finding our best strategic contribution to their ministries.

In every case, when you support specific missionaries and adopting country shares for a particular country you are creating an ongoing partnership with the Free Methodist family in another part of the world.

Mobilize Your Church for Local and Global Missions

Engaging in local and global ministries is important to the health of a local church. Engaging in missions:

1. Aligns a local church with Jesus’ global mandate, “Go and make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:18, NIV).
2. Positions individuals and a local church to be involved in that which is bigger than themselves.
3. Establishes a platform for church leaders to teach a worldview consistent with how God sees the world.
4. Provides a tangible way for people to express their faith, for “faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (James 2:17, NIV).
5. Creates a strategic way to give of time, skills and resources to that which is important to God.
6. Shapes the identity and culture of a local church to be

about what God is doing in a community, nearby city or world area.

By the power of the Holy Spirit a church engaged in local and global missions will be a witness “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” as Jesus promised in Acts 1:8.

Several key elements are important to mobilizing your local church for mission engagement: lead, utilize resources, pray, give and serve.

Lead

A pastor’s heart for people and missions is the single most important influence on the life of a local church when it comes to missions engagement.

1. Set the example for your congregation by advocating and praying for God’s work in the world, giving to missions and serving through cross-cultural ministry.
2. Preach and teach on the biblical basis for local and global mission engagement.
3. Develop a strategy with a team of lay leaders for the church’s involvement in local and global missions.
4. Partner with national leaders and missionaries in other countries.
5. Form short-term mission teams to serve alongside local and global ministries.

Utilize Resources

Resources to assist church leaders in learning about and building awareness for missions can be accessed through these websites:

- www.fmcusa.org
- www.fmwm.org
- www.visaministries.org
- www.childcareministries.org
- www.seedlivelikelihood.org

For additional recommended resources or strategy development, or to schedule a speaker, call 1-800-342-5531 and ask for Free Methodist World Missions.

Pray

Prayer is essential to God's work around the world. It represents a very practical way for a local church to engage in local and global missions. We are motivated to pray for people we care about.

1. Take time in public services and small groups to pray for God's kingdom to become a reality around the world, in your country, in your city and in your neighborhood.
2. Seek to develop personal relationships with national leaders and the missionaries supported by your church and pray for their specific ministry needs.
3. Give regular updates, as a part of church services, about missionaries and work in specific countries, and include excerpts from missionary letters in church newsletters or worship bulletins.
4. Use prayer resources available through www.fmwm.org, as well as resources such as *Operation World* by Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, *Window on the World* by Daphne Spraggett, and www.24-7prayer.com/ – Operation World's prayer guide to every nation.

Give

As we contribute to God's work through local and global missions, we can expect blessing on all of our efforts. While we cannot physically go to every place, we can still influence the global expansion of the kingdom through what we give. We discover previously untapped resources as we co-labor with God in His work around the world. As a part of giving, local churches are encouraged to participate in the Annual Partnership Affirmation Process.

Serve

Serve as a Volunteer: VISA Ministries is the established avenue for pastors, mission leaders and individuals desiring to engage as volunteers in short-term Free Methodist ministry around the world. VISA is an acronym for Volunteers in Service Abroad. Individuals serving under the auspices of VISA can be assured that the primary ministry focus will be on the people being served. This requires a

high degree of collaboration between the participants and the national church and is often brokered with help from VISA staff and missionaries. This attention to detail helps to establish healthy, interdependent and ongoing relationships between the U.S. church and the national church, ultimately honoring God.

VISA has helped more than 20,000 people engage in Free Methodist ministry over the years. As a result the process is straightforward but adaptable given the uniqueness of the volunteers and the variety of ministries in which they are involved. Those serving through VISA can also be assured that safety, security and liability issues are taken seriously and that ministry plans are guided so they are relevant and culturally appropriate.

Three main avenues of VISA ministry:

- ◆ **VISA Teams** – opportunities for churches/ conferences/schools to serve internationally for 10-15 days. Teams can get involved through English and sports camps, children’s programs, construction, etc.
- ◆ **VISA Fast Track Assignments** — opportunities for adults and families to serve for a few weeks to a few months.
- ◆ **VISA Voyager Assignments** — opportunities for adults and families to serve for a year or two.

VISA also offers three types of training through VISA University:

- ◆ **Team Leader Training (TLT)** — training to help experienced and inexperienced team leaders prepare and equip their team members for effective cross cultural ministry. TLT is typically offered twice a year as a 12 hour interactive workshop hosted at the Free Methodist World Ministries Center or at a local church outside Indiana.
- ◆ **Global Studies Intensives (GSI)** — a unique two week experience bringing people from many different countries together to learn about the art and science of crossing cultures as well as to study biblical perspectives on missions. GSI is offered every two to three years and has been hosted in Thailand,

Brazil, India, Egypt, Cambodia and Kenya.

- ♦ **IMPACT Teams** — are FMWM sponsored teams led by VISA personnel which are geared to give young people between the ages of 16 to 22 a discipleship / ministry experience they may not have opportunity to get at their local church.

You can find out more about available opportunities and training by going to www.visaministries.org or calling 1-800-342-5531 and asking for VISA staff.

Serve as an Extended-Term (Career) Missionary:

FMWM has a place for people who want to engage in cross cultural ministry as a long-term investment and are committed to learning the language and serving alongside national leaders. Generally this type of missionary service requires advanced degrees in subjects related to the missionary's ministry profession and fits best with people who are self-motivated and have a proven track record in the U.S.

How to Guide Potential Candidates toward Global Service: Free Methodist World Missions recognizes the important role pastors have in exploring missionary service with members of their congregations. A pastor's heart runs deep for the people who are in their care, and when a member goes through the missionary candidacy process, we depend on their pastor to shepherd them.

The goal of the missionary candidate process is to help individuals to clarify and confirm God's call in their life and to meet the needs of the mission field. The process involves four stages: discernment, assessment, development and deployment.

Rather than have an extensive application at the beginning, we utilize a three-part survey that allows for greater dialogue and an individualized assessment and development plan based upon a person's interests and cross-cultural experience.

The Missions Resource Team (MRT) facilitates the candidate process under the oversight of a World Area Director. Important emphasis is placed upon involving a potential candidate's local church and ongoing dialogue with his

or her pastor. We believe those who are called to another place should be actively engaged in mission work where they are currently worshipping.

Based upon the strategic needs of the mission field, the gifting of an individual, and his or her desired term of service, we seek to identify an effective fit for ministry. Once a candidate has completed an individualized development plan and is approved for service in a world area, a deployment plan is outlined. Resources, training and guidance are provided to missionaries for establishing and communicating with their ministry partners.

This process is followed for those who are identified as missionary candidates:

1. A “personal deployment plan” is developed by the Area Director and MRT specific to each candidate. The plan clearly identifies the route to deployment, including any benchmarks to be obtained and paths for further evaluation or personal growth.

The personal deployment plan has two components:

- ♦ Standardized employment practices such as applications, references, interviews, examinations, etc.
 - ♦ Standardized menu with options an Area Director can tailor to candidates desiring to serve in their world area. These options include: assessments, courses, reading, pre-field preparation and additional training.
2. Throughout the candidate process, the MRT seeks to:
 - ♦ Field questions from candidates, churches or conferences, and provide answers in a timely manner.
 - ♦ Help the candidate stay on track with the personal deployment plan.
 - ♦ Keep the Missions Catalyst Committee Chair and Liaison Bishop appraised of the candidate’s “big picture” progress and the Area Director appraised of “zoomed in” details.
 3. Once the candidate has completed his/her personal deployment plan:

- ◆ Affirmation for appointment comes through the Missions Catalyst Committee and Board of Bishops.
- ◆ Candidates are then commissioned by their local church/conference.

Local Church Support for FMWM

Local churches are encouraged to make commitments to give to specific countries and missionaries and to send these funds directly to Free Methodist World Missions.

The Partnership Affirmation Process enables FMWM to thank its ministry partners and provides a clear path for donors to communicate their intent to invest in worldwide ministries and to partner with national leaders and missionaries. Each year individual donors and churches are encouraged to prayerfully follow these steps in determining what they will give:

Step 1: Seek God's Guidance (Sept. to Nov.)

Take time to pray and reflect. Meet with friends, spend time with your church's ministry staff, gather with members of your church's leadership team and ask God for direction.

Step 2: Allocate Monies Strategically (Oct. to Nov.)

Once you have a sense of direction, evaluate your budget. By faith, allocate these monies strategically and trust in God's abundant provision.

Step 3: Communicate Your Commitment to FMWM (Dec. to Jan.)

Use one of these three methods:

- ◆ Online form: <http://fmcusa.org/fmwm/commit>
- ◆ Printable form: <http://fmcusa.org/fmwm/commit>.
Mail to: Free Methodist World Missions
770 N High School Rd, Indianapolis, IN 46214
- ◆ Call Free Methodist World Missions at 800-342-5531.

Commitments

Making a commitment helps provide the church and the donor clarity in terms of the gifts they plan to give in a specific ministry year. Communicating those commitments to FMWM helps missionaries and world area overseers

to know of those who are standing with them in ministry. Additionally, the commitments provide a means for evaluating budgets and fund levels for Country Support Accounts (CSAs) and Missionary Support Accounts (MSAs) during the year.

Commitments to CSAs or MSAs are to be fulfilled the way they are made.

- ♦ If an individual makes the commitment, the individual gives directly to FMWM to fulfill that commitment.
- ♦ If a church makes the commitment, the church gives directly to FMWM to fulfill that commitment.

An FM church receives missions giving credit only for funds sent in by the church for specific CSAs or MSAs. Churches do not receive credit for individual giving sent directly to FMWM or for Extra Mile Projects (EMPs).

Country Support Accounts (CSAs)

The world area directors annually determine the priority budget needs for each overseas field. These budgets reflect the total amount of assistance needed to carry on that country's vital ministries in the areas of leadership development, church planting/evangelism, compassion/community transformation and national church assistance. Individuals, local churches or conferences are encouraged to support the annual ministry budgets of specific countries. Funds are distributed to the field only as they are received.

Missionary Support Accounts (MSAs)

Missionaries are supported through individual and local church commitments. The missionary support package includes:

1. wages, housing, taxes, insurance and pension,
2. travel and field expenses,
3. missionary kid (MK) education and college grants,
4. home assignment expenses,
5. education, training and promotion, and
6. administration.

The goal for each MSA is to achieve a 100% commit-

ment level. These two funding requirements are used to monitor missionaries' support:

1. A one month fund balance (funds FMWM has received for that specific missionary) and
2. A 75% commitment level from April 1 through the rest of the year.

Extra Mile Projects

Funds for Extra Mile Projects (EMPs) are received outside of a country's or missionary's determined budget for projects important to ongoing ministry. Each EMP goes through an approval process before funds are distributed.

International Child Care Ministries

International Child Care Ministries (ICCM), the Free Methodist child sponsorship program, assists approximately 20,000 children in 30 countries. ICCM advocates for the spiritual, educational, physical and social development of children by partnering with the global church through sponsorships, scholarships and creative initiatives. Sponsors donate a dollar a day to support a child's education, food, clothing, and church connection. Additional projects provide school lunches, residential care, anti-trafficking initiatives, Vacation Bible School, medical interventions, and more. To explore ICCM, visit www.childcareministries.org.

SEED Livelihood Network

SEED empowers local Free Methodist churches around the world to minister through livelihood groups. These groups work together to raise animals, run small businesses, or make handicrafts to support their families and often to support ministry in their country. See www.SEEDLivelihood.org to help your church invest in SEED Capital funds or host a handicrafts table.

Section V — Membership

1. Clarifying Our “Open Arms”

Membership Philosophy

a. We hold firmly to the clear teachings and mandates of the Scriptures. What Scripture prohibits we prohibit unequivocally. Where the Scriptures are silent or tolerant, we will allow our members to come to their own Spirit-guided conclusions, but will appeal to them regularly to consider and adopt our community wisdom (*Book of Discipline*, Chapter 3).

b. We respect, value and promote the community wisdom of the church on lifestyle matters that are not clearly mandated in the Scriptures or unambiguously implied in the Scriptures. We discern the Holy Spirit at work in the history and in the lifestyle reflections of the Free Methodist Church.

We wish to teach and commend our community wisdom in ways that connect biblical principle to faithful reflection on the human condition and our cultural, social, political and personal contexts. We will trust the Holy Spirit to guide us in commending our community wisdom to our people so as to shape them in ways that please God.

c. The nonmandated “prudentials,” found in our community wisdom, as matters of personal conviction, are therefore *disputable matters* (Romans 14:1, NIV), regarding which we must make some allowance for differences of *opinion* (Romans 14:1, NRSV). “Prudentials” are defined as things that relate to or proceed from prudence — the ability to govern or discipline oneself out of respect for Christ and the church by the use of reason, the application of church tradition and personal experience.

These three (reason, tradition, experience) along with Scripture as the most authoritative component of the four, make up what Methodists commonly refer to as the Wesleyan quadrilateral. Using these four, Free Methodists come to sound determinations of acceptable attitudes and

actions in a given culture and circumstantial context.

Though “prudentials” represent behaviors that are not specifically prohibited by Scripture, we consider it wise or prudent to set certain behaviors aside. This is in line with Paul’s counsel that even though we may be free to do anything not prohibited by Scripture, not everything is beneficial. Neither is everything constructive (1 Corinthians 10:23, NIV). Neither should we “be mastered by” these things (1 Corinthians 6:12, NIV).

d. We expect pastors to regularly teach the values behind these convictions in membership classes and in pulpit ministry, inviting persons to make these values and convictions their own.

e. We welcome into membership all persons who have found new life in Christ, who embrace our understanding of the Christian life (which means a continual moving toward Christlikeness), who own our mission in the world and who accept our church government.

f. By “embrace our understanding of the Christian life” we mean commit to full conformity to the clear teachings of the moral principles of the Scriptures and to prayerful and conscientious consideration of the church’s wisdom on how best to live a holy life. While a member may draw a different conclusion on a particular matter (see comments on Romans 14:1 to 15:6 below), we would still expect an attitude of respect for our community wisdom as opposed to disparaging attitudes or impugning words.

g. Church members who wish to move into local, conference or denominational leadership are guided to consider leadership level expectations. The *Book of Discipline* makes it clear that those who lead, teach and have public ministry roles and serve as delegates are to be persons who “live consistently within scriptural guidelines (expectations) for leaders” (§6200.E.2.a) and who “agree with and sincerely seek to live out the goals for their maturing life in Christ” (§6200.E.2.c).

A further statement in this regard relative to local church leaders is found in §3460.B: “They must be spiritually mature individuals whose lifestyle shall be in harmony with [among other things] ... the principles of the

Membership Covenant” and our community wisdom. Even though not every member is gifted to lead, we desire that every member would come to share our community wisdom and lifestyle convictions.

Teaching Helps:

Romans 14:1 to 15:6

Here the Apostle Paul taught about the need for both the weak and strong in faith to not only coexist in a local church, but also to thrive in mutual love, respect and submission. He told us that Christians of differing maturity levels will have differences of opinion on disputable lifestyle issues. Remember though that this scripture applies to those attitudes and behaviors that are clearly

- ♦ not prohibited by scriptural principles or standards of morality, and
- ♦ not against the church universal’s traditional application of those principles.

Acts 15:1-30

Among other things, St. Luke’s account of the first church council meeting establishes the principle of “community wisdom” based on context. It underscores that specific acceptable or unacceptable behaviors may well vary according to culture and context. One of the overarching principles found in Scripture in this regard is that individual Christians often willfully restrain their behaviors (i.e., not do something that is biblically permissible) so as to not bring disrepute on the church.

2. Membership Care Committee

(*Book of Discipline*, ¶6330; Membership Lists, ¶6110.F, H and I)

The pastor and Membership Care Committee shall maintain accurate records of all adult and youth, active, inactive and former members as follows: (Keep a list of preparatory members also, if the church or conference chooses this option.)

a. Active Members

In order to tend and nurture members on their journey toward Christlikeness, an accurate list must be maintained. The annual review of members will then allow the Membership Care Committee to work with small group and discipleship group leaders, with Sunday school teachers and with the pastor(s) as progress or regress is noted and relationships for mentoring, caring and supporting are guided.

b. Inactive Members

We always maintain hope that for whatever reason members have been removed from membership, they will one day return to membership. Keeping this list allows us to pray, discern and reach out with loving care. Intentional relationships seasoned with grace could often be inaugurated.

c. Former Members

Those who move away sometimes return. Those who choose another local church sometimes return. Having a formal record of their membership encourages them that they were significant to us. It might facilitate a timely and easy transition back into membership through board of administration approvals.

Membership Discipline and Restoration

See *2011 Book of Discipline* ¶'s 7710-7140 regarding the authority and responsibility of the Membership Care Committee relative to the discipline and restoration of lay members who live in violation of the membership covenant or have charges brought against them by law enforcement or the civil government.

3. Membership — Entry Level Expectations

In harmony with our mission statement that we “invite into membership and equip for ministry all who respond in faith,” the New Testament model of repentance, faith and baptism shall constitute the primary requirements for membership. This makes membership in the Free Methodist Church as nearly as possible synonymous with entering into the body of Christ. We are open to all whom God has

awakened and support them with the healing and equipping power of the Holy Spirit in His church.

a. Maturing Life Goals

The principles of Christian conduct as expressed in Chapter 3 of the *Book of Discipline* (BOD) **are to be the maturing life goals of all** who are invited into membership. (See also ¶6100.)

b. Provision for Revision of Procedures

Conferences of mission origin as well as ethnic groups in North America who, for cultural reasons, encounter difficulties with membership procedures as outlined in Chapter 3 of the *Book of Discipline* and in the following pastoral procedures (STEPS 1-9) may revise these procedures as long as they do not violate the doctrine or ecclesiology of the Free Methodist Church. Revised procedures shall be sponsored by the Board of Bishops, which shall study them to assure that the constitutional requirements and guarantees of membership are carefully safeguarded prior to submitting them to the Board of Administration for approval. (Approved by the 2003 General Conference and referred to the *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual*.)

4. Membership Development and Pastoral Procedures

The pastor shall guide persons through the following steps in bringing persons to adult membership. When believers come by transfer from other evangelical churches, there may be variations in some procedures, but there should be no shortcuts when it comes to steps four through nine. (We recognize that sometimes people will come to us with membership in other churches where they may not have been baptized yet. So do not assume; rather, ask whether or not they have been baptized.)

STEP 1: Awakening to God, a desire to seek God (see *Book of Discipline*, ¶3120);

STEP 2: Assent to participate in the maturing opportunities offered by the church, such as classes, Bible studies and small groups (see *Book of Discipline*, ¶3230);

STEP 3: Evidence of genuine conversion (see *Book of Discipline*, ¶3130);

Note: According to action of the General Conference, those churches or annual conferences that choose to do so may designate these first three steps as the requirements for Preparatory Membership and may utilize the ritual that follows.

Preparatory Members shall not be continued longer than two years on the membership roll in this relationship without a two-thirds vote of the local board of administration that circumstances warrant a continuation for a longer period.

STEP 4: Receiving the sacrament of **baptism** following instruction in the essential doctrines and practices of the faith. If baptized in infancy, opportunity should be given for them to give public assent to the baptismal covenant made on their behalf by parents or guardians (see *Book of Discipline*, ¶8040 or Appendix A for this ritual). If the candidate has been baptized previously in another church, seek to **verify** their baptism. We do not require rebaptism; rather, we recognize the baptisms done by duly recognized leaders of other churches, both infant and adult baptisms;

STEP 5: Completing the approved course of **instruction** for prospective members, which clearly teaches the history, theological distinctives and mission of the Free Methodist Church (see *Book of Discipline*, ¶6100 — regarding the purposes of membership preparation);

STEP 6: Acceptance of the Articles of Religion, the Covenant, the Goal of the Christian Journey (*Book of Discipline*, ¶3010, ¶5). For persons to be able to adopt chapter three of the *Discipline* as an authoritative guide to living an authentic Christlike life, they must be exposed to its content during the course of instruction and matters of church government as written in the *Book of Discipline*;

STEP 7: Interview by the pastor and/or membership care committee (*Book of Discipline*, ¶6330 for duties of this committee) to verify the person's conversion, baptism and willingness to commit to a holy Christian life. See 2011 *Book of Discipline*, ¶3107 and ¶3108. See also ¶6320.B.9, which states that the local board of administration may designate the pastors cabinet to serve as the Membership Care Committee;

STEP 8: Approval of each candidate by the local board

of administration upon recommendation of the pastor and/or membership care committee; and

STEP 9: Affirmative answers to the questions for membership before a public meeting of the church (see *Book of Discipline*, ¶8800).

Obtain and utilize our Free Methodist catechism, *Foundations of a Living Faith: The Catechism of the Free Methodist Church*, and or the church membership course text and syllabus *Belonging*. Consider using *The Free Methodist Membership Curriculum* which has been designed so you can take its basic blueprint and make it completely your own. All of these are available from Wesleyan Publishing House our partner in distribution and customer care for product and materials specific to the Wesleyan Holiness believe.

A membership participant resource book is available for membership class participants with important membership class content. It is a take-home reference resource for all who are exploring membership in the Free Methodist Church. This is available for Spanish and English speakers.

5. Preparatory Membership

A local church or annual conference may designate the first three steps of the membership process as requirements for preparatory membership. The ritual for reception into preparatory membership in Appendix A may be used.

6. Conditions for Preparatory Membership

These three steps are the same first three steps as previously outlined for Adult Membership:

STEP 1: Awakening to God, a desire to seek God (see *2011 Book of Discipline*, ¶3103);

STEP 2: Assent to participate in the maturing opportunities offered by the church, such as classes, Bible studies and small groups (see *2011 Book of Discipline*, ¶3112);

STEP 3: Evidence of genuine **conversion** (see *2011 Book of Discipline*, ¶3104).

Appendix A — Rituals

The Sacrament of The Lord’s Supper

General Directions

Book of Discipline, ¶8100

Let all our ordained pastors exercise due care to see that no person known to be living an immoral life or to be guilty of any disreputable practice be admitted to the Lord’s Table among us until satisfactory evidence of repentance and amendment of life has been given.

All persons properly included in the general invitation of our traditional liturgy may be allowed to partake of the Lord’s Supper among us.

The officiating pastor may select lay assistants in the distribution of the elements. Relative to the distribution of the elements, as opposed to drinking from the chalice, the use of individual Communion cups or intinction is recommended, wherever practicable.

Use of formally prepared wafers of a loaf or precut portions of bread is acceptable, although unleavened bread is closer to the first-century practice.

Alternate rituals may be used. Here are provided our traditional liturgy, an alternate liturgy and a biblical liturgy. You may find other orders of service for the Lord’s Supper at [fmcusa.org](http://fmcusa.org/resources/pastoral-resources/pastors-and-church-leaders-manual) (resources/pastoral resources/pastors and church leaders manual)

1. Children at the Lord’s Table

Should children be allowed to take Communion? If so allowed, at what age?

The 1979 General Conference affirmed the following ruling by the Board of Bishops:

- ◆ We may not forbid Christian parents the privilege of bringing their children with them to partake at the table of the Lord in Holy Communion.

- ◆ We exhort pastors, parents and teachers to instruct all children under their care so that there may be a degree of understanding ... consistent with the age and intellectual maturity of the child. There should be careful preparation for that time when, as an accountable believer, the individual may respond to the invitation with a more mature understanding.
- ◆ We urge that proper care be always taken to ensure a spirit of reverence in the administration of the sacrament.

The following questions will assist parents in deciding when their children are ready to partake of the Lord's Supper:

- ◆ Does my child want to participate?
- ◆ Does my child have a personal relationship with Jesus?
- ◆ Does my child understand the basic meaning of the Lord's Supper?
 - that the bread is a symbol of Jesus' broken body
 - that the juice represents Jesus' blood shed for us
 - that together they remind us that He died in our place because of our sins
 - that Communion is a time set aside to remember what Jesus has done
 - that Communion is a time to let Jesus' Spirit minister to us

Parents whose children can answer "yes" to these questions should feel free to bring their children to the Lord's Table.

2. How to Use the Communion Rituals

The reader will notice, by carefully comparing the traditional and new rituals, a difference in tone. The traditional ritual has a more reflective, sober tone. It suggests our unworthiness, especially in the light of God's holiness, and the astounding sacrifice Christ made in His death.

The new ritual is more Eucharistic and hopeful. It emphasizes the whole plan of salvation, the liberating power of God and the

prospect of heaven. The choice of which ritual to use might be made on the basis of the time in the church year. For example, the traditional ritual would be more appropriate for Maundy Thursday or Good Friday, and the new for Easter or Pentecost Sunday.

However, on occasion Holy Communion should also be observed as a part of Sunday-morning worship. And in this case, preaching ought to be included. Methodist tradition has always placed great emphasis on preaching. But this will mean that, if Communion is included along with the sermon, the sermon will have to be delivered briefly lest the service be unduly long. As a rule this will require that pastors prepare their remarks even more carefully — to make the very best use of time in saying what God wants them to say.

There may be various ways to proceed with the order of worship. The pastor might choose to follow the order that we know to have existed in the second century (Justin Martyr), made up of two parts. This traditional ritual breaks the prayers into two basic categories. The first contains the various requests that the church makes of God (the prayers of the people: confession of sin, petition for the needs of life and intercession on behalf of others). The second contains the Eucharistic prayers proper (praise and adoration of God, thanksgiving for God's provisions made for life, and thanksgiving for salvation). Between the two units of prayer is a proper place for a Communion hymn that brings praise to the God of our salvation.

a. The Ritual of the Word

Hymns

Scripture Lessons

Sermon

Prayers of the People (Confession, Petition, Intercession)

b. The Ritual of the Lord's Supper

The Communion Hymn (Preparation of the Elements)

Eucharistic Prayers

Distribution of the Elements

Benediction

A variation of this, and one that is more in keeping with our traditional practice, would be as follows:

Hymns

Scripture Lessons

Sermon

Preparation for the Lord's Supper

Prayers of the People

Eucharistic Prayers

Distribution of the Elements

Benediction

In cases when time is short, the ritual of the Lord's Supper may be abbreviated. In such cases the minister could choose the following elements from the full ritual:

Invitation

Confession (if not included in the pastoral prayer)

Praise

Thanksgiving

Praise

The Great Thanksgiving

Glory to God

Prayer of Approach

Consecration

Distribution of Elements

Benediction

3. Additional Resources to Insert into Communion Rituals

A. Celebrating the Lord's Supper

(Adapted from *Celtic Daily Prayer* and *Iona Abbey Worship Book*)

The Invitation

The table of the bread and cup is now ready.

It is the table of company with Jesus and all who love Him.

It is the table of sharing with the poor of the world, with whom Jesus identified Himself.

It is the table of communion with the earth, in which Jesus became incarnate.

So come to this table, you who have much faith,

And you who would like to have more;

You who have been here often

And you who have not been for a long time;

You who have tried to follow Jesus,

And you who have failed.

Come! It is Christ who invites us to meet Him here.

The Story

Blessed is Jesus who walks with us the road of our world's suffering, and who is known to us in the breaking of bread. On the night of His arrest Jesus took bread and having blessed it He broke the bread and gave it to His disciples, saying, "This is my body, given to you."

In the same way He took the cup and having given thanks for it, He poured it out and gave the cup to His disciples, saying, "This cup is the new relationship with God, sealed with my blood. Take this and share it."

The Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

Blessed are you Lord God of the universe, our Father for ever and ever; for through Your goodness we have these gifts of bread and the cup, which earth has given and human hands have made. May they become for us the food and drink of eternal life.

Bless the King of all the earth!

Holy, holy, holy Lord.

God of power and might.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Receiving the Lord's Supper

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, in Your tender mercy, send us the Spirit of the Lamb.

Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.

Jesus, Bearer of our Sins, have mercy on us.

Jesus, Redeemer of the World, give us Your peace.

(Please come forward to one of the servers, take a wafer and dip it in the goblet. If it is difficult for you to come forward, please let the servers know that you desire to be served where you are.)

Blessing

May the everlasting God shield you, east and west and wherever you go. And the blessing of God be upon you.

The blessing of the God of Life.

The blessing of Christ be upon you.

The blessing of the Christ of Love.

The blessing of the Spirit be upon you.

The blessing of the Spirit of Grace.

The blessing of the Trinity be upon you, now and forever.

Amen!

B. Communion Prayer of Thanks

(From The Eastern Rite, adapted from *The Worshiping Church*)

It is proper and right that we should bless you, praise you, give thanks to you, and adore you in all places of your dominion: for you are God inexpressible, incomprehensible, inconceivable; you are from everlasting and are changeless, you, and your Only-begotten Son, and your Holy Spirit.

You have called us into being from nothingness; and when we had fallen away from you, you raised us up again; and you did not cease to do all things until you brought us back to heaven, and endowed us with your kingdom which is to come. For all these things we give thanks to you, and your Only-begotten Son, and your Holy Spirit; for all the things we know about and the things about which we do not know; for all your benefits bestowed upon us, both seen and unseen.

And we give thanks to you for this ministry which you accept at our hands, although there stand before you thousands of archangels and myriads of angels, with the cheru-

bim, and seraphim, six-winged, many-eyed, who soar aloft, borne on their wings, singing the triumphant song, crying, calling aloud, and saying:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, LORD OF HOSTS; HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE FULL OF YOUR GLORY. HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD. HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST. AMEN!

Sections marked with an asterisk may be used when an abbreviated service is desired.*

Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper — The Traditional Ritual

Book of Discipline, ¶8110

***The Invitation**

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who live in love and peace with your neighbors and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God and walking in His holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort; and humbly kneeling, make your honest confession to Almighty God.

The General Confession

The pastor may pray:

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all people, we confess that we have sinned, and we are deeply grieved as we remember the wickedness of our past lives. We have sinned against You,

Your holiness and Your love, and we deserve only Your indignation and anger.

We sincerely repent, and we are genuinely sorry for all wrongdoing and every failure to do the things we should. Our hearts are grieved, and we acknowledge that we are hopeless without Your grace.

Have mercy upon us.

Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father, for the sake of your son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, who died for us.

Forgive us.

Cleanse us.

Give us strength to serve and please You in newness of life and to honor and praise Your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

***The Lord's Prayer**

The pastor may say:

Let us continue our confession as we pray together the prayer Jesus taught His disciples.

(To be prayed in unison)

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen (KJV).

***The Affirmation of Faith**

The pastor may continue the prayer:

O Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who with great mercy has promised forgiveness to all who turn to You with hearty repentance and true faith, have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from our sins, make us strong and faithful in all goodness and bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

***The Collect**

The pastor may say:

Let us pray for inner cleansing.

(To be prayed in unison)

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love You and worthily magnify Your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Sanctus

The pastor may say:

It is always right and proper, and our moral duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, holy Father, Almighty and Everlasting God.

Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the inhabitants of heaven, we honor and adore Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying,

(In unison)

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts!

Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

Glory be to Thee, O Lord, most high. Amen.

Then may be sung or recited:

The Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father

And to the Son

And to the Holy Ghost:

As it was in the beginning,

Is now, and ever shall be,

World without end. Amen. Amen.

The Prayer for Spiritual Communion

The pastor may pray:

We do not come to this Your table, O merciful Lord, with self-confidence and pride, trusting in our own righteousness, but we trust in Your great and many mercies. We are not worthy to gather the crumbs from under Your table. But You, O Lord, are unchanging in Your mercy and Your nature is love; grant us, therefore, God of mercy, God of grace, so to eat at this Your table that we may receive in spirit and in truth the body of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, and the merits of His shed blood, so that we may live and grow in His likeness and, being washed and cleansed through His most precious blood, we may evermore live in Him and He in us. Amen.

***The Prayer of Consecration of the Elements**

The pastor may pray:

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who gave in love Your only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who by His sacrifice, offered once for all, did provide a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world, we come now to Your table in obedience to Your Son, Jesus Christ, who in His holy gospel commanded us to continue a perpetual memory of His precious death until He comes again. Hear us, O merciful Father, we humbly ask, and grant that we, receiving this bread and this cup, as He commanded and in the memory of His passion and death, may partake of His most blessed body and blood.

In the night of His betrayal, Jesus took bread, (*The pastor may take the bread in his/her hand.*) and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, “Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”

In like manner, after supper He took the cup, (*The pastor may lay hands upon the cups.*) and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink of this, all of you, for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” Amen.

The pastor may first receive the communion, both the bread and the cup, and then give of the same to other pastors who may be present to assist in the service. After that the pastor shall give to the congregation the communion, both the bread and the cup.

When the bread is delivered, the pastor may say:

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed upon Him in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving.

When serving the cup the pastor may say:

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you and be thankful.

If the consecrated bread or cup are used up before all have been served, the pastor should consecrate more by repeating the prayer of consecration. When all have communed, the pastor shall return to the Lord's table and place upon it the consecrated elements that remain, covering the same with a white linen cloth. The pastor may then offer extemporaneous prayer, or speak briefly of the significance of the service, and conclude with a blessing.

The Benediction

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be yours now and forever. Amen.

Service of Holy Communion — The Alternate Ritual

The alternate ritual is the result of extensive study of the different ways Christians have celebrated the Lord's Supper over the centuries. Although we have no documentary evidence of what was said in the ritual prayers for about a century after the New Testament church, from somewhere around the middle of the third century we do have records, and they become increasingly plentiful as time passes.

Our present ritual is a descendent of the one shaped by Archbishop Cranmer in 1662 as the Church of England began to pull itself away from medieval Catholicism. There are many valuable elements in this ritual that the church has long cherished and would not want to lose. This is especially true of the careful attention it gives to the teaching that through the death of Christ we receive the redeeming grace of God. Cranmer was a master writer who phrased this theme in language that could hardly be excelled.

On the other hand Cranmer did not have some of the materials that we now have that help us understand how the early and patristic churches experienced Holy Communion. These materials possess rich, theological importance and should not be neglected.

Almost all of what we have in the revised ritual incorporates elements that are very old. Thus, we are not really offering a new ritual so much as recovering old elements that had been lost. The order of the ritual, the prayers of the people (confession, petition and intercession) followed by the Eucharistic prayers, dates from Justin Martyr in A.D. 165.

The Confession echoes our traditional ritual and the litany of the *Book of Common Prayer* (also by Cranmer).

The Petition echoes the liturgy of St. James (from Antioch of Syria), that dates from the middle of the fourth century.

The Intercession has elements from many liturgies dating all the way from the fourth to the 20th centuries.

The Thanksgiving reflects the influence of the liturgy of St. Mark (from Alexandria in the third century). It has been a fundamental element in all rituals since that time.

The Sanctus is very hard to date but can be taken back as far as Origen of Alexandria in the third century. It has been a fundamental element in all rituals since that time.

The Great Thanksgiving goes back to the liturgy of St. James but also shows the influence of the medieval prayer *Te Deum* (which can be found in the *Book of Common Prayer*). Forms of the Great Thanksgiving can also be found in the *Didache* (around A.D. 125), which is a Christian adaptation of the Jewish table grace, the *berakhah*, that predates the Christian church altogether. The *berakhah* was the prayer that Jesus would have offered when He ate with His disciples or when He blessed the bread and the fish that were distributed to the 5,000 on the mountain.

The Invitation

Minister:

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who live in love and peace with your neighbors, and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God and walking henceforth in His holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament for your comfort; and humbly bowing make your honest confession to Almighty God.

The General Confession

Minister:

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, Maker of all things, Judge of all people, who with great mercy has promised forgiveness and deliverance to all who turn to You with hearty repentance and true faith, we confess that

we have sinned against You and are hopeless without Your grace. Have mercy upon us, O merciful Father, have mercy upon us; pardon and deliver us from all our sins:

From blindness of heart and lack of love;

From the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil;

From false doctrine and neglect of Your Word;

From anxiety and lack of trust.

O God, our Savior, keep us this day without sin. Give us strength to serve and please You in newness of life, and to honor and praise Your name through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The Petition

Minister:

Almighty God, You have so faithfully watched over us, and so graciously helped us; now hear our petitions:

For good health and sound minds,

For strength to earn our bread,

For rest from worry and labor,

For safety in travel, for protection from enemies,

For Christian homes, for a just and strong nation.

Out of Your compassion give us those things that are good and proper for our souls, and protect us by Your might in all our tribulations. Grant us in this world the peace that is from above, and bring us to everlasting life in the world to come, through Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray saying:

People:

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

The Intercession

Minister:

Almighty God, Who created the world from nothing, and Who sustains it by Your powerful word, support and protect us that we may serve You as intercessors in Your world; and to that end hear our prayers for those in need:

For the sick, the infirm and the dying;

For widows and orphans, the poor and oppressed;

For the lonely, discouraged, bereaved and heartbroken;

For those in bondage to sin, unmindful of God, without knowledge of the gospel of salvation.

Minister:

We pray too for all Your servants who work honorably in the cause of our Lord, Jesus Christ:

For homemakers and wage earners,

For teachers and students,

For doctors and nurses and others who serve the sick,

For laborers and executives,

For farmers and city dwellers,

For the aged and the young,

For those who govern and those who are ruled,
To each of these and to all others for whom we should
pray, give wisdom, strength and the power to endure,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
(*Here may be sung a Communion hymn.*)

The Dialogue

Minister:

The Lord be with you.

People:

And also with you.

Minister:

Lift up your hearts.

People:

We lift them up to the Lord.

Minister:

Let us give thanks to the Lord.

People:

It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

Thanksgiving

Minister:

We give You thanks, O Lord God, for all Your goodness
at all times and in all places. You have shielded, rescued,
helped and guided us all our days and brought us to this
hour, letting us once again worship You and seek Your help.

Blessed are You, Lord God, Ruler of all creation; for by
Your goodness we have this bread from the soil and this
fruit from the vine.

Praise

Minister:

It is always right and proper that we should give You thanks and praise, O Lord God, for You alone reign. You judge the world in righteousness and rule over all the nations. Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the inhabitants of heaven, we honor and adore Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

People:

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts! Heaven and earth are full of Your glory. Glory be to You, O Lord, most high. Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving

Minister:

Almighty God, You created us to enjoy Your fellowship; and even when we transgressed Your command, You did not forsake us, but chastened us as a merciful Father;

You called Abraham from the land of his fathers, and freed the children of Israel from bondage and slavery; You gave Your law and sent Your prophets to guide them in Your ways;

At the right time You gave the world Your only Son, Who by His birth of a virgin, and through His temptations and ministry, His suffering and death, His resurrection and ascension, opened to us the way to heaven;

You sent Your Holy Spirit, the Counselor, Who through the apostles and the church, called us to salvation; You adopted us and daily give us aid in the journey of faith by the

same Spirit. Our hearts are full, O God, and in thanksgiving to You we cry, Abba, Father.

Minister:

In confidence that You will bring us to our full inheritance, and give us our place at the heavenly table with Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, we offer thanksgiving, joining our voices with all the church to confess:

People:

Christ has died,
Christ has risen,
Christ will come again.

Glory to God

People:

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

Prayer of Approach

Minister:

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, send the power of Your Holy Spirit upon us, that we may experience anew the suffering, death and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ. May Your Spirit help us to know, in the breaking of this bread and the drinking of this cup, the presence of Christ Who gave His body and blood for all. And may Your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in service to all the world. Amen.

Words of Consecration

Minister (laying his hand upon the bread):

In the night of His betrayal, Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, “Take, eat, this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”

Minister (laying his hand upon the cup):

In like manner, after supper He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink of this, all of you, for this is My blood of the New Testament which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

Words of Distribution

Minister:

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed upon Him in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving.

Minister:

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ’s blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

Benediction

Minister:

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you forever.
Amen.

Service of Holy Communion — A Biblical Ritual

There may be occasions that call for a celebration of the Lord's Supper in which the ritual is made entirely from scriptural passages.

These suggestions are offered as a guide for the use of the biblical ritual:

1. The biblical ritual may be used as a separate part of a worship service or interspersed throughout an entire order of worship.
2. Appropriate hymns should be selected when the ritual is spread out throughout the entire worship service.
3. The Lord's Prayer may be sung by the congregation as a positive alternative to the unison recital.
4. The invitation to the Communion ritual may be used as a call to worship for the entire worship service.
5. When several tables are served, let the minister speak appropriate words of dismissal to each.

The Lord's Supper: A Biblical Liturgy (TNIV)

The Invitation

Pastor:

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies

washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Hebrews 10:19-24

The Call to Love

Unison:

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no commandment greater than these.

All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Mark 12:29c-30; Matthew 22:38-39;

Mark 12:31c; Matthew 22:40

The Good News from Jesus

Pastor:

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” He said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Mark 1:14-15

The Blest Acts and Attitudes

Unison:

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and He began to teach them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you,
persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven,

for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Matthew 5:1-12

The Responsible Community

Pastor:

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:13-16

The Disciples' Prayer

Unison:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in
heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For if you forgive men when they sin against you,
your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 6:9-15

The Communion Faith

Pastor:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.

After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all He appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

The Supper Instituted

Pastor:

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And He said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”

After taking the cup, He gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

In the same way, after the supper He took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

Luke 22:14-20

The Slain Lamb

Unison:

Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

And when He had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people. And they sang a new song, saying:

“You are worthy to take the scroll

and to open its seals,

because you were slain,

and with your blood you purchased for God

members of every tribe and language

and people and nation.

You have made them to be a kingdom and priests

to serve our God,

and they will reign on the earth.”

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times

ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they were saying:

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!”

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!”

The four living creatures said, “Amen,”
and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Revelation 5:6-14

Pastor:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3:20

Pastor:

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Jude 24-25

The Love Feast

The “Love Feast” is one of the fascinating yet least understood aspects of the early church rites. It derives from early church practices. For example, Luke writes, “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people” (Acts 2:46-47a, NIV).

Such a formal activity may also be referenced in Jude 12, where it says, regarding ungodly believers who were apparently still functioning in this particular church, “These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm — shepherds who feed only themselves.”

In early centuries there may have developed particular practices of holding formal love feasts wherein the people would participate in three activities: the washing of each others’ feet (per Jesus at the Last Supper), the sharing of a fellowship meal, and the sharing of the bread and cup of the Lord’s Supper. These practices apparently largely fell out of common usage for centuries. The Moravians (Czech and Slovak) and the Brethren (Germany) were holding love feasts when John Wesley sought out Moravians upon his return to England. He subsequently adapted their love feast to Methodist practice. Here are Wesley’s own words about his use of the love feast in the small group called a “band”:

“In order to increase ... a grateful sense of all God’s mercies, I desired that one evening every three months all men in the band, on a second all the women, would meet, and on a third both men and women together, that we might together ‘eat bread,’ as the ancient Christians did, ‘with gladness and singleness of heart.’ At these love-feasts (so we termed them, retaining the name as well as the thing, which was in use from the beginning) our food is only a little plain cake and water; but we seldom

return from them without being fed not only with the ‘meat which perisheth,’ but with ‘that which endureth to everlasting life.’”

Free Methodists have historically observed the love feast as a stand-alone opportunity (i.e., not connected to foot washing or to the Lord’s Supper). Our service is characterized by the singing of hymns, a devotional challenge regarding one’s love relationship with God, testimonies, extemporaneous prayer and the breaking of bread (symbolizing the meals shared by early Christians) between brothers and sisters during an extended time of sharing, wherein persons ask forgiveness of any against whom they may have sinned, express forgiveness or reconciliation, and pray for one another according to the need.

Reconciliation of the most noble sort is represented in the breaking of bread. The broken bread offered by Jesus to the disciples, including Judas, was a final act of forgiving love on the part of the Master. The breaking of bread is a celebration of the forgiving love of Christ at Calvary and a participation in that love in the fellowship of the reconciled, joy-filled believers. We reintroduce this service as a resource for seeking to maintain singleness of heart through forgiving love, which overcomes petty differences or misunderstandings.

Opening Sentences

Dear friends, let us love one another; for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. (1 John 4:7, 10-12, NIV)

Hymns/Songs

On the theme of God's love, mutual love, grace, forgiveness, reconciliation, etc.

Devotional Message or Challenge from the Scriptures **Silent Meditation**

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24, NIV)

Guided Reflection and Prayer

Guide participants to pray and listen to the Spirit regarding any offense or division that might exist between themselves and others. Use the kneeling rails for prayer, or have them kneel at their chair or pew. This is time for introspection and inquiry of the Lord.

(*Please see below other reflective questions that may be used from time to time).

The leader asks the following (and other) kinds of questions, pausing after each:

1. Am I willing to know myself and accept responsibility for what I am and for what I do, or do I blame others?
2. Am I honest, or do I profess principles in public that I do not practice in private?
3. Am I more severe in my judgment of others than I am in judgment of myself?
4. Am I making demands of others that I do not make of myself?

5. Am I listening to others so I may understand them, or do I think only of my own thoughts when others speak?
6. Am I gracious and courteous toward all my family, my associates and the strangers whom I meet?
7. Am I forgiving toward all who have wronged me or spoken unkindly, remembering that God forgives even more through Christ Jesus my Lord?
8. Am I doing all in my power to keep peace and unity with the fellowship of Christian believers?
9. Am I ready to ask forgiveness of any I have wronged, humbling myself that Jesus Christ may be exalted in the congregation?
10. Am I willing to be known by others and to love my Christian brothers and sisters when I know them?

Prayer

The leader begins, but then invites extemporaneous prayer by others.

Distribute the Bread

Each participant is given a large enough piece of bread to allow them to go to several others and offer them a portion of their bread as a sign of their desire for peace, continued communion, reconciliation or to pray for or with them.

Song: “Bind Us Together,” “Make Me a Servant” or “Jesus, Thine All Victorious Love”

Following the singing, let the people move out to mingle

with all others, to take from each other the offered bread, and to speak to one another in love, request, appreciation, forgiveness, etc., quietly and sincerely.

Song: “We Are One in the Spirit” (or one of similar tone and intent)

When the time of sharing ends, let ushers gather the leftover bread. Let the people stand to sing. They may form a circle and clasp hands if convenient and appropriate.

Song: “Blest Be the Tie That Binds”

Benediction

Go forth to love God and your neighbor in all you do. Go to live as witnesses to Jesus Christ in the world and to follow His teachings through acts of kindness, justice, worship and devotion. May the Holy Spirit pour into your heart God’s love, through Jesus Christ, who said, “By this [everyone] will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35, NIV).

*Alternate Questions for Love Feast Guided Reflection:

1. How do I use my leisure time? Is it pleasing to the Lord?
2. What are the things at which I tend to laugh? Am I demeaning others when I do?
3. Do I ever try to create the impression in others that I am a better person than I am?
4. Do I pass along to other persons that which was told to me in confidence?
5. Am I a slave to faddish dress, overeating or sexual fantasizing?

6. Do I take time to have daily personal devotions?
7. Do I insist on doing some things about which my conscience is a bit uneasy?
8. Am I jealous, critical, irritable, touchy or hard to please?
9. How do I treat those who are unkind or unreasonable toward me?
10. Am I quick to acknowledge a fault and ask forgiveness?
11. Is there anybody whom I dislike, disregard or hold resentment against?
12. Do I enjoy taking time to pray and be alone with God?

A Service of Prayer for the Healing of Human Hurts

Prepare the congregation in advance.

1. Preach on the healing miracles of Jesus.
2. Recruit prayer support from the intercessory groups in the church.
3. Explain the purpose and nature of the service of prayer for the healing of human hurts.
4. Assure the people that every request will be kept in strict confidence.

Prepare yourself and several others who will assist you in praying at the altar.

1. Remember that the moments with each seeker at the altar are for prayer only. If counseling is needed, suggest that it be arranged at another time.
2. Prepare your hearts through fasting and prayer the previous week and during a time of prayer and meditation immediately preceding the service.
3. Prepare the order of service to include appropriate music, a brief meditation (perhaps on a healing miracle of Jesus), and a testimony of healing from one of your people.

Prepare the people to come to the service ready to write on their prayer cards a specific concern of their own or a burden they carry for another. Encourage them to be honest in describing in a few words the deepest concerns of their own lives — physical, emotional or spiritual.

After hymns and Scripture readings* that magnify the love of God and the healing ministry of Jesus through the Holy Spirit, ask the people to come forward and kneel opposite you and the others who assist you, presenting their cards with explicit needs indicated. Spend a few moments in faith-filled prayer with them. Allow them to remain in quiet meditation until they wish to return to their places.

As music plays quietly in the background, people will

come to share with you burdens and hurts of which you had no knowledge.

It may be appropriate to ask for personal testimonies following if time allows.

You may wish to print prayer cards and folders with appropriate scripture and readings using the following suggestion:

*Suggested Readings: Isaiah 53:4-6; Psalms 46:1-3, 10-11; Luke 4:16-21; John 5:1-8; Romans 8:26-27; Hebrews 7:23-28 and 10:19-23.

Prayer Card

Name _____

Personal need _____

My prayer burden for another

A Service of Prayer for the Healing of Human Hurts

“Many followed him,
and he healed all their sick. . . .”
(Matthew 12:15b).

Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28, NIV).

Each of us carried a burden for a friend. Many of us have burdens of our own that are too heavy to bear. There are broken places in either body, mind or spirit that only Christ can heal.

Our risen Lord stands among His people in service such as this, welcoming you to come with your burden, with your hurt, and let Him touch you with His healing love.

As you come to share your need with God and with one of the intercessors at the altar, your Christian friends will be praying for you.

We invite each of you to become a part of a caring, praying congregation. During this hour let the creative work of the Holy Spirit bring to you a new realization that Christ is carrying the heaviest part of your burden for someone else.

Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:29-30, NIV).

Service of Infant Baptism

Book of Discipline, ¶8010

The pastor coming to the font, which is to be filled with pure water, shall say:

Dear friends in Christ: God, through Moses, made covenant with Israel, saying to the people, “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

In the days of the New Covenant, Christ Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14) and on the Day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter declared, regarding the salvation given through Christ, “The promise is to you and to your children” (Acts 2:39).

It is therefore our privilege to present our children to the Lord and our duty to raise them in His ways. These parents now bring *this child* to offer *him/her* in dedication and to pledge in the presence of this congregation to bring *him/her* up in the Lord’s discipline and instruction.

Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, who has made saving covenant with Your people and who, out of Your loving-kindness, has ordained that they should live before You in families; we thank You that it is our privilege to dedicate our children to You, in steadfast hope that they will cleave to Your covenant and live to Your glory. We entreat You for *this child* that *he/she* may be delivered

from the power of sin and Satan and be set apart to You by the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray for these parents that they may be given divine aid, so that both by instruction and example they may lead *this child* in the way of everlasting life, and so all may come in unity together to Your eternal kingdom. We pray for this congregation, that we may faithfully discharge our duties to both parents and child, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Questions to parents:

1. Do you, in the presence of God and this church, solemnly dedicate this child to the Lord?

Answer: We/I do.

2. Do you, so far as you are able on *his/her* behalf, renounce the devil and his works, the lure of the world and the sinful desires of fallen humanity, so that in the training of *this child* you will not be led by them and so that so far as you are able, you will keep *this child* from following them?

Answer: We/I do.

3. Will you faithfully strive by word and example to lead *this child* to personal faith in Christ?

Answer: We/I will.

4. Do you accept the authority of the Old and New Testaments?

Answer: We/I do.

5. Out of them, will you diligently teach *this child* the commandments and promises of the Most High God, raising *him/her* in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?

Answer: We/I will.

The pastor will say:

Let us acknowledge our duty to strengthen this family with prayers and encouragement, thus aiding the parent(s) and child to fulfill all that has here been promised. The congregation will affirm this by standing.

The pastor shall take the child, and say:

Name this child.

_____, I baptize you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us pray: O God, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, grant that this child may increase in wisdom and stature, growing in divine and human favor. So guide and uphold these parents that they may lead this child into that life of faith in Jesus Christ whose mark in this world is righteousness and in the world to come, everlasting bliss. May he/she be brought early to affirm in faith all that has here been pledged on his/her behalf, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction: “Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen” (Jude 24, 25, RSV).

In the place of the second prayer, the pastor may offer an extemporaneous prayer, which will include the petitions set forth in the printed prayer.

Service of Infant Dedication

Book of Discipline, ¶8020

The pastor shall say:

Dear friends in Christ: God, through Moses made covenant with Israel, saying to the people, “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

In the days of the New Covenant, Christ Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14) and on the Day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter declared, regarding the salvation given through Christ, “The promise is to you and to your children” (Acts 2:39).

It is therefore our privilege to present our children to the Lord and our duty to raise them in His ways. These parents now bring *this child* to offer *him/her* in dedication and to pledge in the presence of this congregation to bring *him/her* up in the Lord’s discipline and instruction.

Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, who has made saving covenant with Your people and who, out of Your loving-kindness, has ordained that they should live before You in families; we thank You that it is our privilege to dedicate our children to You, in steadfast hope that they will cleave to Your covenant and live to Your glory. We entreat You for *this child* that *he/she* may be delivered from the power of sin and Satan and be set apart to You

by the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray for these parents that they may be given divine aid, so that both by instruction and example they may lead *this child* in the way of everlasting life, and so all may come in unity together to Your eternal kingdom. We pray for this congregation, that we may faithfully discharge our duties to both parents and child, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Questions to parents:

1. Do you, in the presence of God and this church, solemnly dedicate *this child* to the Lord?

Answer: We/I do.

2. Will you endeavor to live a life before *this child* that will give witness to your faith in Jesus Christ?

Answer: We/I will.

3. Do you accept the authority of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God?

Answer: We/I do.

4. Out of them, will you endeavor diligently to teach *this child* the commandments and promises of the Most High God, so that your child may early come to personal faith in Jesus Christ?

Answer: We/I will.

Then the pastor will say:

Let us acknowledge our duty to support this family with our prayers and encouragement, thereby aiding the parent(s) and child to fulfill all that has here been promised. The congregation will affirm this by standing.

The pastor shall then take the child in his arms and say:

Name this child.

Even as Joseph and Mary brought Jesus in the time of His infancy to the temple to present Him to God, so now, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we present _____ in an act of dedication to God, with a prayer that at an early age in life *he/she* may experience His justifying and sanctifying grace. Amen.

Here the pastor shall pray an extemporaneous prayer on behalf of the parents and their child.

Service of Baptism for Children Under Twelve

Book of Discipline, ¶8030

In place of the questions asked to parents or guardians in ¶8010, the pastor may ask the following questions to candidates for baptism who are under 12 years of age.

Questions to candidate:

1. Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and do you desire to be baptized in His name?

Answer: I do.

2. Do you intend by this act to testify to all the world that you are a Christian and will be a loyal follower of Christ?

Answer: I do.

3. Do you believe in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?

Answer: I do.

4. Trusting God to help you, will you resist temptation always and keep from doing those things that you know to be sinful or displeasing to God?

Answer: I will.

5. Will you attend church services and do those things you know a Christian should do?

Answer: I will.

The Affirmation of Baptismal Vows

Book of Discipline, ¶8040

Because we baptize infants, it is important to provide the opportunity for youth to affirm their acceptance of the vows taken on their behalf when they were infants. This provides a similar kind of checkpoint on the journey of faith as that which is commonly called “confirmation” in other churches. Though we do not have a formal confirmation procedure, we do strongly suggest that prior to use of this ritual, the individual be guided to review our catechism (available at LLCust+Serv@freemethodistchurch.org) as a means of confirming the specifics of his or her faith.

This ritual allows for the spiritual anchor to be set once children have experienced the benefits of the promises made by their parents and have established their own acceptance of Jesus as their own source of salvation. Please note that in preparation for answering the questions, the individual should be guided to review the Infant Baptism ritual and questions.

Rebaptism?

We are not Anabaptist in our theology in that we do not require rebaptism by immersing, pouring or sprinkling once a person comes to age of accountability. We do practice infant baptism. But, we acknowledge that at the request of the individual, rebaptism is unofficially and occasionally practiced among us. We do not endorse or condemn such practices, believing that individual consciences should be allowed to guide such decisions.

A statement regarding our rationale for providing infant baptism or infant dedication at the request of parent(s) or guardian(s) may be found in a discussion paper online at [fmcusa.org](http://fmcusa.org/resources/pastoral-resources/pastors-and-church-leaders-manual) (resources/pastoral resources/pastors and church leaders manual). The article more fully explains the history of the two traditions and the truth embraced by both.

The pastor shall say:

Dearly beloved, in your infancy your parents presented you at the altar of the church for the Sacrament of Baptism. That service was one of both dedication and consecration. Your parents dedicated you to the Lord and took vows on your behalf. They promised to teach you from the Word of God and to train you in the way that you should go.

God in His goodness has brought you to years of responsibility, and you now desire to acknowledge before God and His church the covenant then made on your behalf, to profess your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to consecrate yourself to Him, and thereby to bind yourself anew to His service.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has said, “Whoever publicly acknowledges me I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:32, TNIV).

Let us repeat the words of the Apostles’ Creed (together).

The Apostles’ Creed:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into Hades; the third day He arose from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrec-

tion of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Questions:

1. Do you believe these things?

Answer: All these things I firmly believe.

2. Do you promise with the aid of the Holy Spirit to be Christ's faithful disciple to your life's end?

Answer: I do.

3. Have you read and considered the vows taken for you in baptism, and do you affirm them with a humble and contrite heart, putting your whole trust in the mercy of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Answer: I do.

4. Do you promise to make diligent use of the means of grace, to share faithfully in the worship and service of the church, to give of your substance as the Lord may prosper you, and to give your whole heart to the service of Christ and His kingdom throughout the world?

Answer: I do.

Service of Baptism for Adults

(This gender neutral alternate version of the ritual from *The Manual of the Free Methodist Church in Canada* is provided for your consideration.)

The pastor shall say:

Dear friends in Christ, our faith declares that by the sin of Adam, humanity as the offspring of Adam is corrupted in its very nature, so that from birth we are inclined to sin; and that new life and a right relationship with God are possible only through the redemptive acts of God in Christ Jesus. Believing these declarations to be true, and in obedience to the command of Christ, (*this person has/these persons have*) come to make public confession that (*his/her/their*) sins have been washed away, and by means of baptism with water, to give sign of that inward washing and new life in Christ which are now (*his/hers/theirs*) by faith. We therefore implore you to pray that through this means of grace (*he/she/they*) may be further moved to keep covenant with God and so may ever experience the constant washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

Then the minister shall say:

Let us pray. Almighty and Everlasting God, whose covenant is firm and whose promises are always to be trusted, we call upon You for *this person* that, (*he/she*), coming to (*his/her*) baptism, may by this act give clear witness that (*he/she*) has received Your inner washing through faith in the cleansing blood of Your Son, Jesus Christ. May (*he/she*) ever rejoice in the forgiveness of sins, the indwelling of

Your Spirit, the fellowship of the church and the assurance of resurrection to glory in the world to come.

Then shall the people stand, and the minister shall say:

Christ Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20, RSV).

You, who present yourself for water baptism, have heard this congregation’s prayers that God will continue His loving favor toward you and bring you to His eternal kingdom. And God, Who keeps covenant, has promised by His only Son, Who offered Himself up for our redemption, to grant you these gracious favors. You must now promise, in the presence of this congregation, to keep covenant with Him, renouncing the life of sin, believing His Holy Word and obediently keeping His commandments.

Then shall the minister ask each candidate these questions, to be answered individually:

1. Do you have the inward witness that your sins are forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord?

Answer: I have.

2. Do you renounce the devil and his works, the lure of this ungodly world and the sinful desires of fallen humanity, so that you will not follow nor be led by them?

Answer: I do.

Let us repeat the words of the Apostles' Creed (together):

The Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into Hades; the third day He arose from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic* church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

3. Do you believe these things?

Answer: All these things I firmly believe.

4. Is it your desire to be baptized into the Christian faith?

Answer: It is my desire.

5. In the fellowship of the church, will you obediently do God's will and walk in His holy commandments all the days of your life?

Answer: I will endeavor to do so, the Lord being my helper.

Then shall the persons be baptized by sprinkling, pouring or immersion as they shall desire. The minister shall say:

I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

*Catholic refers to universal church

Then shall the minister use the following prayer, or substitute an extemporaneous one with the same requests:

God, our Father, who gives to all who repent and believe the gospel the right to be called children of God, may Your grace ever be effectual in this, *Your child*. And may (*he/she*) enjoy the greater baptism of the Holy Spirit so that all sinful inclinations may be conquered by Your power, and every Christian virtue may live and grow in (*him/her*). Grant to (*him/her*) a place of service in the fellowship of Your church and may (*his/her*) witness in the world bring glory to Your holy name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Here may follow a benediction if the service is ending.

Consecration of Deacons

Book of Discipline, ¶8500

The service may be either a special service with appropriate music and preparation, or as a part of a Sunday worship service.

The pastor or designee shall present to the superintendent the one who is (those who are) to be consecrated, saying:

Superintendent _____ (name), I present to you _____ (name or names) to be consecrated deacon in the _____ (name of church), a Free Methodist congregation.

The superintendent shall say to the pastor:

Have you diligently examined *this person/these persons*, whom you present to us, to be capable and qualified? *Has he/she/ Have they* prepared *himself/herself/themselves* educationally and spiritually, so that *his/her/their* life and ministry will bring honor to God and edify His church?

The senior pastor shall respond:

He has/She has/They have been so examined and we believe *him/her/them* to be a *person/persons* God has called to be a consecrated *deacon/deacons* in this church.

The superintendent shall say to the congregation:

Dear Friends in Christ: We purpose, God willing, to consecrate as a deacon *this person/these persons* who *stands/stand* before you. *He has/She has/They have* been examined and *has/have* been found to be a *person/persons* called by God to this ministry and suited for the same. We ask you, people of God, to declare your assent to the consecration of *this person/these persons*.

Do you trust that *he is/she is/they are* worthy, by God's grace, to be consecrated?

People: We do. Thanks be to God.

Superintendent:

Will you uphold *him/her/them* in *his/her/their* ministry?

People: With God's help, we will.

Superintendent:

Let us stand together as we pray in unison the prayer our Lord taught us to pray:

People: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Superintendent:

You may be seated.

Superintendent continues in prayer with The Collect:

Let us pray: Almighty God, who appointed ministers in Your church and inspired Your apostles to consecrate as deacon Your first martyr, Stephen, with others; look with mercy upon *this, Your servant/these, Your servants*, whom You have called to the same order and administration; may *he/she/they* be replenished with the truth of Your doctrine and adorned with blamelessness of life, so that both by word and good example, *he/she/they* may serve You faithfully; so may Your name be glorified and Your church built up, through the merits of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives

and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.
Amen.

The superintendent may assign readers:

Mark 10:42-45 (NRSV)

“So Jesus called them and said to them, ‘You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.’”

1 Timothy 3:8-13 (NRSV)

“Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons. Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be married only once and let them manage their children and their households well; for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.”

1 Peter 4:10-11 (TNIV)

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If you speak, you should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If you serve, you should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”

The superintendent shall then say to the candidate(s):

My brother/sister/brothers and sisters you are to be consecrated to the ministry of deacon in this church. God has called you to represent to the church the ministry of servanthood in the world, a ministry to which all Christians are called in baptism, but to which you are called in a special way. You are to be a co-worker with your pastor(s) (and other deacons), serving this congregation in the area of your gifting and calling. In the name of Jesus Christ you are to serve all people, particularly the poor, the sick, and the oppressed. You are to interpret to the church the needs, concerns and hopes of the world. At all times, by your life and teaching you are to show Christ’s people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ.

So that we may know that you believe *yourself/yourselfs* to be called by God and that you profess the Christian faith, we ask you the following questions:

1. Do you believe you are inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit to take upon you the ministry of a deacon in this

church, to serve God, promoting His glory and edifying His people?

Answer: I so believe.

2. Are you persuaded that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain all things necessary for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and are the inspired and authoritative standard for the church's faith and life?

Answer: I do so believe and am persuaded.

3. Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and do you accept the beliefs and teachings of the Christian faith?

Answer: I do so confess and accept, by the grace of God.

4. Will you be faithful in prayer, in the reading and study of the Holy Scriptures, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, continually rekindle the gift of God that is in you?

Answer: I will, with the help of God.

5. Will you apply all diligence to regulate and fashion your own life (and the lives of your family) according to the doctrine of Christ; and to make (both) yourself (and them), as far as you are able, wholesome example(s) of the flock of Christ?

Answer: I will do so, the Lord being my helper.

6. Deacons express their ministry under the guidance and authority of an elder, being faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ as they participate in the life and work of the church. Will you do this gladly and willingly?

Answer: I will do so, the Lord being my helper.

7. Will you be loyal to the Free Methodist Church, accepting its polity, doctrine and discipline?

Answer: I will, with the help of God.

May God, who has given you the will to do these things, give you grace to perform them, that the work begun in you may be brought to completion. Amen.

Laying on of Hands and Prayer

The superintendent says to the congregation:

As this person is/these persons are consecrated by God and the church for the ministry of deacon, to which we believe he/she/they have been called by the Holy Spirit, let us silently pray for him/her/them as they kneel before God.

The candidates kneel.

The people pray for them in silence.

The superintendent addresses the candidate(s):

My brother/sister/brothers and sisters, from the time of the apostles, persons with suitable gifts and graces have been set apart by the laying on of hands and prayer for a ministry of service in the church of Jesus Christ our Lord. We trust that the Spirit of God has called you to the ministry of deacon. As earnest prayer is made for the fulfillment of the Spirit's gift in you, your church now calls you to receive the laying on of hands as the seal of your vocation by the Spirit.

The superintendent (and other elders, as well as consecrated deacons who may be present), laying hands upon the head of each candidate in turn, shall say:

Take authority to execute the office of a deacon in this congregation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

After all have received the laying on of hands, the superintendent, facing the candidates, with both hands extended over them, says:

Let us pray. We give thanks to You, Lord God, that in Your great love You sent Jesus Christ, Your only begotten, to take the form of a servant for the sake of us all, becoming obedient even to death on the cross. We praise You that You have highly exalted Jesus Christ Your servant Whom You have made to be Lord of all, and that You have taught us, by His word and example, that whoever would be great among us must be servant of all. Increase within the lives of these Your servants the gift of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ Your Son, for the ministry of a deacon in Your church. Give them grace to be faithful to their promises, constant in their discipleship and always ready for the works of loving service. Make them modest and humble, gentle and strong that, having the assurance of faith and rejoicing in hope, they may be rooted and grounded in love. Give them a share in the ministry of Jesus Christ, Who came not to be served but to serve; Who now lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*Recognition and a Bible or other gift may be given to each deacon.
The superintendent addresses the deacon:*

We now welcome you to your ministry as deacon. You have given assurance of your faith and Christian experience. You have confirmed the vows of your consecration and committed yourself to uphold faithfully the Free Methodist Church. We rejoice that you have been called to serve among us, and pray that the Spirit of God may guide your ministry.

Presenting each deacon with his or her credentials, the superintendent says:

_____ (name), we now recognize you as a deacon in the _____ (name of church), a Free Methodist congregation.

Benediction

Christian Marriage

Book of Discipline, ¶8200

¶8210 *At the time set, the man and woman to be married shall stand together facing the pastor, the woman on the man's left, and the pastor shall say:*

Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God and the presence of these witnesses to join together _____ and _____ in holy matrimony. Marriage is an honorable estate, instituted by God in the time of creation for the well-being of mankind. It is safeguarded by the laws of Moses, affirmed by the words of the prophets, and hallowed by the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Marriage is a union close and enduring, a relationship in which a man and a woman forsake all others to become one flesh. This abiding union illustrates the holy relationship between Christ and His church. Marriage is therefore not to be entered into by any lightly, but reverently, soberly and in the fear of God.

Addressing the man and woman, the pastor shall say:

_____ and _____, I charge you both as you stand in the presence of God to remember that covenant love alone will avail as the foundation of a happy and enduring home. Let Christ, who was loyal to His own unto death, be your example. Let the Apostle Paul be your teacher, who wrote, "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the

right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7, RSV). If you keep this steadfast love ever before you and, remaining faithful to each other, resolutely endeavor to fulfill the vows you now will make, God’s blessing will be upon you, and the home you establish will endure through life’s every change.

The pastor shall say to the man, using his Christian name:

_____, will you have _____ to be your wedded wife, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, keep yourself only for her, so long as you both shall live?

The man shall answer: I will.

The pastor shall say to the woman, using her Christian name:

_____, will you have _____ to be your wedded husband, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, keep yourself only for him, so long as you both shall live?

The woman shall answer: I will.

The pastor shall say:

Who gives _____ to be married to _____?

The father of the woman, or the person who gives her in marriage, shall answer: I do.

The pastor, receiving the hand of the woman from her father or other sponsor, shall cause the man with his right hand to take the woman by her right hand, and say after him:

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death us do part, and thereto I pledge you my faith.

They shall loose their hands, and the woman, with her right hand, shall take the man by his right hand, and shall likewise say after the pastor:

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death us do part, and thereto I pledge you my faith.

They again shall loose hands. The groomsman may give to the pastor a ring, which the pastor in turn will give to the groom, who will put it upon the third finger of the woman's left hand and, holding the ring, shall say after the pastor:

This ring I give you in token and pledge of our constant faith and steadfast love.

In case of a double ring ceremony, the pastor shall receive the other ring from the bridesmaid and shall deliver it to the woman to put upon the third finger of the man's left hand. The woman, holding the ring there, shall say after the pastor:

This ring I give you in token and pledge of our constant faith and steadfast love.

The pastor shall say:

Let us pray.

O Eternal God, creator and preserver of all mankind, giver of all spiritual grace, the author of everlasting life: send Your blessing upon this man and this woman whom we bless in Your name; that they, living faithfully together, may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant between them made, and may ever remain in perfect love and peace together, and live according to Your laws through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The pastor shall say:

Forasmuch as _____ and _____ have consented together in holy wedlock and have witnessed the same before God and this company and have pledged their faith each to the other and have declared the same by joining hands (and by giving and receiving a ring), therefore, by the authority granted to me as a minister of Jesus Christ, I pronounce that they are husband and wife together, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together, let not man put asunder. Amen.

The man and woman then kneel, and the pastor shall pray over them an extemporaneous prayer, prepared especially for the two of them.

The man and woman shall stand, and the pastor shall pronounce over them the following benediction:

Go forth into the world in peace. Be of good courage. Hold fast to that which is good. Render to no one evil for evil. Strengthen the fainthearted. Support the weak. Help the afflicted. Show honor to all. Love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you forever. Amen.

The Funeral Service

Book of Discipline, ¶8310

The pastor may use this order of worship at the church or chapel.

The pastor may use opening sentences, such as:

“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die” (John 11:25-26, RSV).

“For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18, RSV).

Invocation:

O Eternal God, our Father, from whom we come and to whom we go, grant us the favor of Your divine presence at this time in our earthly pilgrimage; assure us by Your Spirit that the one we serve, even Jesus, has conquered death and is alive forevermore; enable us to view our temporal lives in the light of the eternal; and so may our spirits grow calm and our vision clear. Through Christ we pray. Amen.

**Hymn by the Congregation, Musicians
or Organist (Optional)**

Obituary and/or Tributes (Optional)

Old Testament Scriptures, such as Psalms 23, 90, 121

New Testament Scriptures, such as John 14:1-6;

1 Corinthians 15:35-49; 2 Corinthians 5:1-5

**Hymn by the Congregation, Musicians
or Organist (Optional)**

Meditation

Prayer for the Family and Community

Benediction *(not used if the service is to continue at the
graveside)*

*The pastor shall at the appropriate time at the cemetery
say:*

“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die” (John 11:25-26, RSV).

“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes” (Job 19:25-27a, NIV).

“For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it” (1 Timothy 6:7, NIV).

“The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised” (Job 1:21b, NIV).

This may also be used at the cemetery.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place

for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.

“Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (John 14:1-6, RSV).

Then shall the pastor say:

Inasmuch as Almighty God, in His wise providence, has taken out of this world our deceased brother (sister, or child), we therefore commit this mortal body to the ground, looking for the general resurrection in the last day and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose Second Coming in glorious majesty to judge the world, the earth and the sea shall give up their dead; and the corruptible bodies of those who sleep in Him shall be changed, and made like unto His own glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.

The pastor may pray extemporaneously or use The Collect.

O merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the resurrection and the life, in Whom whosoever believeth shall live though he die, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Him shall not die eternally, we meekly beseech You, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, that when we shall depart this life we may rest in Him, and at the general resurrection on the last day may be found acceptable in Your sight and receive that

blessing which Your well-beloved Son shall then pronounce to all who love and fear You, saying, “Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.” Grant this, we beseech You, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.

Benediction

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

Going Home to Heaven — A Saint's Send-Off with Loved Ones Present

(Songs may be used at the start, during and/or end.)

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever” (Psalm 23, KJV).

Almighty God, look on this, your servant, lying in great weakness, and comfort *him/her* with the promise of life everlasting, given in the resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit — Holy Trinity, one God — have mercy on Your servant, _____ . From all evil, from all sin, from all tribulation, good Lord, deliver *him/her*. By Your holy incarnation, by Your cross and passion, by Your precious death and burial, by Your glorious resurrection and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Spirit, grant _____ a place of refreshment and everlasting blessedness, of joy and gladness, in Your kingdom, with Your saints in light, Jesus, Lamb of God, bearer of our sins, Redeemer of the world.

Inviting all to pray aloud together:

“Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Deliver Your servant, _____, O Sovereign Lord Christ, from all evil, and set *him/her* free from every bond, that *he/she* may rest with all Your saints in the eternal habitations, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit You live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Depart, O Christian soul, out of this world; in the name of God the Father Almighty who created you, in the name of the Holy Spirit who fills you. May your rest be this day in peace, and your dwelling place in the Paradise of God.

Into Your hands, O wonderful, merciful Savior, we commend Your servant, _____. Acknowledge, we humbly ask You, a sheep of Your own fold, a lamb of Your own flock, a sinner of Your own redeeming. Receive *him/her* into the arms of Your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints in light! Amen.

Almighty God, our Father in heaven, before whom live all who die in the Lord, receive our *brother/sister*, _____, into the courts of Your heavenly dwelling place. Let *his/her* heart and soul now ring out in joy to You, O Lord, the living God, and the God of those who live. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(There may be sharing by, and/or further prayers offered for, the family.)

(Adapted from *The Book of Common Prayer*, by Thomas J. Ramundo.)

Dedication of Churches

Book of Discipline, ¶8600

Here follow two more contemporary rituals for the dedication of church buildings. The more traditional ritual may be found online at [fmcusa.org](http://fmcusa.org/resources/pastoral-resources/pastors-and-church-leaders-manual) (resources/pastoral resources/pastors and church leaders manual).

Ritual A — Dedication of a Church Building or Meeting Hall

Ritual A, which follows immediately, is the dedicatory material only. It may be fleshed out with appropriate hymns and songs, creeds and the Lord's Prayer, Scripture readings and the ministry of the Word, the honoring of those involved in leadership of the building project and an appropriate benediction. You might also consider using portions of Ritual B, which follows, to create your own unique ritual.

Dedicatory Prayer

O eternal God, You are mighty in power and glorious in majesty. The heavens cannot contain Your glory, much less the walls of buildings made with hands, and yet You have been pleased to promise Your special presence wherever two or three of Your faithful gather in Your name. Be present with us today, we pray, as we gather together with all humility and readiness of heart to consecrate this place to the honor of Your great name; separating it from all unhallowed uses and dedicating it to Your service for the reading of Your Holy Word, for proclaiming Your everlasting gospel, for teaching Your people in the ways of righteousness, for celebrating Your matchless grace, for offering Your glorious majesty the sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving, for blessing Your people in Your name, and for all

other holy offices. Look with mercy upon us as we seek to worship You today, and may our worship glorify Your holy name, through Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Savior. Amen.

All standing, the bishop (or designee) shall say, the people responding:

To the glory of God the Father,
 who has called us by His grace;
To the honor of His Son, who loved us
 and gave Himself for us;
To the praise of the Holy Spirit,
 who illumines and sanctifies us;

we dedicate this house.

For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry;
For the nurture of our children and our teens;
For the upbuilding of our community;

we dedicate this house.

For the comfort of all who mourn;
For strength for those who are tempted;
For light to those who seek the way;

we dedicate this house.

For the hallowing of family life;
For teaching and guiding the young;
For the perfecting of the saints;

we dedicate this house.

For the conversion of sinners;
For the promotion of righteousness;
For the extension of the kingdom of God;

we dedicate this house.

In the unity of the faith;

In the bond of Christian fellowship;

In charity and goodwill to all;

we dedicate this house.

Ritual B — Dedication of a Church Building or Meeting Hall

Prelude

Responsive Reading of Psalm 24

Pastor: The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.

Congregation: Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully. They will receive blessing from the Lord, and vindication from the God of their salvation. Such is the company of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Pastor: Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle.

Congregation: Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

Scripture — Ephesians 3:20-21; Psalms 115:1-13

Choral Number or Other Ministry in Music

Hymn — “The Church’s One Foundation” (or a song about Christ)

Prayer

Welcome by the Pastor

Greetings from Special Guests

Announcements

Children’s Choir (optional)

Hymn — “God of Our Fathers” (or a song of praise)

Offering

Sermon

Hymn — “How Firm a Foundation” (or a song about the Great Commission)

Five Scriptural Values

Leader: Obedience to God’s Word is the highest form of worship.

Congregation: Grant, O Lord, that we may take to heart all the words You have solemnly declared to us this day so that we may command our children to obey carefully all the words of Your law. Your words are not just idle words for us; they are our life. By them we will live long in the community we have come to possess.

In view of God’s mercies, we offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to You, O God, which is our spiritual worship. We will endeavor to not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but will seek to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. Then we will be

able to test and approve Your will, Your good, pleasing and perfect will.

The entrance of Your words gives light. We will let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly, hiding the Word in our hearts so that we will not sin against You. (Deuteronomy 32:45-47; Romans 12:1-2; Psalms 119:11, 130; Colossians 3:16)

Leader: The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

Congregation: Grant, O Lord, that we may find joy in this house of prayer, for Your church is to be called a house of prayer for all nationalities who worship as one.

Teach us to follow the example of the apostles, who all joined together constantly in prayer, along with other believers. When pressures and threats come upon the church, may we again learn from the apostles to raise our voices together in prayer to You. After we have prayed, may we be filled with the Holy Spirit and speak Your Word boldly.

Thank You, Lord, that the prayer of a righteous people is powerful and effective. (Isaiah 56:7; Acts 1:14, 4:24, 31 and James 5:16)

Leader: Every believer is a minister, gifted by God for the benefit of the Kingdom.

Congregation: Grant, O Lord, that we will use whatever gifts we have received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. In Christ, we who are many form one body, and each of us belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. May we develop and use these gifts to

prepare Your people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (1 Peter 4:10; Romans 12:5-6; Ephesians 4:12-13)

Leader: God is glorified through the unity of the body of Christ.

Congregation: Grant, O Lord, that all people will know that we are your disciples and that the world might believe that You sent Your Son, because we love one another.

Now that we have purified ourselves by obeying the truth, so that we have genuine mutual love, help us love one another deeply from the heart. Yes, love one another deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.

Strengthen us to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bonds of peace, for Your Word declares that it is good and pleasant when kindred live together in unity. For there, You, O Lord, bestow Your blessings, even life evermore. (John 15:3-5, 17:21; 1 Peter 1:22, 4:8; Ephesians 4:3; Psalms 133:1, 3)

Leader: Lost people are precious to God and to us.

Congregation: Grant, O Lord, that we may care about the souls of men and women with Your compassion, the compassion of You, our Father, of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Son of Man came to seek and to save those who are lost. There is rejoicing in the presence of Your angels over one sinner who repents.

You, our Father, loved the world so much that You gave

Your one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For You did not send Your Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. You are patient with all of us, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

O God, that our eyes might be fountains of tears that we would weep day and night for those who do not know You. May we have great sorrow and anguish in our hearts for those in this community and those around the world who have never heard of You. Give us hearts that always care about the salvation of people. (Luke 19:10, 15:10; John 3:14-17; 2 Peter 3:9; Jeremiah 9:1; Romans 9:2)

Leader and Congregation: As we offer these our church values and prayer requests, we, the pastor and people of the _____ Free Methodist Church, dedicate this church, together with all its facilities, to the praise and service of Almighty God. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

Hymn — “To God Be the Glory”

Benediction

(Adapted from a service by the Reverend Harold Bishop and members of First Free Methodist Church, Lawrence, Kansas. Used with permission.)

Preparatory Membership

This ritual other than questions and answers is optional.

Those who are to be received as preparatory members shall be called forward by name, and the pastor, addressing the people, shall say:

Dear friends, that none may be admitted into the Free Methodist Church without instruction, we receive persons who seek fellowship with us into preparatory membership, during which they may be properly instructed, and also give proof, both to themselves and to the church, of the sincerity and depth of their convictions and of the strength and purpose of their desire to lead a new life.

Then addressing the persons seeking admission as preparatory members, the pastor shall say:

Believers in Christ, you have by the grace of God made your decision to follow Christ and to serve Him. Your confidence in so doing is to be based not on any notion of fitness or worthiness in yourselves, but on the gracious promise of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

That the church may know your purpose, you will answer the following questions:

1. Do you have the assurance that God has forgiven your sins through faith in Jesus Christ?

Answer: I have.

2. Are you willing to receive membership instruction as offered by our church?

Answer: I am.

3. Have you received Christian baptism?

Answer: Yes or no.

If not, will you receive this sacrament at a duly appointed time?

Answer: Yes.

4. You have been won to Christ. Will you endeavor to win others to Christ and the church?

Answer: I will.

Then shall the pastor say:

On behalf of the Free Methodist Church and in the hope that you will go forward to complete membership therein, I extend to you a cordial welcome.

Then shall the pastor offer extemporaneous prayer.

Youth Membership

Book of Discipline, ¶8820

Ritual other than questions and answers is optional.

Those who are to be received as youth members shall be called forward by name, and the pastor shall say:

Beloved, our Lord Jesus, by His Holy Word, has expressly given to everyone who believes in Him a place in His kingdom and church. Before you are admitted into the church, it becomes my duty to inquire of you as to your purpose of mind and heart.

1. Do you believe that Jesus Christ has forgiven your sins and is now your Savior?

Answer: Yes.

2. Have you received Christian baptism? If not, are you willing to be baptized?

Answer: Yes.

3. Will you attend classes of instruction on living the Christian life and serving God through your church?

Answer: Yes.

4. Can the Free Methodist Church count on you? Will you pray for the church, attend regularly, give to your church and help wherever you can?

Answer: Yes.

5. Will you show your friends by the way you live what it means to be a Christian and will you try to win them to Christ?

Answer: Yes.

The pastor may offer an extemporaneous prayer. (Optional)

Those to be received as youth members shall kneel, and the pastor, laying his hands upon each of them in turn, shall say:

I receive you into the fellowship of the Free Methodist Church as a youth member. May God confirm you in the faith and fellowship of all true disciples of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Adult Membership

Book of Discipline, ¶8800

Those who are to be received into adult membership shall be called forward by name, and the pastor, addressing the people, shall say:

Into this holy fellowship the persons before you, who have received the sacrament of baptism, who have learned the nature of these privileges and duties, who have been instructed in the teachings and mission of the Free Methodist Church, and who have been approved by the local board of administration, come to be welcomed into membership. We now propose, in the fear of God, to question them as to their faith and purpose, that you may know that they are ready to be admitted into this church.

Addressing those seeking admission, the pastor shall say:

Beloved in the Lord, you have been baptized into Christ and come now to be received into membership in the Free Methodist Church. We rejoice with you in all God's mercies that have brought you to this hour; and we join our prayers with yours as you make this sacred undertaking.

1. Do you have the assurance that God has forgiven your sins through faith in Jesus Christ?

Answer: I do.

2. Do you believe the Bible is God's written Word, uniquely inspired by the Holy Spirit and do you accept its authority for what you must believe and how you must live?

Answer: I do.

3. Do you here resolve, by God's grace, to be Christlike in heart and life, opening yourself fully to the cleansing and empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit, the guidance of the Scriptures, and the nurture and fellowship of the church?

Answer: By God's enabling grace, I do resolve.

4. Do you accept the *Book of Discipline of the Free Methodist Church*, with its Articles of Religion, Membership Covenant and its principles for the lives of its members and the governance of the church?

Answer: Trusting God's power to aid me, I do.

5. As a follower of Jesus Christ, will you embrace the mission of the Free Methodist Church within and beyond this congregation and will you join us in giving sacrificially of your time, talents and resources to help us carry out that mission?

Answer: With God's help, I will.

I offer you the right hand of fellowship and welcome you into the Free Methodist Church. May the experience of membership in this body enrich your life and the life of our church; and may your contribution to its life strengthen both you and all of us.

The pastor shall introduce each candidate by name to the congregation and shall continue as follows:

You, my fellow-members of this congregation, have heard the vows of these who have completed the requirements for membership in the Free Methodist Church. Let us now welcome them into our fellowship.

(The method of welcoming shall be left to the discretion of the pastor.)

The pastor may offer an extemporaneous prayer.

(Optional) Those to be received into membership shall kneel, and the pastor, laying hands upon each of them in turn, shall say:

_____, I receive you into the fellowship of the Free Methodist Church. May the Lord confirm you in the faith and fellowship of the true disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Those being received shall rise, and the pastor, addressing the candidates, shall say:

We rejoice to recognize you as members of the Free Methodist Church and bid you welcome to all its privileges; and in token of our love we give you the right hand of fellowship and pray that you may be numbered with His people here and with His saints in glory everlasting. May the church be a blessing to you, and may you be a blessing to the church.

The pastor shall say to the congregation:

Friends in Christ, I commend to your love and care these persons whom we this day recognize as members of our church. Do all in your power to strengthen their faith, confirm their hope and perfect them in love.

Membership by Transfer

Book of Discipline, ¶8830

Those who are to be received into membership by transfer shall be called forward by name, and the pastor, addressing the congregation, shall say:

The Free Methodist Church is a welcoming fellowship that provides a home for those committed to the advancement of Christ's kingdom. We count it a privilege to receive these members into our fellowship by transfer. Their letters of transfer read:

*The pastor will read only the first letter in each category of membership in its entirety. The others can be named along with the name of the church from which they are transferring.
The pastor shall lead in an extemporaneous prayer.
The pastor will welcome each new member.*

Members transferring from another evangelical denomination must previously have met the requirements of the *Book of Discipline*, ¶6110.

See Appendix C for suggested content for various kinds of transfer letters.

Local Ministerial Candidate

Book of Discipline, ¶8700

A. Questions for a local ministerial candidate before the local board of administration:

1. When and how did you come to know Christ as Savior and Lord?
2. Describe your life as it relates to the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
3. Describe the call of God in your life to full-time ministry.
4. What preparations and plans are you making in order to follow God's will for your life?
5. What do you see as your primary spiritual gifts?
6. In what ways do you plan to witness and minister as a local ministerial candidate?

B. Questions for a local ministerial candidate before the congregation:

1. Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and do you offer yourself in service to Him as a local ministerial candidate in the _____ Free Methodist Church?

Answer: I do.

2. Recognizing that being a local ministerial candidate in this congregation is an important step in confirming the call of God on your life, do you pledge to diligently seek the Lord's will for your life through prayer and study?

Answer: I do.

3. Will you seek and accept the guidance of your pastor and the local board of administration in order to fulfill these goals?

Answer: I will.

C. The pastor will present a certificate to the local ministerial candidate.

Conference Ministerial Candidate

Book of Discipline, ¶8710

This information is provided for your awareness as you prepare a local ministerial candidate for conference ministerial candidate (CMC) status with the annual conference. Please work in conjunction with your conference ministerial education and guidance (MEG) board to accomplish this goal.

At an appropriate time the conference ministerial candidate(s) shall be called before the annual conference or the administrative committee if so authorized by the annual conference, and the chair shall say:

The leaders and members of this annual conference, having observed your Christian life and conduct, feel you are endowed with the gifts of ministerial leadership. The ministerial education and guidance board has carefully inquired into your qualifications and has presented you as a candidate for membership. We offer our words of encouragement and congratulations. We know you take seriously this first step on the road to ordination. We expect you to give yourself diligently in prayer and study in preparation for effective pastoral ministry. That you may fix your eyes more clearly upon your goal we ask you the following questions:

1. Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and offer yourself in service to Him as a conference ministerial candidate in the _____ Annual Conference of the Free Methodist Church?

Answer: I do.

2. Recognizing that being a conference ministerial candidate in this annual conference is an important step toward full membership and ordination, do you pledge to equip yourself spiritually, morally, and intellectually for the Christian ministry?

Answer: I do.

3. Will you seek and accept the guidance of your superintendent and the ministerial education and guidance board to fulfill these goals?

Answer: I will.

The president of the conference shall present a certificate to the newly received conference ministerial candidate(s).

Special Service

Sample Organization of a New Free Methodist Fellowship

Invocation

Hymn of Praise

Responsive Reading

Prayer

Ministry in Music

Sermon *An appropriate subject is the New Testament view of the church as the body of Christ.*

Ritual for Organization as a Fellowship

The superintendent, or other designated pastor, calls those who have been members of a Free Methodist fellowship or those who wish to form a new fellowship to the front.

Superintendent or Designee: Having faith in Christ and His holy Bible, and having received instruction in the beliefs and organization of the Free Methodist Church of North America, is it your desire to form a fellowship as the first step towards becoming a Free Methodist church?

People: It is by the grace of God.

Superintendent or Designee: What shall be the name of this fellowship?

People (*or the pastor or a representative of the congregation*): This will be known as the _____ (name of fellowship) Free Methodist Fellowship of _____ (city and state).

Superintendent or Designee: I now declare that the _____ (name of fellowship) Free Methodist Fellowship of _____ (city and state) is duly organized and

invite each of you to join by answering the questions contained in the ritual of membership.

The superintendent or designee will then proceed to ask the questions for adult membership according to the Book of Discipline, ¶8800 or the same ritual from this manual. After concluding with the questions, the superintendent or designee may offer an extemporaneous prayer.

Superintendent or Designee:

(Optional) Those being received into membership shall kneel, and the minister, laying hands upon each of them in turn, shall say:

I receive you into membership in the Free Methodist Church. May the Lord confirm you in faith and fellowship as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Those being received shall rise, and the minister, addressing the candidates, shall say:

We rejoice to recognize you as members of the Free Methodist Church and charter members of the (name of fellowship) Free Methodist Fellowship. We bid you welcome to all its privileges. In token of our brotherly love we give you the right hand of fellowship and pray that you may be numbered with His people here and with His saints in glory everlasting. May the church be a blessing to you, and you to the church.

Friends, I commend you, each to the other, to love and care for one another, and to do all in your power to strengthen each other's faith, confirm each other in hope, and perfect each other in love.

Hymn

Benediction

Special Service

Sample Organization of a New Free Methodist Society

Invocation

Hymn of Praise

Responsive Reading

Prayer

Ministry in Music

Sermon *An appropriate subject is the New Testament view of the church as the body of Christ.*

Ritual for Organization as a Society

The superintendent, or other designated pastor, calls those who have been members of a Free Methodist fellowship or those who wish to form a new society to the front.

Superintendent or Designee: Having read the Constitution of the Free Methodist Church of North America contained in the *Book of Discipline* and having familiarized yourselves with the policies and practices of the church contained therein, do you now adopt this *Book of Discipline* as your rule and authority in organizing a new Free Methodist church?

People: With thankful hearts to God, we do.

Superintendent or Designee: What will the society now formed be named?

People (*or the pastor or a representative of the congregation*): This society will be known as the _____ (name of society) Free Methodist Church of _____ (city and state).

Superintendent or Designee: I now declare that the _____ (name of society) Free Methodist Church

of _____ (city and state) is duly organized and invite each of you to join by answering the questions contained in the ritual of membership.

The superintendent or designee will then proceed with the ritual according to the Book of Discipline, ¶8800 or the same ritual from this manual. After concluding with the questions, the superintendent or designee may offer an extemporaneous prayer.

Superintendent or Designee:

(Optional) Those being received into membership shall kneel, and the minister, laying hands upon each of them in turn, shall say:

I receive you into membership in the Free Methodist Church. May the Lord confirm you in faith and fellowship as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Those being received shall rise, and the minister, addressing the candidates, shall say:

We rejoice to recognize you as members of the Free Methodist Church and charter members of the (name of society) Free Methodist Society. We bid you welcome to all its privileges. In token of our brotherly love we give you the right hand of fellowship and pray that you may be numbered with His people here and with His saints in glory everlasting. May the church be a blessing to you, and you to the church.

Friends, I commend you, each to the other, to love and care for one another, and to do all in your power to strengthen each other's faith, confirm each other in hope, and perfect each other in love.

Hymn

Benediction

Appendix B — Ministry Board Options and Suggested Agenda

The 2003 General Conference directed that the following board descriptions, along with the two illustrative agendas that follow, be shifted from the *Book of Discipline* to this manual, to assist local churches that maintain one or more of these boards.

Board of Christian Education

1. The local board of Christian education (CE) may be composed of the director of Christian education, director of children's ministries, director of youth ministries, director of adult ministries, Sunday school leader(s) and others as determined. They shall normally be members of the church. The pastor shall be an ex officio member. Smaller churches may have fewer than five members, but shall work toward the basic age-level structure as ministries are needed and persons are available.

2. The board of Christian education may submit an organizational plan and list of officers needed for the new year to the annual society meeting. (The organizational plan will take into consideration the size of the church and its ministry needs.) The board may submit nominations for the new board of CE to the church nominating committee.

3. Upon authorization by the society the newly elected board shall name all staff personnel for the following: the Sunday school; Christian Life Club; young teen and Free Methodist Youth programs; the variety of adult programs such as those emphasizing family life or those for senior citizens; and other programs, such as vacation Bible school, junior choir and children's church. As an alternative, if a society chooses to elect such personnel, the newly elected board shall present its nominations to the society.

Leaders and teachers in Christian education should be persons who:

- a. have a vital Christian experience;
 - b. are faithful in church attendance and fellowship;
 - c. are diligent in prayer; and
 - d. are in agreement with the doctrinal positions of the church.
4. The responsibilities may include:
- a. to administer all CE programs;
 - b. to coordinate all CE activities;
 - c. to grow the church through CE programs and ministries;
 - d. to implement denominational curricula for all CE endeavors;
 - e. to provide training for CE workers;
 - f. to encourage adherence to denominational doctrine and standards;
 - g. to project, plan and evaluate total CE programs;
 - h. to develop and maintain church library materials;
 - i. to review all Christian education financial programs.

Board of Missions

1. A local board of missions may be composed of the pastor, missions coordinator, representatives of Women's Ministries International and Men's Ministries International, director of Christian education, directors of youth and children's ministries, with two or more members elected at large where practicable.

2. It shall develop a year-round program of missions education and activities in cooperation with Free Methodist World Missions (FMWM).

3. The missions coordinator shall normally serve as chair.

4. The responsibilities may include:

- a. alert the church to missions prayer needs through

- such resources as “Missions Hotline” and Free Methodist *World Mission People* magazine;
- b. promote regular prayer for missionaries and mission initiatives;
- c. inform the church concerning opportunities for missionary service through VISA (volunteers in service abroad) Ministries and career appointment;
- d. forward to the department of FMWM the names and addresses of people sensing a call to missionary service;
- e. coordinate all missions activities and programs for the year; and
- f. utilize projects and other methods for fundraising.

Board of Evangelism and Church Growth

1. A board of evangelism and church growth may be elected. In smaller churches, the local board of administration may serve this purpose.

2. The duties shall be to:

- a. cooperate with conference evangelism and church growth programs;
- b. study established patterns of church growth;
- c. seek practical means with which to apply these principles to the local church;
- d. prepare growth goals and objectives with time lines to be presented to the local board of administration and the society for approval at the beginning of each conference year;
- e. submit the above goals and objectives for a quarterly evaluation by the local board of administration, which shall report annually to the society and the conference superintendent;
- f. develop strategies to sponsor a church-planting proj-

- ect in another part of the city or in an adjacent community;
- g. adopt a church-planting project in another area, or share the church facilities to start an ethnic Free Methodist church; and
- h. motivate the people of the church to implement these principles.

Board of Stewards

1. Stewards shall be persons of recognized piety who subscribe to the *Book of Discipline*, support their local church, and have the ability to transact temporary business.
2. The number of stewards shall be not fewer than three, and at least two-thirds of the members shall be adult members of the church.
3. The stewards may be elected at the regular annual society meeting.
4. They shall have the following privileges and responsibilities:
 - a. assisting the society in social ministries by:
 - (1) soliciting help for its needy (and others, within its means);
 - (2) comforting the sick and sorrowing;
 - (3) assisting the aged;
 - (4) initiating the establishment of children's day-care centers and schools where practicable;
 - (5) seeking support and encouragement for youth preparing for Kingdom service;
 - (6) assisting in the promotion of accredited Free Methodist social institutions.
 - b. preparing the elements for the Lord's Supper;
 - c. working with approved community agencies to minister to human need, keeping in mind always that all of these services must work toward the ultimate objective, salvation through Jesus Christ; and

- d. performing such other duties as may be assigned by the society.

With the establishment of local church consecrated deacons, the society might choose to have many of these ministry tasks assigned to or guided by such local deacons, according to their calling, gifting and passion.

Local Church Society Annual Meeting

This suggested “Order of Business” was shifted to the *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual* by action of the editors of the 2003 *Book of Discipline*. It comes from earlier *Disciplines* and represents the old paradigm for how Free Methodist churches did their work. In our current permission-giving spirit, we have granted new freedoms to local churches to organize in simpler ways with fewer boards and committees.

Please see the *Book of Discipline*, ¶s 6040, 6200 and 6250 for more particulars. We doubt that there is a single church that follows this complex and lengthy suggested agenda. Rather, this document illustrates the kinds of administrative issues to which the pastor and lay leaders need to give oversight.

1. Devotions.
2. Seat the secretary (secretary of the local board of administration).
3. Calling of the roll (or taken by inspection of sign-up).
4. Election of tellers.
5. Reception of reports from pastor (state of the church), stewards, trustees, treasurer, ministry leaders.
6. Election of a treasurer. Selection of an auditor.
7. Election of a statistical auditor.
8. Election by ballot of delegates to the annual conference.
9. Election by ballot of reserve delegates to the annual conference.
10. Election by ballot of pastor’s cabinet.
11. Decide the number of stewards; elect.

12. Election by ballot of trustees (See *Book of Discipline* ¶6400). If the board of administration serves as the legal trustees, the local board of administration shall be elected by ballot where civil law requires.
13. Election of local board of administration personnel.
14. Election by ballot of director of Christian education.
15. Election of directors of children's, youth and adult ministries.
16. Election of Christian education personnel (if so decided) or authorize election or appointment by the board of Christian education.
17. Election of a missions coordinator.
18. Election of members-at-large to the board of missions.
19. Election of trial committee (if necessary).
20. Election of a church nominating committee.
21. Decision regarding incorporation (If necessary, see *Book of Discipline* ¶6400).
22. Miscellaneous business.
23. Approval of minutes.
24. Adjournment.

Local Church Board of Administration Meeting

This suggested agenda was shifted to the *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual* by action of the editors of the 2003 *Book of Discipline*. It represents the old paradigm for how Free Methodist churches did their work. In our current permission-giving spirit, we have granted new freedoms to the local board of administration to organize in simpler ways with fewer boards and committees. We doubt that there is a single church that follows our old complex and lengthy suggested agendas.

In fact, we highly recommend that the local board of administration be a policy-making and leadership board that focuses on applying the biblical mission and denominational vision to their church circumstances.

This means that we challenge you to build your agendas off of your decision to make the main thing the main thing, namely, to make disciples who make disciples. This implies that our primary tasks are to win the lost, build the believers, equip the workers and send disciples.

Since there is a tendency for such boards to micromanage administrative details, we wish to remind you to review the *Book of Discipline*, ¶6300.D, which states that this board provides “vision, general oversight, planning and coordination of the ministries of the church. The purpose shall be to stimulate and ensure the furtherance of the congregation’s mission and the spiritual growth and development of the entire body.” In other words, the local board of administration is to be a leadership board, not a management board. Management details and tasks should be delegated to the pastor(s) and lay leaders gifted in these things.

1. Devotions.
2. Election of a secretary.
3. Taking the roll by inspection.
4. Approving the minutes of the previous meeting.
5. Election of a committee on social ministry.
6. Election of a church calendar committee (pastor’s cabinet, *Book of Discipline* ¶6320.B.8).

7. Evaluation of pastoral leadership and church effectiveness (every three years — see *Book of Discipline* ¶5800.E.3).
8. Inquire:
 - a. Are there any sick?
 - b. What is the status of membership?
 - (1) Have any been received as youth members?
 - (2) Have any been received as preparatory members?
 - (3) Are converts and youth members receiving instruction in Christian living and church membership?
 - (4) Are there any youth members whose terms of training have expired?
 - (5) Have any been received into adult membership?
 - (6) Have any been received into associate membership? (See *Book of Discipline* ¶6130.)
 - (7) Have any died?
 - (8) Have any been otherwise removed?
 - c. Are there any violating our standards of church membership who will not be reproved?
 - d. Are there any persons to be recommended as local ministerial candidates?
 - e. Are there any persons to be recommended to be licensed as conference ministerial candidates?
 - f. Are there any local ministerial candidate's licenses to be renewed?
 - g. Are there any lay minister's licenses to be granted? to be renewed?
 - h. When, where and how should we begin a church planting project?
 - i. Have any been married or baptized?
 - j. Report of the board of Christian education.
 - k. Treasurer's report:
 - (1) Amount raised as ordered by the conference.
 - (2) Amount raised for pastoral support.
 - (3) Amount raised for Equal Participation Plan (EPP)

previously it was United Ministries for Christ (UMC).

(4) Report of other money received and disbursed.

(5) Balance in the treasury.

- l. Are there any claims to be presented?
- m. Is there any unfinished business, or are there any committees to report?
- n. Is there any new business, or are there any committees to be appointed?
- o. Reports of department heads:
 - (1) The president of Women's Ministries International.
 - (2) The president of Men's Ministries International.
 - (3) The board of stewards.
 - (4) The board of trustees.
- p. Are there any vacancies on the board of trustees?
- q. Is the title to the church property secure?
- r. Are the legal documents for this pastoral charge deposited for safekeeping; and if so, where? Are the official records in safekeeping?
- s. Is the church property insured?
- t. Annually at a fall meeting (October, if possible) the pastor, with the aid of the local board of Christian education, shall report in writing the following information concerning members of the congregation, particularly young people who are in college and other educational institutions at home and away from home, and also those in the armed services. It is expected that these reports shall include names and current addresses of those away in school and elsewhere, including names of schools being attended if of collegiate level. The report is expected to be divided according to answers to the following questions:
 - (1) What young people of our church are members of the senior class in the local high school?
 - (2) What young people are members of the second

year in a local junior college?

(3) What people, younger or older, are now away from home in theological seminaries? Give the name of the seminary in each case.

(4) What individuals are enrolled in other colleges, universities or graduate schools, or schools of nursing? Give the name of the school in each case.

(5) What individuals are now in the armed services, and what are their present addresses?

(6) Has the list of seniors in the local high school or second-year students in the local junior college been sent to the admission officer of the area Free Methodist college/university?

(7) What is being done to extend and maintain the church's ministry to students away from home/church in attendance at college and graduate institutions?

(8) What is being done to extend and maintain the church's ministry to those individuals in the armed services?

- u. Adoption of the annual budget.
- v. Reading the minutes.
- w. Adjournment.

Appendix C — Forms

1. Application for Permission to Mortgage Church Property of the Free Methodist Church – USA

(Answer all questions to avoid delay. Include a cover letter if more information is necessary to clarify your request.)

Society _____

Date _____ Conference _____

1. Who owns or is purchasing the property to be **MORTGAGED**?

2. Has the body owning or purchasing the property authorized the **MORTGAGE**? YES _____ NO _____

In what book of record is the action recorded?

3. What lending institution is providing the mortgage?

Page _____ Date _____

Please enclose a copy of the minutes – see note below.

NOTE: When the electing body so authorizes, the local board of administration or conference committee may authorize the mortgage. (See the current Book of Discipline, ¶6400.F.) A copy of the body's minutes giving such authorization must accompany application.

4. What is the purpose of this **MORTGAGE**?

5. How will the proceeds of the **MORTGAGE** be used? Please be specific. (See *Book of Discipline*, ¶6400.E-F.)

6. Has the local board of administration (or conference administrative committee) approved this plan? (See *Book of Discipline*, ¶6410.C.) _____

7. Is the title to the property to be **MORTGAGED** a warranty deed? _____

8. Is the property deeded or will the property be deeded to the organization in its corporate name, or to the individual trustees? (See *Book of Discipline*, ¶6400.)

9. If the organization is incorporated, give corporate name.

10. Does the deed to the property to be **MORTGAGED** contain the following trust clause: "... in trust for the use and benefit of the Free Methodist Church – USA, incorporated under the name of 'The Free Methodist Church of North America,' ...," etc.? _____ (See *Book of Discipline*, ¶6400.D.) A *Release to Mortgage* cannot be granted unless the trust clause is included in the deed. Please *enclose a copy of the deed showing legal description of the property*.

11. If new property is **PURCHASED** with the proceeds of **MORTGAGE**, will the title thereto include the trust clause referred to in “10” above? (See *Book of Discipline*, ¶6400.D.)

12. If new property is **PURCHASED** with the proceeds, will there be a reverting clause in the title? (See *Book of Discipline*, ¶6400.E.) _____. A *Release to Mortgage* cannot be granted if there is or will be a reverting clause in the title.

13. Describe the property to be **MORTGAGED**: Number of lots or acres _____.
Type of building (frame, stone, brick, other).

CHURCH _____

PARSONAGE _____

OTHER _____

Address of property being **MORTGAGED**:

14. Appraised value of property to be **MORTGAGED**:

Amount expected from **MORTGAGE**:

15. Give legal description of property to be **MORTGAGED**, enclosing a copy of the deed. (If the legal description on the deed includes more than the property you wish to **MORTGAGE**, indicate clearly the portion you want included on the Release to Mortgage.)

16. List names and addresses of the trustees, if the property to be **MORTGAGED** is held in the names of the trustees. If your church does not have a board of trustees, then the church board of administration names should be listed. (See *Book of Discipline* ¶6250.I.)

17. Signatures approving the **MORTGAGE**:

Pastor in Charge: _____

Signature

Print name

Mailing Address: _____

Phone Number

Conference

Superintendent: _____

Signature

Print name

Mailing Address: _____

phone number

email

Secretary of Church Society (conference secretary if property is owned by the conference):

Signature

Print name

Mailing Address: _____

phone number

email

Board of Directors
The Free Methodist Church – USA
770 N. High School Road
Indianapolis, IN 46214

Please send a cover letter if more information is necessary to clarify your request.

2. Application for Permission to Sell Church Property of the Free Methodist Church – USA

(Answer all questions to avoid delay. Include a cover letter
if more information is necessary to clarify your request.)

Society _____

Date _____ Conference _____

1. Who owns or is purchasing the property to be **SOLD**?

2. Has the body owning or purchasing the property authorized
the **SALE** of the property? YES _____ NO _____

In what book of record is the action recorded?

Page _____ Date _____

Please enclose a copy of the minutes.

*NOTE: When the electing body so authorizes, the local board
of administration or conference committee may authorize the
sale. (See the current Book of Discipline, ¶6400.F.)*

3. What is the purpose of this **SALE**?

4. How will the proceeds of the **SALE** be used? Please be specific.
(See *Book of Discipline*, ¶6400.E-F.)

5. Has the local board of administration (or conference administrative committee) approved this plan? (See *Book of Discipline*, ¶6410.C.) _____

6. Is the title to the property to be **SOLD** a warranty deed?

7. Is the property deeded or will the property be deeded to the organization in its corporate name, or to the individual trustees? (See *Book of Discipline*, ¶6400.)

8. If the organization is incorporated, give corporate name.

9. Does the deed to the property to be **SOLD** contain the following trust clause: "... in trust for the use and benefit of the Free Methodist Church – USA, incorporated under the name of 'The Free Methodist Church of North America,' ...," etc.? _____ (See *Book of Discipline*, ¶6400.D.) *Release to Sell* cannot be granted unless the trust clause is included in the deed. Please *enclose a copy of the deed*.

10. If new property is **PURCHASED** with the proceeds of **SALE**, will the title thereto include the trust clause referred to in "9" above? (See *Book of Discipline*, ¶6400.D.)

11. If new property is **PURCHASED** with the proceeds, will there be a reverting clause in the title? (See *Book of Discipline*, ¶6400.E.) _____. A *Release to Sell* cannot be granted if there is or will be a reverting clause in the title.

12. Describe the property to be **SOLD**: Number of lots or acres

Type of building (frame, stone, brick, other).

CHURCH _____

PARSONAGE _____

OTHER _____

Address of property being **SOLD**

13. Appraised value of property to be **SOLD**:

Amount expected from **SALE**:

14. Give legal description of property to be **SOLD**, enclosing a copy of the deed. (If the legal description on the deed includes more than the property you wish to **SELL**, *indicate clearly the portion you want included on the Release to Mortgage.*)

15. List names and addresses of the trustees, if the property to be **MORTGAGED** is held in the names of the trustees. If your church does not have a board of trustees, then the church board of administration names should be listed. (See *Book of Discipline* ¶6250.I.)

16. Signatures approving the **SALE**:

Pastor in Charge: _____
Signature

Print name

Mailing Address: _____

Phone Number

Conference

Superintendent: _____
Signature

Print name

Mailing Address: _____

phone number

email

Secretary of Church Society (conference secretary if property is owned by the conference):

Signature

Print name

Mailing Address: _____

phone number

email

Board of Directors
The Free Methodist Church – USA
770 N. High School Road
Indianapolis, IN 46214

Please send a cover letter if more information is necessary to clarify your request.

3. Declaration of Trust (Suggested)

Whenever a piece of property does not have the trust clause set forth in its deed, the local society may adopt the following trust clause and have it duly recorded at the county recorder's office, thus conforming to the provisions of ¶6400 of the current *Book of Discipline*.

WHEREAS, _____, a
_____ corporation or religious society, located
at _____,
(herein after referred to as the "Church") is the owner of
the hereinafter described real property and,

WHEREAS, said Church is affiliated with the Free Methodist Church of North America, a California corporation, subject to the rules, regulations, and *Book of Discipline* thereof, and,

WHEREAS, the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America provides that all real property held by said corporation shall include the following trust clause:

"Irrevocably in trust for the use and benefit of the Free Methodist Church – USA, incorporated under the name of 'The Free Methodist Church of North America,' subject to the *Book of Discipline*, usages, and ministerial appointment of said church as from time to time authorized and declared; and, if sold, the proceeds shall be disposed of and used in accordance with the provisions of said *Book of Discipline*, and the civil law; and in further trust and confidence that in the houses of worship now constructed or that may hereafter be constructed on said premises hereby conveyed, the seats shall be forever free; and in further trust and confidence that the said trustees and their successors in office shall permit at all times the preachers

who may be duly authorized according to the *Book of Discipline* of the said Free Methodist Church, to hold religious services in said houses of worship according to said *Book of Discipline*.”

And, WHEREAS, the deed to the hereinafter described real property from _____, as grantor, to the Church as grantee, dated on the _____ day of _____, _____, and recorded as Document No. _____, Book _____, Page _____, of deeds records of _____ County, State of _____, failed to include the foregoing trust,

NOW, THEREFORE, it is declared by the Church on the _____ day of _____, 20_____, that the said Church holds the hereinafter described real property subject to the provisions of said trust.

The hereinbefore described real property as the hereinafter described real property is more particularly described as:

(insert legal description)

Done at a duly and regularly called meeting of the corporation or society on the _____ day of _____, 20_____.

We, the undersigned, _____ president, and _____, secretary of the

_____ Church of _____,

_____, hereby certify that the foregoing

resolution was duly adopted at the foregoing meeting and that we were instructed and directed to execute this instrument as a declaration of trust and cause the same to be recorded upon the records of the county recorder of the

County of _____,

State of _____.

_____ President

_____ Secretary

State of _____

County of _____

Before me _____, a notary public, on this day personally appeared _____ and _____, known to me to be the persons whose names are subscribed to the foregoing instrument and known to me to be the president and secretary respectively of _____

a _____

religious society or corporation, located at _____, _____, and acknowledged to me that they executed said instrument for the purposes therein expressed and as the act of said

corporation or society.

GIVEN under my hand and seal this _____ day

of _____, 20_____.

Notary Public in and for the above County and State

4. Articles of Incorporation (Suggested)

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION OF

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That we, the undersigned, residents of the State of _____, have this day voluntarily associated ourselves together for the purpose of forming a corporation under the laws of the State of _____.

AND WE HEREBY CERTIFY:

FIRST

The name of the corporation shall be:

SECOND

That the primary purposes for which it is formed are religious, charitable, and educational, and especially:

To conduct religious services, to cultivate social intercourse among its members, and to assist in improving and ameliorating the moral and social conditions of humanity; to purchase, own, sell, or dispose of the same, mortgage and lease real estate and other property as may be necessary for the purposes of this corporation; to receive donations, to receive, manage, take, and hold real and personal property by gift, grant, devise, or bequest, and to sell or dispose of the same, and to do everything necessary, suitable, or proper for the accomplishment of any of the purposes herein enumerated, or which shall at any time appear conducive or

expedient for the protection or benefit of this corporation.

THIRD

That the principal office for the transaction of business of said corporation is to be located in the County _____, State of _____.

FOURTH

That the term for which said corporation is to exist is perpetual.

FIFTH

That it is a corporation which does not contemplate pecuniary gain or profit to the members thereof, and therefore there shall be no capital stock.

The property is irrevocably dedicated to religious, charitable, or scientific purposes and upon liquidation, dissolution or abandonment of the corporation, ownership will not inure to the benefit of any private person except a fund, foundation, or corporation organized and operated for religious, scientific, or charitable purposes. The directors shall not be personally liable for the debts, liabilities, or obligations of the corporation.

SIXTH

The ecclesiastical affairs of the corporation shall be subject to the rules, regulation, and *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America, as from time to time adopted by the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America, insofar as the same do not contravene or conflict with the laws of the state or province of incorporation.

SEVENTH

That the number of directors of said corporation shall be three and that the names and addresses of the persons who are to act in the capacity of directors until the selection of their successors, and who shall be known as trustees, are

Names

Addresses

That the number of directors may be changed by a by-law duly adopted or amended by the members, authority for which is hereby expressly conferred.

Editor's Note:

Do not try to use this form without the aid of an attorney of your state or province. If you desire to form a corporation, take this form to an attorney for his or her information.

Following the above will have to be the regular certification either by individual, incorporators, or by the president and secretary of the unincorporated society being incorporated. They must follow the requirements of the local civil law. (JURAT)

5. Bylaws (Suggested)

BYLAWS of _____
(Corporate name of church)

ARTICLE I

SECTION I:

The members of the _____ shall constitute the members of this corporation.

SECTION II:

The annual meeting of this corporation shall be held at any time within eight months prior to the convening of the

(name of the annual conference)

of the Free Methodist Church of North America, and may be called by the pastor or the president of said corporation by giving notice as provided in the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America.

SECTION III:

Special meetings may be called at any time for any purpose or purposes whatsoever by the president of the corporation or the pastor, pursuant to the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America.

SECTION IV:

Notice of special meeting may be given as provided in the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America.

Note: Although the Church's corporate name is The Free Methodist Church of North America, by action of the Board of Administration (April 2011) the Church now does business as The Free Methodist Church – USA.

SECTION V:

The entry in the minutes of the notice of any annual or special meeting, if read and approved at such meeting or subsequent meeting, shall be conclusive proof on the question of such notice.

SECTION VI:

When all the members are present at any meeting, however called or notified, and signify their consent thereto by the roll call showing their presence, and those not present consent in writing at the time of such meeting or subsequent thereto, and such consent is made a part of the records of such meeting, the proceedings had at such meeting are valid, irrespective of the manner in which the meeting was called or the place where it was held.

SECTION VII:

At any meeting of the members, those present shall constitute a quorum to transact business.

SECTION VIII:

The pastor of the church, or in his absence his appointee, or the president of the corporation shall preside at all meetings.

SECTION IX:

Any regular or called meeting may adjourn from day to day or from time to time, without further notice until its business is completed.

SECTION X:

The *Book of Discipline*, rules and regulations of the Free Methodist Church of North America, shall at all times constitute the rules for admission, expulsion, withdrawal,

and the disciplining of members of this corporation.

ARTICLE II

Directors or Trustees

SECTION I:

The secular affairs of this corporation shall be exercised and conducted by a board of directors or trustees as directed by the society of the _____.

SECTION II:

The qualifications of all such directors or trustees shall be as provided in the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America, and the Articles of Incorporation.

SECTION III:

Their term of office shall be for one year or until their successors are elected and qualified.

SECTION IV:

Any vacancy occurring in the office of director or trustee shall be filled by an election at a meeting of the membership or society, and any director or trustee so elected shall hold office for the unexpired term.

SECTION V:

Immediately after the annual meeting, the board of directors or trustees shall meet and organize by electing a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, or secretary-treasurer.

SECTION VI:

All meetings of the directors or trustees shall be held as directed from time to time or at the call of the president or pastor.

SECTION VII:

The duties of the several officers shall be as provided in the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America, or as prescribed by the society of the

_____.

ARTICLE III

Amendments

SECTION I:

The bylaws of this corporation may be amended at any annual meeting of the members by a majority vote of those present except as to Article I, Section X. Adopted by resolution of the members of the corporation this

_____ day of _____,

20____.

6. Bequests

Form of bequest of money or other personal property:
“I give and bequeath to the Free Methodist Church of North America the sum of _____ dollars, to be used and appropriated by that body to religious, charitable, missionary, or educational purposes.”

Real estate: “I grant and devise (full description of the land).”

Licenses or Recommendations

1. Local Ministerial Candidate's License

This certifies that _____ is authorized to officiate as a LOCAL MINISTERIAL CANDIDATE in the FREE METHODIST CHURCH for one year, provided h_____ spirit and practice are such as become the gospel of Christ, and h_____ teachings correspond with the established doctrines of the Holy Scriptures as held by the Free Methodist Church.

Done by order of the Board of Administration of the

_____ Society,

_____ Conference.

Done at _____ this _____ day

of _____, 20_____

Pastor and/or Chair

Secretary _____

2. Renewal of Local Ministerial Candidate's License

The license of _____ as a LOCAL MINISTERIAL CANDIDATE is hereby renewed for one year, subject to the requirements of the *Book of Discipline*.

Signed by order of the Board of Administration of the

_____ Society,

_____ Conference, this

_____ day of _____, 20____

Pastor and/or Chair

Secretary _____

3. Renewal of Lay Minister's License

The denomination replaced the lay ministry category with the consecrated deacon category in 1999. Thus, use of this form would normally only be occasioned by the “grandfathering” or continuance of existing lay ministers, not the establishment of new lay ministers. We have no form for establishing new lay ministers.

This certifies that the license of _____ as a LAY MINISTER in the FREE METHODIST CHURCH is hereby renewed for one year, subject to the requirements of the *Book of Discipline*.

Done by order of the Board of Administration of the

_____ Society,

_____ Conference.

Done at _____ this _____ day of

_____, 20_____

Pastor and/or Chair

Secretary _____

**4. Recommendation for Status of
Conference Ministerial Candidate**

(See *Book of Discipline*, ¶6500.L.)

This certifies that _____, a local ministerial candidate and member of the

_____ Society of the

_____ Conference, is hereby recommended to the

_____ Conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board as a suitable person to be approved as a conference ministerial candidate of the FREE METHODIST CHURCH.

Done by order of the Board of Administration of the _____ society, at Conference

this _____ day of _____, 20____
Pastor and/or Chair

Secretary _____

5. Annual Conference — Delegate Credentials

This certifies that _____ was duly
elected to represent the _____

Society at the _____ Annual

Conference to be held at _____

commencing the _____ day of _____,

20_____

Lay Delegate _____

Reserve Delegate _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (Circle one to indicate order of election.)

Done at the Society Meeting held at

_____ on the _____ day of

_____, 20_____.

Chair and/or Pastor

Secretary

Transfers

1. Adult Membership Transfer

This is to certify that _____, an adult member in good standing at _____, a Free Methodist Church, is cordially commended to the Free Methodist Church in _____ or in any other place. When he or she is admitted to another society, membership in this society shall cease. This certificate must be deposited with another Free Methodist church within one year, unless renewed.

Member's date of birth _____ and of baptism _____

Check where appropriate:

Member is:

____ local ministerial candidate

____ consecrated deacon

____ located deacon

____ located elder

Dated _____

Pastor's signature _____

2. Acknowledgment of Transfer

You are hereby notified that _____
has been duly enrolled as a member of this society
_____ upon a certificate issued by the society
of which you are the pastor.

Dated _____

Pastor's signature _____

3. Transfer of Membership to Another Denomination

This is to certify that _____, who wishes
to become a member of another evangelical church, is an
adult member in good standing at _____, a
Free Methodist Church in _____ and is cor-
dially commended to the fellowship of _____
or any other such church with which ____ may desire to
unite. H____ membership in the Free Methodist Church
ceases when this certificate is given.

Member's date of birth _____
and baptism _____

Dated _____

Pastor's signature _____

4. Youth Membership Transfer

This is to certify that _____, a youth member in good standing at _____, a Free Methodist Church, is cordially commended to the Free Methodist Church in _____ or in any other place. When he or she is admitted to another society, membership in this society shall cease. This certificate must be deposited with another Free Methodist Church within one year, unless renewed.

Member's date of birth _____, and
of baptism _____

Date received to youth membership _____

Member has _____ has not _____ been baptized.

Member has completed instruction classes _____.

Dated _____

Pastor's signature _____

Appendix D — The Revised Common Lectionary

Online Resources Available

The Consultation on Common Texts

CCT offers printable PDF documents of Years A, B and C of the Revised Common Lectionary.

Visit <https://www.commontexts.org/rcl/download/> to access their printable resources.

The Vanderbilt Divinity Library

Vanderbilt Divinity Library offers weekly lectionary resources, yearly printable PDF documents with links to biblical texts, art resources and calendar options to include the RCL in your Outlook, Google, or Apple iCal applications.

Visit <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/> to access their resources.