



The MEG Board Action Guide

A Quick Reference Guide for the Work of the Acts 12:24 Churches
Board of Ministerial Education and Guidance

*But the word of God **increased** and **multiplied!** Acts 12:24*

Acts1224Churches.com

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Section 1 – Guiding Principles & Administration

What is the MEG?

The ***Board of Ministerial Education and Guidance*** (which our policy documents call the MEG Board) is responsible to see that godly, competent pastors make a maximum impact for the Kingdom of God at the front lines of ministry. The MEG Board also works to care for churches in times of crisis and/or transition. We do that by:

1. Carefully screening potential pastors
2. Developing new pastors (which includes training and credentialing)
3. Matching qualified pastors to existing congregations and new church planting projects
4. Providing care and support to these front-line leaders and local churches
5. Providing guidance to churches and pastors who are in transition

There are **Prerequisites** for each interview type. You can see the Ordination Pathway document to better understand these requirements.

Hearing & Deciding

The process of listening during an interview is three-fold:

1. You listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit
2. You listen to the individual being interviewed
3. You listen to yourself – your own reactions and thoughts

In MEG Board meetings the decision-making process entails reporting your reactions to the interviewee. Once the interviewee is dismissed from the room each MEG member is asked to report their reactions – what did you hear, what did you sense, what do you think. We each listen one another. This is as important as the interview itself. Many times, a MEG member will receive much clarity in what Jesus is saying by listening to the others speak.

From this process we begin to sense where Jesus is leading us. No-one on the MEG is asked to make a case or argue a point. We're not trying to convince other people on the MEG. The goal is to reach a consensus, and the Chair of the meeting has latitude to determine when, to his/her satisfaction, the MEG has reached a clear decision about the interview. If it seems that an additional process is needed before making a decision, the Chair is asked to provide directions as to the next steps that need to be taken.

If there are additional steps that are needed, the MEG Board is to identify what needs to be done (reference checks, follow-up interactions, etc.) and assign responsibility for these tasks.

The Interview “Environment”

The Regional MEG Chair works with the Regional Superintendent to determine the location most convenient for the meeting. It is best to sit around a table for a meeting so that everybody can see each other; we avoid the appearance of putting an individual “in the hot seat.” We don’t place an interviewee at the far end of a table separated from the MEG team. It’s good to have bottled water available on the table. We want to communicate to an interviewee that “we are happy to meet you and we are with you in this effort to see what God is doing.”

The Regional MEG Chair convenes the meeting, welcoming the interviewee, and facilitates introductions. Typically, each MEG member will introduce themselves. When you introduce yourself try to put the interviewee at ease by being warm, real, and personable about your heart for the Lord and his church. This is not the time to recite your degrees and credentials; be careful about playful statements. This is often a first impression setting and a somewhat nervous interviewee may misunderstand your humor. The Regional MEG Chair will give some background on what has led up to the interview to make sure everybody is on the same page.

Be attentive to how you present yourself during the meeting. Leaning back with your arms folded can communicate a judgmental dynamic; a super-serious facial expression or thoughtful scowl may communicate that you’re bothered by the interviewee. Make eye contact without staring intently. Have nonverbals that communicate that you’re listening. I.e., Put a “smile in your eyes” and nod to show that you’re listening and understanding.

Sometimes a MEG member will sense a need to ask a hard question. It might be about a divorce and the interviewee seems hesitant to disclose what happened. Maybe the individual refers to a previous church member or leader in a somewhat critical manner which needs to be challenged. Perhaps the interviewee seems to be glossing over some problematic patterns that are evident in their description of past ministry, and the MEG realizes they need to be sure that there has been growth and change. Or it could be the reality of a past addiction, some time in jail, and so on.

The team should neither avoid tough topics, nor “jump on them.” These should be approached with friendly nonverbals (leaning forward slightly, extending an open hand, making eye contact but not glaring, using a conversational voice) and prefaced with a supportive statement followed by the inquiry.

Here’s an example: “I’m sure it is difficult for you to talk about this, but I want you to understand that we care about you, and we need to understand this issue a bit better. So could you help us out by explaining...”

The work of the MEG Board is confidential. Board members are not permitted to tell others about personal or sensitive information learned regarding interviewees and/or churches. Interviewees need to know that that they can speak openly to the MEG Board without fear that Board members will violate confidentiality.

Processes Before & After the Interview

Pre-Interview Process:

1. The **Regional MEG Chair or Regional Superintendent** become aware of the need for an interview. This may be a new CMC, Ordination, Pastoral Conflict, Exit Interview, or some other situation.
2. The **Regional MEG Chair** gathers the contact information for the interviewee and makes contact and communicates the following to the interviewee:
 - An explanation of the role of the MEG & what to expect in the interview
 - Discuss the options for decisions and the timing after the interview
 - If approved for a new status, attendance at Annual Conference is necessary
3. The **Regional MEG Chair** contacts Regional MEG Board and Regional Superintendent to schedule a meeting, copying Conference MEG Office.
4. The **Regional MEG Chair** gathers, consolidates, & organizes the various forms, emails, & recommendations related to the interview; then distributes them to the Regional MEG and Regional Superintendent.

Post-Interview Process:

1. A member of the **Regional MEG** completes minutes (see the guide to completing MEG Minutes section of this document).
 - a. If any appointment changes occur, the **Regional Superintendent** completes the Appointment & Church Change Form.
2. The **Regional MEG Chair or Regional Superintendent** communicate any outcomes, decisions, action plans, follow ups, or other relevant steps & information to the interviewee.
 - a. This communication should be in person or over the phone, then with a follow-up email sent to the candidate.

Completing Minutes:

The written minutes of meetings of the MEG Board document activity of the MEG Board that impacts the personnel and churches of the conference. Minutes should be succinct, to the point, and absent of information that is not necessary for the formal record of our ministry organization. In general, it is not necessary to describe detailed information that was disclosed to the MEG Board or the details of the discussion that took place. Minutes should simply answer the questions: who, when, where, why, what was decided and what is next.

These should be completed on the Acts 12:24 Churches website, under “MEG Resources”

Background Checks

The Acts 12:24 Churches, in 2018, established a policy to conduct background checks on individuals we are considering for positions of responsibility in our organization. The goal of background checks is to help us document with reasonable certainty that a person has no issues of personal history that would inhibit them from a role of leadership in our network.

We require a background check for potential lay nominees for our MEG and Board of Administration. We require a background check for persons in our pastoral development/ministry deployment process.

Background Check Process:

1. The **Regional MEG Board** approves a pastor for ministry in the Acts 12:24 Churches or determines an interviewee should move forward as a Conference Ministerial Candidate or be received as an Elder by transfer. All people to be appointed in the Acts 12:24 Churches will have a background check completed.
2. The **Conference MEG Office** initiates the background check through our database system.
3. When the **Conference MEG Office** receives notification of the completed background check and reviews results for compliance, the **Conference MEG Office** notifies **Regional MEG Chair** of the determination.
4. If cleared to join Acts 12:24 Churches: **Regional MEG Chair** notifies interviewee of **Regional MEG Board** decision and next steps.
5. If the Background Check documents some matters of concern, these will be addressed with the Interviewee/ Ministerial Candidate according to the Adverse Actions Guidelines maintained in the Conference MEG Office.

Divorce Clearance

Divorce is never part of God's perfect plan. That stated, some marriages, even among followers of Jesus do dissolve. Having experienced a divorce or being married to one who has experienced divorce does not automatically disqualify someone from fruitful ministry; but the brokenness experienced in divorce must be addressed by forgiveness and healing.

Healing can only take place when those who have sinned confess it, ask for forgiveness from those they have harmed, and commit to the hard work of walking in wholeness. The same standard applies to those who have been sinned against in a divorce situation—that they find healing, and that they both offer and experience forgiveness. In the Acts 12:24 Churches we walk through a Divorce Clearance Process with individuals who seek to enter the Conference Ministerial Candidate status or clergy who seek to transfer into the FMC.

Divorce Clearance Process

1. **Regional MEG Chair** notes, based on an application for ministry that a Local Ministerial Candidate, applicant for Conference Ministerial Candidate status or applicant for transfer of clergy credentials from outside of Acts has been divorced and/or is married to a spouse who has been divorced; & notifies the Regional Superintendent that the Divorce Clearance Process must be activated.
2. **Regional Superintendent and Regional MEG Chair** consult to determine who will take the lead on initiating and explaining the Divorce Clearance Process.
3. **Regional Superintendent or Regional MEG Chair** communicates the following to the applicant:
 - The purpose of the divorce clearance is to help the applicant and the MEG mutually understand if there are any unresolved spiritual issues or unhealed personal wounds.
 - The function of a completed Divorce Clearance is to help a pastor to put the past in the past. Once a **Bishop** approves a completed Divorce Clearance, the pastor is not to be subject to scrutiny by local church boards or local church participants over a divorce issue that has been reviewed and declared closed by a FM MEG and Bishop.
 - The applicant will be asked to recommend a **Divorce Clearance Advocate (DCA)** to act as liaison to the MEG. This could be a local ministry mentor, a transferring staff pastors senior pastor, or a conference-level official for transfer candidate for a senior pastor role.
 - The **Regional Superintendent & Regional MEG Chair** will consider the recommended **DCA** and either approve or provide an alternate person for this role.
 - The candidate/spouse will unpack the story of the marriage and divorce with the **DCA**, using the DCA Interview Guide and submit summarized answers to the Regional MEG Chair.
 - The candidate/spouse should complete Questionnaire A, B, or C based on the Divorce Clearance Checklist.
 - The candidate may submit a written response to any concerns as well as any information they wish to share directly in their own words with the MEG.
4. The **Regional MEG** will review the DCA's Interview Answers, the candidate/spouse's written responses, and any other properly submitted reports to determine the following:
 - Has the one who experienced divorce gained an awareness of personal responsibility?
 - Has the divorcee received God's grace for healing and transformation?
 - Does the applicant's current marriage appear to be healthy?
 - Are the current viewpoints on marriage and divorce in line with biblical guidance?

5. ***If there are no hesitations***, the **Regional MEG** would vote to recommend authorization of the Divorce Clearance.
 - a. ***If the MEG (or Bishop) does not believe Divorce Clearance is appropriate***, they should articulate the reasons why in written form. If the reasons are determined by the MEG to be insurmountable, they will out-counsel the applicant from the pastoral development process. If the impediments to the Divorce Clearance can potentially be resolved, the MEG should communicate this in written form and meet with the candidate/spouse and DCA to discuss the decision.
6. ***The MEG has full discretion*** to conclude the Divorce Clearance process by out-counseling the applicant.
7. The work of the DCA and the written responses of the applicant/spouse ***must be received no later than 60 days before the next Annual Conference*** in order to be considered for action at that Annual Conference.
8. The **Regional MEG Chair** will send all applicable documents, including DCA's Letter, FMC Divorce Clearance Form, any written responses from the candidate/spouse, and minutes from the Regional MEG meeting recommending the divorce clearance be authorized and approved to the presiding Bishop.
9. The **Bishop's Office** will notify the Conference MEG of the decision and the **Conference MEG** will forward this information to the **Regional MEG Chair**.
10. The **Regional MEG Chair** or **Regional Superintendent** will notify the candidate of the decision.

Confidentiality

The work of the Acts 12:24 Churches Ministerial Education and Guidance Board is highly confidential and that failure to recognize this may result in harm to those whom we seek to serve.

Therefore, we pledge ourselves to hold in strict confidence, both now and in the future, all information, written or spoken, which comes to us as members of the Acts 12:24 Churches Ministerial Education and Guidance Board.

This pledge refers to specific information relating to individuals, churches, or ministry organizations that we receive in interviews, meetings, or other communications. Any discussion of this confidential information outside of MEG-related duties is a violation of confidence.

We understand that this also covers unnecessary discussion with MEG Board members or other leaders in the Acts 12:24 Churches, and any discussion with personal acquaintances or family in private, semi-private, or public settings.

Section 2—Interviews

Types of Interviews

1. Approval for Ministry Interviews: Determine if an individual who is not currently appointed (or is currently appointed as an interim pastor) in the Acts 12:24 Churches demonstrates the call of God and the capacity to serve in a pastoral role in our network.
2. New Conference Ministerial Candidate Interviews: Determine if a person who is interested in entering the **Acts 12:24 Churches Pathway to Ordained Elder**. Typically, these interviews are an hour in length, with the MEG taking an additional 15 minutes to debrief and make a decision afterward.
3. Pastoral Transfer Interviews: Determine if an already credentialed pastor may serve in our network **AND** whether to accept her/his credentials as presented. The MEG may stipulate additional requirements to be met prior to authorizing the transfer of a credential.
4. Elder Ordination Interviews: Conducted at the conclusion of the **Acts 12:24 Churches Pathway to Ordained Elder** and provides the MEG Board an opportunity to discern if a Conference Ministerial Candidate is ready to be deployed as an ordained Elder in the Free Methodist Church.
5. Appointment Interviews: As a part of the appointment process, the Regional MEG will interview several candidates for appointment as a Lead Pastor at a local church. The Regional MEG will select **one**, and only one, candidate for the Regional Superintendent to bring to the local church for the next step in the **Acts 12:24 Churches Modified Appointment System**.
6. How are You Doing? Interviews: These are a supportive conversation with an appointed pastor (and often spouse). The purpose of this conversation is to reassure a pastor that she/he has the support of regional leaders and helps the Regional MEG to maintain a first-hand awareness of the experiences and needs of pastors. Each appointed pastor is to be invited in for a How are You Doing? Interview at least once every three years. Typically, these provide 30 minutes for the pastor to share, and 10 minutes to pray for the pastor/spouse.
7. Exit Interviews: When a **Lead Pastor** will not be continuing in the previously appointed role of local church ministry, the Exit Interview helps the Regional MEG gain a full understanding of the reasons for the transition and to help the pastor develop a helpful plan for the next steps.
 - When a **Staff Pastor** concludes at a local church: once the decision is made, but **before** it is implemented, the MEG Board will conduct an Exit Interview with that Staff Pastor. The **Regional MEG** removes this person from their role, not the local church. This interview helps the Staff Pastor transition and begin to develop a plan for their next steps in ministry.

Note There are times that the MEG Board will need to intervene in difficult situations. Some examples of needs for intervention by the MEG Board include moral failure or other misconduct by a pastor, conflict between pastors or between a pastor and the church's Board of Administration, mental health issues for the pastor or within the pastor's family, or breakdown of a pastor's marriage.

Types of Questions

While there are certain interview topics where it is necessary to ask “what do you think?” or “what do you believe?” or even “yes or no” questions, you will learn the most about an interviewee by asking behavioral questions. Here is a comparison between non-behavioral and behavioral questions:

Non-behavioral Questions

1. What do you think is the best way to deal with destructive conflict in the church?
2. How do you lead people to Christ?
3. How is your marriage doing?
4. Does your spouse support your ministry?
5. Do you have regular personal devotions?

Behavioral Questions

1. Can you tell us about a time when you were involved in a church conflict? What did you do? What did you learn?
2. Tell us about the last person who came to Christ through your ministry. Describe what took place.
3. Give us some examples of what you do to maintain a healthy marriage.
4. What specific statements has your spouse made recently about this ministry opportunity?
5. Describe your devotions yesterday and today. What did you do for devotions? How did your time alone with God impact you?

MEG Boards are called to discern the substance of the demonstrated character and capacity of potential pastors and CMCs. Here are some question categories and sample questions that can be a resource to the MEG Board. **The goal is not to ask every question**—rather it is to ask sufficient questions to come to an understanding of how to guide this individual and what to decide about their journey in ministry.

Personal Motivation

1. In what ways have you attempted to make yourself more effective in your job or ministry?
2. Describe your most important accomplishments. How did you go about reaching your goals?
3. Describe your ideal work or ministry assignment. Tell me about the time you came closest to having this kind of assignment and what you found rewarding about it.

Building Body Cohesiveness

1. Describe a time when members of your church were divided over an important issue. What did you do to resolve the conflict?
2. How do you establish a group identity among your people?
3. Describe the steps you take to get a group to work cohesively. Give me an example of that.

Relationship Building

1. To what extent are you the initiator in developing relationships? Tell me about the last relationship you built.
2. How do you help others to develop relationships?
3. Tell me about a relationship you salvaged after a conflict or falling out with a person.

Commitment to Church Growth

1. Articulate your philosophy of church growth and how you have implemented that philosophy.
2. Tell me about a time when you were unsuccessful in applying church growth principles. What did you learn from the experience, and how did you benefit from your learning in a later effort?
3. What training have you provided other people interested in church growth?

Denominational Distinctives

1. What is it about Wesleyan theology that draws you to the Free Methodist Church?
2. Tell us how you would answer a question like, “are women allowed to be pastors?”
3. Ordained Elders are called to go wherever God sends them and serve wherever God calls them. What are your thoughts about the possibility of relocating? (If married): How do you think your spouse would respond to this? (If a parent): How do you think your children would respond to this?
4. Tell us what you know about Acts 12:24 Churches. What is your understanding of who we are?

Family relationships

1. How do you and your spouse prioritize your marriage above the ministry work?
2. What do you do to stay in love with your spouse?
3. How do you lead your children toward Jesus? Parents? Siblings?

Personal care

1. How do you plan for personal devotion time with Jesus?
2. How do you care for your physical and mental needs?

Future Ministry Planning

1. How do you plan a preaching schedule?
2. When approached about starting a new ministry, how do you discern if it is right for the church?
3. How do you cultivate giftedness in others?

Vision Casting Capacity

1. When was an important time you created an opportunity out of an obstacle? How did you create that opportunity?
2. When were you successful in selling a concept to people who initially opposed you? How did you convince them?
3. Describe a situation that was stagnant or failing, and how you stepped in to revitalize it.

Responsiveness to Community

1. How do you put your fingers on the pulse and culture of a community surrounding your church?
2. How have you ministered in ways that improve the quality of life in your community?
3. How have you shifted church priorities to be responsive to needs in the local community?

Communication Skills

1. What critical feedback have you received on your ability to speak in public?
2. Describe your public speaking style.
3. How have you modified your speaking to be more effective?

Gift Utilization

1. How do you help lay people discover their spiritual gifts?
2. What process do you use to match individuals with ministry opportunities?
3. How do you cultivate giftedness in others?

Creating Ownership of Ministry

1. How do you typically give ministry away?
2. What steps have you taken to ensure that your ministry would flourish in your absence?
3. Describe someone you developed who is now reproducing other disciples. How did you develop that person and what kind of results is he or she having?

Flexibility

1. Describe a situation in which you coped with ambiguity while adhering to a theoretical framework.
2. Tell me about a demanding period in your life. How did you manage multiple demands upon you?
3. How do you see that your work gets completed when it is disrupted by emergencies or other unforeseen circumstances?

Demonstrating Strong Christian Faith

1. Describe your most serious compromise on your Christian convictions and principles.
2. What examples of demonstrating Christian faith in your personal life could you share with others who struggle with faith issues?
3. In what ways is it costly because of your convictions?

Developing Faith Formation

1. How do you develop faith formation in other people?
2. How do you help people integrate theological truths into personal lifestyle practices?
3. Describe how you discipled someone on a one-to-one basic.

Some Important Ordination Interview Categories:

- Wesleyan Theology
- Women in Lead Pastoral Roles
- Doctrinal Differences from the FMC
- Perspectives on Church Planting
- Personal Devotional and Prayer Formation
- Ability to Articulate the Gospel
- Ministry & Preaching Planning Processes

Some Important CMC Interview Categories:

- Personal Spiritual Formation
- Submission to Authority/Systems
- Marriage & Family Health
- Dealing with Conflict
- Connection with Other Pastors (FM District & Non-FM Community)
- Understanding How to Deal with Conflict in the Church