

# Chapter 4

## General Administration

### General Conference

#### Free Methodist Church of North America

##### Preamble

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

##### Purpose

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- A. The general conference shall have general organizational, legislative, judicial, promotional and supervisory powers over the activities of the church. It shall have power to determine the number of its officers, their qualifications for office and the manner of their selection.
- B. The general conference is the primary legislative body in the church. It shall have full power to make rules and regulations for the church, under the limitations and restrictions described in ¶225-228. *Robert's Rules of Order* in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure in the general conference sessions.
- C. It is the inalienable right of any annual conference, society or individual member of the Free Methodist Church to submit protests, petitions or resolutions to

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Bold paragraph numbers and section letters indicate those items which may be changed by the board of administration. All others may only be changed by the general conference.

the general conference and to have them fully heard. Such papers must be introduced by a member of the general conference and be subject to the rules of that body.

### **Composition**

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

### **Ministerial Delegates**

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- A. Each annual conference and provisional annual conference shall be entitled to one ministerial delegate in the general conference, and whenever an annual conference shall reach an aggregate of eight hundred full lay members, it shall be entitled to two ministerial delegates, and to an additional ministerial delegate for every subsequent six hundred full lay members, provided, however, that in no case shall a person be counted more than once in the election of delegates.
- B. The ministerial delegates shall be elected by the ministers of the provisional annual or annual conference by ballot. Delegates may be nominated by the nominating committee if the annual conference so chooses, not precluding nominations from the floor. They shall present at least two nominations for each ministerial position. Using the nominees, both delegates and reserve delegates shall be elected by ballot. Candidates shall be elders and at the time of their election, as also at the time of the general conference, shall be members of the annual conference that elected them. When a ministerial delegate leaves the conference from which he/she is elected prior to the time of the general conference by accepting an appointment to serve another

conference, he/she shall be automatically disqualified as a delegate.

- C. Ministerial delegates and reserve ministerial delegates shall be elected by separate ballot and each shall require a majority vote of those present and voting. In emergencies where neither elected nor reserve delegates can serve in this capacity, the board of administration (or its equivalent) of that annual conference shall have the authority to elect by majority vote the additional reserve delegates to serve.

### **Lay Delegates**

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

## **Delegate Credentials**

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

## **Time and Place**

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- A. The general conference shall meet every four years at the time and place determined by the general conference (see ¶4200.N).
- B. The bishop(s), or if there be none, the secretary of the general conference shall, whenever two thirds of the annual conferences shall demand it, call an extra session of the general conference, fixing the date and the time of assembling later than the next ensuing session of each of the annual conferences.
- C. The determination of the location for the subsequent general conference shall be considered prior to final adjournment of a regular general conference session, with careful consideration given to the use of Free Methodist facilities.
- D. The Friday preceding every general conference shall be observed as a day of fasting and prayer.

## **Organizing Principles**

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- A. The bishops shall preside at the sittings of the general conference in such order as they may determine. If no

bishop is present, the general conference shall elect by ballot an elder to preside.

- B. The general conference secretary (previously elected by the board of administration) shall continue in office until a successor is named and shall be custodian of the general conference records and journals. A record of conscientious objectors shall be kept as reported by the annual conference secretaries (see ¶3470.B, ¶5120.B.8).
- C. At all times when general conference is in session, two-thirds of all the delegates elected by the annual conferences shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The general conference may adjourn from time to time until a quorum is present.
- D. The members of the general conference shall deliberate and vote as one body; nevertheless, upon the call of one-fourth of the members present and voting, the house shall divide; and it shall require a majority of the ministerial and of the lay delegates to pass any vote or transact any business.

## Bishops

¶4100 Each bishop shall be amenable to the general conference for the discharge of his/her official duties and shall be responsible for his/her conduct to the annual conference to which he/she belongs.

### The Nomination and Election of Bishops

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- A. The general conference shall elect by ballot two or more traveling elders as bishops to serve as the pastoral overseers of various areas of the denomination who shall constitute the Board of Bishops. These are to be persons who exhibit exemplary character and leadership qualities, and who embody deep commitment to the mission, doctrine and theology of the Free Methodist Church. They shall remain in office for the years of the

interim between general conferences and, unless the general conference decides upon a lesser number of bishops, until others shall be elected in their places.

- B. In preparation for the election of bishops, each annual conference's newly elected general conference delegation may submit a maximum of two nominees. Due attention shall be given to the nomination of persons having qualifications equal to or exceeding those for conference superintendents (see ¶5110.B); as well as to ethnic, gender, cultural and geographical considerations. A one-page biographical sketch and rationale for each nominee shall be submitted to the general conference secretary no later than sixty days prior to the opening of general conference. The general conference secretary shall compile the nominee information in standardized format and distribute, by paper or electronic means, to all delegates no later than thirty days prior to the opening of general conference. The first ballot for election of bishops shall consist of the names of these nominees and the incumbent bishops.
  
- C. In the event of a vacancy on the Board of Bishops during the interim between sessions of the general conference, the preceding general conference shall fill the vacancy with an election held by paper or electronic ballot. Existing rules for the election of bishops by the general conference shall apply.

### **The Role of a Bishop: Conceptual**

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- A. All elders have responsibilities in Word, sacrament and order. Bishops are elders who are called to be pastors of the church at large. As such, for the health of the church, their duties in each of these areas are expanded by the responsibility of general oversight.
  
- B. Word. The task of the Word applies to the bishop in two regards, to teach the apostolic gospel and to protect the church from error. The first concerns such things as

preaching, making official statements to the church and the public at large, overseeing the preparation of tools for evangelism and discipleship and training for the ordained ministry. The second refers to the protection of the church from heresy or from trends that obscure the Gospel. Thus the bishop must be theologically orthodox and an able preacher of the gospel.

- C. **Sacrament.** In worship the church gives praise to God, pleads with Him for mercy and receives the grace God mediates to His people. The bishop leads the church in its adoration and petition of God and in upholding the sacredness of the Lord's Supper and baptism as a means of grace. We extend the sacramental scope of the bishop's tasks to deep personal piety and intercession for the church and the world. Thus, bishops must be persons whose souls are nourished by public and private devotion and who can lead congregations into the renewing presence of Almighty God.
- D. **Order.** Bishops lead the church by articulating its vision. Thus, bishops must have a deep commitment to the church's mission, insight into the complexities of human nature and skill at guiding others. As apostolic leaders of the church-at-large, bishops give oversight to the pastoral care of each local church. They oversee the ordained ministry. 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. This enables the general ministry of the church to practice the Great Commandment and fulfill the Great Commission. Bishops, together with superintendents, give oversight to the ordained ministry through appointment, guidance and discipline.

### **The Role of a Bishop: Practical**

¶4130 In each generation and culture, the applications of foundational concepts may vary. To assist the bishops in directing the church, these practical leadership priorities are set forth.

- A. Regarding Self and Family, the bishop shall:
  - 1. feed his/her soul (heart, mind, spirit), diligently attending to the means of grace;
  - 2. love his/her spouse and family, maintaining a household of faith; and
  - 3. fulfill his/her vows as a baptized disciple and elder called to leadership.
  
- B. Regarding the Church at Large, the bishop shall:
  - 1. multiply godly, competent leaders, who disciple and equip others; and
  - 2. encourage every church to be a healthy church with Spirit-filled leaders, working a plan to fulfill the biblical mission (our Expected Outcomes).
  
- C. Regarding Annual Conferences. Accepting mutual responsibility for the mission to make Christ known and to develop whole people through forgiveness and holiness, the bishop shall:
  - 1. ordain those called to and approved for Elder's Orders;
  - 2. teach and guide regarding denominational priorities;
  - 3. oversee the organizational health of the annual conference, as the conference president; and
  - 4. disciple each superintendent to:
    - a. identify, recruit, equip, deploy and encourage godly, competent leaders by:
      - 1. encouraging faith-driven ministry;
      - 2. guiding leaders to be wise innovators;
      - 3. facilitating change so that healthy process is the norm; and
      - 4. supporting godly, competent risk-takers.
    - b. encourage and equip conference leaders in crucial priorities, such as:
      - 1. convert and membership growth;
      - 2. making disciples who make disciples;
      - 3. networking;

4. church planting;
  5. cell-based ministries; and
  6. Free Methodist missionary enterprises.
- c. influence all churches to be Wesleyan in:
1. ethos (see *Distinctive Principles*, pages 6-8);
  2. doctrine (see *Articles of Religion*, ¶101-130); and
  3. practice (see *The Christian Journey*, ¶3000-3470).
- D. Regarding Local Churches. In partnership with superintendents and others the bishop shall develop and nurture Spirit-filled leaders, who equip believers to minister, resulting in a healthy biblical community of holy people multiplying disciples, leaders, groups and churches.

### **Additional Duties of Bishops**

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- A. Each bishop shall:
1. assist superintendents in personal and professional development through periodic training, giving special training for newly elected superintendents;
  2. serve as chair of the ministerial appointments committees of his/her assigned area (see ¶5220);
  3. transfer a minister from one conference to another with the consent of the minister and of the conference to which transferred, provided that no minister shall be transferred to another conference without a certificate of good standing and general acceptability, given by the ministerial education and guidance board or the annual conference;
  4. cite a conference appointee to show cause (see ¶7120 and ¶7220);
  5. suspend conference appointees (see ¶7170);
  6. form new annual conferences in the interim between general conferences, as the needs of the work demand, subject to the approval of the gen-

eral conference. No new conference shall be formed without the consent of the conferences whose territory is affected, nor without the consent of two-thirds of the members of the board of administration. No new conference shall be organized with less than ten ministers in full membership and six hundred lay members within its bounds, with exceptions to be approved by the board of administration upon recommendation of the Board of Bishops. In the event an annual conference no longer meets these minimum standards, the area bishop, in consultation with conference board of administration and the Board of Bishops, shall submit recommendations for change to the board of administration; and

7. assist the area fellowships or the approved equivalent group in the development of national leadership to achieve the disciplinary standards for new general conferences.
  8. decide all questions of law at annual conferences, subject to an appeal to the general conference. A bishop's decision upon a point of law arising in annual conference session shall be the rule until reversed by the general conference. Also, when a bishop is requested by an annual conference of which he/she is president to rule upon a point of law not arising in conference proceedings, the request shall be in writing giving full explanation of the circumstances, including statements by the opposition, if there be any. The bishop, upon ruling, shall immediately appeal to the other bishops, and with the agreement of the majority of the bishops in writing, the ruling shall be binding, until reversed by the general conference. All documents shall be presented, along with the ruling, for the review of the general conference.
- B. Nothing in ¶4140.A.6 shall prevent the organization of annual conferences of mission origin out of provisional annual conferences, the areas of which may extend over the boundaries of other conferences, when such other

conferences have approved and all other requirements for annual conference status have been met. For a provisional annual conference of mission origin to become an annual conference, there must be no less than five national elders and four hundred adult lay members.

### **Retirement of Bishops**

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- A. A bishop shall retire:
  - 1. at the time of the general conference following his/her sixty-eighth birthday;
  - 2. following his/her sixty-second birthday if the bishop so chooses; or
  - 3. at any time because of failing health. Disability status shall be determined by the board of administration upon recommendation from either the human resources department or the board of administration benefits committee, based upon medical evidence.
- B. When a bishop, or former bishop, retires he/she shall be given the title of bishop emeritus provided he/she has served the church as bishop for a minimum of six years.

### **Board of Bishops**

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The Board of Bishops shall:

- A. practice healthy biblical community as a board by speaking the truth in love;
- B. organize as a board to oversee all conferences, presiding at the general and annual conference meetings;
- C. assign themselves to the several areas and arrange conference schedules so that no annual conference has a non-bishop presiding officer for two successive years;
- D. receive from the presiding officer of an annual conference a comprehensive written report of all the administrative proceedings which arose in the conference;

- E. administer the annual conferences of mission origin of the North American General Conference. The bishop, in consultation with the conferences and the area director, shall designate the presiding officer for the conference; and
- F. have authority to initiate and recommend corrective measures to the general board of administration and the affected conference, when a conference falls below six hundred lay members, has less than ten ministers in full membership, or shows continuous loss.

## **Board of Administration**

### **The Nomination and Election of the Board of Administration**

¶4300

- A. The general conference shall elect a board of administration, determine its powers, and prescribe the qualifications of its members and manner of their selection. The board shall be comprised of:
  - 1. all the U.S. bishops;
  - 2. sufficient additional elders to give a total of twelve clergy (equal representation from each U.S. bishop's area);
  - 3. twelve lay members (equal representation from each U.S. bishop's area);
  - 4. two representatives (two elder and two lay members in rotation) from conferences of mission origin; and
  - 5. honorary members to include president of Women's Ministries International, executive director of Men's Ministries International, president of Association of Human Services Ministries, president of Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions, president of Free Methodist Foundation and denominational executive directors.
- B. Each annual conference may, if it desires, submit up to two clergy and two lay nominees for election to the

board of administration. Such a nominee shall:

1. be widely known in the community, church and conference as a follower of Christ in word, attitude and deed;
  2. have demonstrated keen interest in the mission of the Free Methodist Church;
  3. have served on at least one local church and one conference board;
  4. have served, or be serving, as a delegate to annual conference, or be an ordained elder in the conference;
  5. have demonstrated strong ability to engage in dialog and listen reflectively; and
  6. have demonstrated commitment to attend and positively participate in scheduled meetings.
- C. Submission of such nominees must be completed no later than sixty days prior to the general conference, and must be submitted on the provided nomination form, including biographical data. A one-paragraph introduction from the conference may be attached to the nominating form.

Nomination forms from each bishop's area will be sent to the general conference delegates from that area no later than thirty days prior to the general conference. The forms will also be distributed prior to balloting for election of the board of administration.

The delegates from each bishop's area will meet during general conference for the purpose of nominating its representatives to the next board of administration. During that meeting, the nomination forms will be distributed, and each nominee will be introduced by the area bishop. The general conference delegates from each bishop's area shall select their nominees by ballot from the nominee slate and present them to the general conference for election to the board of administration.

A maximum of one lay member and one elder may be elected from a given annual conference. A majority of the board of administration members shall be delegates to the general conference electing them.

## Organization

### ¶4310

- A. The board of administration shall meet immediately at the close of the general conference to organize itself by electing a chair, vice chair and the nominating committee, from its membership.

The outgoing board of administration members present at general conference shall caucus to nominate the chair and vice chair of the new board of administration. The chair and vice chair of the outgoing board of administration shall absent themselves from the meeting which, shall be convened and chaired by the chair of the Board of Bishops.

- B. A nominating committee of not less than six persons, including two bishops and consisting of equal lay and clergy representation shall be elected by the board of administration to subsequently nominate the members and chairs of the committees and task forces of the board. In the selection process, sensitivity to regional, ethnic and gender diversity should be demonstrated.
- C. The nominating committee shall nominate a secretary of the general conference from outside the membership of the board of administration, who shall also serve as the secretary of the board. The board shall elect the secretary, who shall serve with voice but no vote, unless his/her vote is needed to establish lay-clergy balance.
- D. It shall be the secretary's duty to make a full report of the proceedings of the board of administration to the general conference.
- E. The board of administration may employ a general

church secretary as a denominational executive who shall then assume all the responsibilities and authority of the secretary of the general conference and other duties as may be assigned by the board.

- F. Termination of membership in the Free Methodist Church shall automatically terminate membership on the board of administration.
- G. No general conference officer other than the bishops and the secretary may be a member of the board of administration.
- H. The board shall assign its work to committees and boards as it shall determine and may elect an executive committee. The board may determine the rules and regulations for the conduct of its business.

### **Authority and Responsibilities**

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- A. The board of administration shall have general organizational, promotional, policy making and supervisory powers over all the activities of the church during the interim between general conference sessions.
- B. It shall meet at least annually and whenever the bishops or one-third of the members shall deem it necessary.
- C. A majority of the members elected shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.
- D. Each member of the board of administration owes primary duty to the board and secondary duty to the committees to which he/she has been elected.
- E. The board of administration shall have power to accept resignations, fill vacancies and remove for cause any of its members during the interim between general conference sessions, subject to the provisions of the *Book of Discipline*.

- F. The board of administration shall elect the board of directors of The Free Methodist Foundation. The board of directors of the foundation may suggest names to the nominating committee of the board of administration.
- G. The board of administration shall set the salaries of the bishops and the executive directors, considering the recommendations from the budget and finance committee.
- H. World Ministries Center Personnel
  1. The Board of Bishops may designate one of its members to serve as the World Ministries Center overseer and as chair of the operating committee. This person will give general oversight to the World Ministries Center and other responsibilities as assigned by the board of administration, and shall report to the board.
  2. The board of administration may employ a World Ministries Center administrator upon nomination by the Board of Bishops or, in consultation with the Board of Bishops, assign to an existing executive director the responsibility of administering the World Ministries Center.
  3. The board of administration shall have power to employ suitable personnel in the leadership of the various church ministries and may delegate this responsibility to the Board of Bishops. Executive directors and other personnel employed by the church shall work under the supervision of the World Ministries Center overseer. Each shall make a report to the board of administration as to his/her official duties and shall meet with the appropriate committees of the board of administration.
- I. The Executive Director of Administration and Finance shall serve as the general church treasurer to administer the finances of the church. This person shall be bonded.

J. Financial Reporting

1. The board of administration shall employ a certified public accountant firm to audit annually the accounts of the general church. The auditor will make an annual report in writing to the board of administration with recommendations, if any.
2. The proper officers shall publish in the *Yearbook* annually full and detailed statements of the assets, liabilities, net worth and financial standing of the general church and its corporations.
3. Women's Ministries International and Men's Ministries International auxiliaries shall make and file annually their financial statements with the secretary of the board of administration.

K. The board of administration shall be the Board of Directors of the Free Methodist Publishing House.

L. The board of administration shall oversee all church property (see ¶6400).

M. Legal Matters

1. The board of administration shall, if needed, elect a court of appeals, whose decision shall be final. Should any member of this court be absent or disqualified to sit, the place shall be temporarily filled by the board of administration from its members. If a member is disqualified, a replacement from a list of members of the church-at-large, approved by counsel for both sides, shall be selected. No appeal shall be heard except before a full court. The court of appeals shall, if necessary, hold a session once a year, for the purpose of trying all appeals by any ordained minister who is a member of an annual conference. The chair of the board of administration shall ordinarily preside over the court. If the chair is absent or disqualified, the board shall elect another of its members to preside.
2. The board of administration shall have the power

to decide all legal matters referred to it during the interim of general conferences.

3. The board of administration shall, as needed, elect a board of industrial relations. This board shall receive all questions, communications, and papers relating to labor unions or membership in them. This board shall, wherever practicable, constitute a collective bargaining agency on behalf of the members of the church.

N. The board of administration shall have the power to change the time and place for the meeting of the general conference. It shall make appropriate arrangements for the general conference.

O. Conference Boundaries

1. Any question of conference boundaries that may arise in the interim between general conferences shall be referred to the board of administration.
2. The board of administration may prepare proposals to merge two or more conferences or otherwise revise existing conference boundaries and recommend such proposals to the conferences involved and to the area bishop. Changes will be made upon the majority vote of the annual conferences concerned and with the consent of a majority of the board of administration. In the event that the proposal is rejected, a written rationale for the rejection shall be submitted to the board of administration by the conferences. The board of administration shall have authority to revise the proposal if it deems it wise and resubmit it to the conferences. The board of administration may send representatives to the conferences to make a full explanation.
3. Conferences considering merger or the revision of their boundaries (except as provided in ¶6850) may initiate discussions with their concerned neighbors, keeping the area bishop informed. The bishop shall inform the board of administration which may convey its thinking to the conferences through the area bishop if it so

desires. Approval requires a majority vote of the annual conferences involved, voting separately, and a majority vote of the board of administration.

**P. Christian Schools**

1. The Free Methodist Church of North America shall encourage and promote the establishing of Christian day schools (see ¶5270 and ¶6340). It shall make available to local churches and annual conferences information concerning existing Christian elementary and preschools.
2. It is recommended that such schools be designated Light and Life Christian Schools.

- Q.** The members of the Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church of North America, elected by the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America, shall constitute the members of the Free Methodist Church of North America Corporation (see ¶9100).

## **Finance and Pension**

### **Budget and Finance Committee**

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- A. The board of administration shall elect a budget and finance committee of five members. All members, including the chair, shall be elected with nominations from the nominating committee. The World Ministries Center overseer and the general church treasurer shall be ex-officio members of the committee.
- B. Terms of service shall be for the interim of general conferences.
- C. In consultation with the executive director of administration and finance, the budget and finance committee will:
  1. recommend policy to assure good stewardship of

- church financial assets, assure appropriate levels of financial performance and debt levels, maintain appropriate financial flexibility, select investment managers, negotiate fees and review performance and assure proper accounting and reporting of all church financial records;
2. recommend to the board of administration compensation levels for the bishops and executive staff;
  3. provide a careful review and recommend to the board of administration the operating budgets of United Ministries for Christ - Home Ministries, and United Ministries for Christ - World Missions;
  4. serve as the audit review committee; and
  5. develop and recommend to the board of administration the funding model for Home Ministries' support.

### **United Ministries for Christ**

¶4360

- A. United Ministries for Christ is the approved system for funding of all ministries of the general church.
- B. The portion of United Ministries for Christ that pertains to world missions shall be funded by methods and programs devised by the Missions Executive Leadership Team, in consultation with the missions committee, and approved by the board of administration.
- C. All other general church ministries, including their administrative costs, shall be funded as determined by the board of administration upon recommendation of the budget and finance committee.
- D. The board of administration may approve projects for promotion that are not included in the United Ministries for Christ budget. The board of administration shall develop guidelines for defining, approving, promoting and administering such projects.
- E. Approved projects outside of United Ministries for

Christ may be made available to individuals, groups, and organizations outside the Free Methodist Church.

- F. Contributions received at the World Ministries Center shall be applied to United Ministries for Christ - Home Ministries budget unless specifically designated otherwise by the donor.
- G. John Wesley Seminary shall be supported by general funds, special appropriations and solicitations consistent with United Ministries for Christ and approved by the board of administration.
- H. The proposed budget of each general church ministry shall be prepared annually by the appropriate executive director, reviewed and approved by the operating committee and presented to the budget and finance committee. The recommended budget shall be submitted by the budget and finance committee to the board of administration for approval each year.

### **Social Security**

¶4370

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

### **Pension Plan**

¶4380

- A. The board of administration by authorization of the 1964 General Conference has established a defined contribution pension plan which became effective January 1, 1969 and covers ministers, general officers and other persons as described in the pension plan. On January 1,

1981 a defined benefit pension plan was added.

- B. The pension plan was created for the exclusive benefit of employees of the employer and their beneficiaries and shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with its being a qualified pension plan as defined in section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as the same may be amended from time to time.
- C. The trustees of the pension plans shall be the Board of Directors of the Free Methodist Church of North America, who shall be responsible for seeing that the plans are administered in accordance with the plan documents.
- D. The pension plans shall be administered by the board of administration serving as the pension board, in accordance with the rules and regulations of the plans. The details of this administrative responsibility may be delegated to a benefits committee that is elected from nominations from the nominating committee by the board of administration.
- E. If established, the benefits committee make recommendations concerning the administration of the plans, and shall regularly review the plans and their administration for needed clarification, procedural adjustments or amendments. The benefits committee's work is subject to the approval of the board of administration.
- F. Benefits Committee. The benefits committee shall:
  - 1. administer and monitor the Free Methodist Church of North America Defined Benefit and Defined Contribution pension plans in a manner consistent with the definition of a qualified pension plan in section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 as amended. The pension plans may be amended by the general conference or the board of administration. The text of such amendments shall be communicated to the participants of the plans in writ-

- ing. No amendment shall abridge or annul the rights of members in respect to their accumulations as of the date of the adoption of such amendment.
2. administer an overall policy regarding enrollments, contributions and retirement benefits that will ensure that all appropriate personnel receive a benefit;
  3. regularly review the plans' provisions and provide clarification, adjustments or amendments;
  4. receive and review annually the plans' audit and valuation for any possible benefit improvements;
  5. periodically meet with the plan actuary to review the plans' financial profile related to current and future plan participants and refer participants' issues to legal counsel when appropriate;
  6. periodically meet with the Free Methodist Foundation to receive and review reports of the plans' investment performance and fee structure;
  7. communicate with the plans' participants on a regular basis regarding plan changes and accrued benefits, and in conjunction with the Free Methodist Foundation, provide retirement financial planning;
  8. provide any necessary reports and recommendations for the plans to the board of administration which has ultimate responsibility for the plans' administration; and
  9. work with the administration of the World Ministries Center on benefit issues that are outside of the retirement plans.
- G. Each United States church shall contribute to the support of the defined benefit pension plan in accordance with the rules and regulations of the plan. The contribution paid by the church shall be in addition to the pastor's earnings, not a deduction from them.
- H. Any qualifying person serving a Free Methodist Church in another country shall be granted a leave of absence and shall not forfeit any pension benefits which have accrued.

- I. No participant in the pension plans shall have any right to assign, alienate, anticipate or commute any payments from the plans; and, except as otherwise prescribed by law, no payment shall be subject to the debts, contracts or engagements of any payee, nor to any judicial process to levy upon or attach the same for the payment thereof.

## **Free Methodist Communications**

### **¶4400**

- A. The purpose of Free Methodist Communications is to communicate the vision and core values of the Free Methodist Church to its constituents and to the world-at-large.
- B. Free Methodist Communications includes the Free Methodist Publishing House (Light and Life Communications), a corporation established by the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America. The Free Methodist Publishing House is incorporated under the laws of the state of Illinois, with headquarters at Indianapolis, Indiana, and is the denomination's official publishing agency. The Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church of North America constitutes the corporate membership of the Free Methodist Publishing House.

## **Communications Committee**

### **¶4410**

- A. The board of administration shall elect a communications committee, including the chair, with nominations from the nominating committee. The terms of service shall be for the interim of general conference.
- B. In consultation with the executive director of Free Methodist Communications, the communications committee shall:
  1. recommend policy regarding communications to the board of administration, assuring effective com-

- munications among church leadership, pastors, staff, and members; promotion of the Church at large; and doctrinal integrity in church publications;
2. recommend the Free Methodist Communications budget to the budget and finance committee of the board of administration;
  3. recommend communications vision and strategy; and
  4. review the performance of the sales of Free Methodist Communications.
- C. The Board of Bishops will consult with the chair of the communications committee and the chair of the board of administration regarding the board of bishops' recommendations in the selection and/or termination of the executive director.

## Free Methodist World Missions

¶4500 The Free Methodist Church accepts responsibility to obey the Great Commission of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). Missionaries are sent into all the world to evangelize and make disciples, to build them together in His church (1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:20-22), and to engage in ministries of compassion and human development in the name of Christ. Free Methodist World Missions shall carry the gospel into areas where no Free Methodist ministry exists and serve in partnership with the national church in evangelization and church planting.

### General Missionary Board

¶4510

- A. The board of administration shall constitute the General Missionary Board of the Free Methodist Church of North America, which has authority over world missions functions. The general missionary board is incorporated and is used for special financial transactions for Free Methodist World Missions.

- B. The objectives for which this corporation is formed are:
  - 1. to receive, hold, pay out or dispose of any property, of whatever nature and situation as allowed by law, that may be obtained in aid of the general missionary work of the Free Methodist Church; and
  - 2. to acquire real estate or personal property and to hold or sell or convey the same as in its judgment may be necessary in the prosecution of its missionary work.

### **Missions Committee**

¶4520

- A. The board of administration shall elect a missions committee of up to twelve members. All members, including the chair, shall be elected with nominations from the nominating committee. The Canadian General Conference shall have a representative on the missions committee. Terms of service shall be for the interim of general conference.
- B. In consultation with the executive director of World Missions, the missions committee shall:
  - 1. recommend policy regarding World Missions to the board of administration;
  - 2. review the World Missions budget, and send a recommendation to the budget and finance committee of the board of administration;
  - 3. consult with the executive director regarding World Missions vision and strategy and their implementation;
  - 4. advise missions leadership with the intent of increasing ownership and giving within the Free Methodist Church of North America;
  - 5. review developments in World Missions.
- C. The Board of Bishops will consult with the missions committee chair and the board of administration chair regarding the board of bishops' recommendations in the selection and/or termination of the executive director of World Missions.

### **Free Methodist World Missions Executives**

¶4530

- A. The executive director of Free Methodist World Missions shall be employed by the Board of Bishops.
- B. In consultation with the Board of Bishops and the chairs of the missions committee and the board of administration, the executive director of Free Methodist World Missions shall appoint overseas area directors.
- C. The executive director shall develop and have on file job descriptions for mission directors, including area directors.

### **Missions Executive Leadership Team**

¶4540

- A. The Missions Executive Leadership Team includes the executive director of World Missions, on site directors and overseas area directors/coordinators.
- B. They shall, under the leadership of the executive director, oversee all missionary work originating in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom that is directed toward peoples outside of those countries, except for areas which the board of administration may assign elsewhere.
- C. The team shall:
  - 1. devise methods and programs for funding that portion of the United Ministries for Christ that pertains to Free Methodist World Missions;
  - 2. be responsible for receiving and appropriating all monies allocated for foreign missions to the purpose for which they have been contributed or budgeted;
  - 3. prepare the annual budget in consultation with the missions committee, the operating committee and the budget and finance committee;
  - 4. review and approve a call for funds for special projects; and
  - 5. review and approve loan applications from overseas churches to the Free Methodist Loan Fund.

The missions administration will co-sign the loans, assuring repayment, and be responsible for collecting payments from the churches with outstanding loans.

D. The team shall:

1. recruit, appoint, license and commission candidates for missionary service;
2. appoint all short-term Volunteers In Service Abroad (VISA) personnel; and
3. decide the status of missionaries not on their field of assignment for other than a normal home ministry assignment.

E. The team shall:

1. encourage and aid church planting outside Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States among all population groups in cooperation with a national church, whenever possible; and
2. recognize that in areas not presently served by the Free Methodist Church, new work shall first be a mission district under the jurisdiction of Free Methodist World Missions or of another general conference before being established as a provisional annual or annual conference.

F. The Missions Executive Leadership Team shall approve all candidates for ordination in mission districts under its jurisdiction.

G. Trustees and property

1. Titles to land purchased for missions and institutions under the direction of Free Methodist World Missions shall be in the name of Free Methodist World Missions or deeded to trustees elected or approved by the General Missionary Board. Trustees may be missionaries, nationals, or both.
2. Such trustees shall hold the property for the ben-

efit and use of Free Methodist World Missions of the Free Methodist Church of North America. Where property cannot be titled or held in trust for Free Methodist World Missions, it shall be held for the benefit and use of the Free Methodist Church and its institutions in those countries.

3. Any sale or disposal of property or use of funds from the sale of such property shall be with the approval and consent of the Missions Executive Leadership Team on behalf of Free Methodist World Missions of the Free Methodist Church, in consultation with the area bishop of the Free Methodist Church of North America, and ratified by the board of administration.
4. Whenever possible the tenure of the trustees shall be subject to Free Methodist World Missions and in all cases to the laws and regulations of the country where the property is located.

### **Mission Districts**

¶4550

- A. A mission district may be approved as a provisional annual conference by the Free Methodist World Missions executive director and area director, in consultation with the area bishop, by adopting in principle the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America together with a constitution adapted to local culture and circumstances.
- B. Membership in a provisional annual conference does not cancel membership in an annual conference. Members of annual conferences serving in a provisional annual conference shall, within two years, become members of that provisional annual conference.

### **Provisional Annual Conferences of Mission Origin**

¶4560

- A. All provisional annual conferences of mission origin shall be under the jurisdiction of Free Methodist World Missions, through its Missions Executive Leadership Team, except where provisional annual conferences

have been organized from an existing annual conference, in which case they shall be administered by the bishop of the originating annual conference. Copies of their constitutions and bylaws may, when adopted by the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America, be secured from the executive director of World Missions.

- B. The conferences so recognized are noted in the *Yearbook*.

### **Annual Conferences of Mission Origin**

¶4570

- A. When a provisional annual conference has made marked advancement in national leadership, evangelistic outreach, self-government and self-support, and has reached the stage where it is able to operate satisfactorily under the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church of North America, and has a constitution that has been approved by the general conference, or its board of administration, it shall be recommended to the area bishop or the president of the conference to be organized into an annual conference as outlined in ¶4140.A.6, and B.
- B. Any changes in constitutions of annual conferences of mission origin shall be considered by the executive director, area director and area bishop with legal counsel for recommendation to the board of administration or general conference for approval.
- C. An annual conference of mission origin may submit requests for personnel and finances through the area director of World Missions.

### **Provisional General or General Conferences of Mission Origin**

¶4580

- A. Requirements for forming a provisional general conference are found in ¶252.
- B. To prepare for a new provisional general conference, the area bishop shall form a provisional general con-

ference task force of the superintendents, lay representatives from the participating annual conferences and the area director to prepare a provisional general conference proposal. It shall be presented to the participating annual conferences for adoption in principle.

- C. The governing body of a provisional general conference shall be composed of the suffragan bishop(s) and an equal number of lay and ministerial delegates elected by the participating annual conferences. The number of delegates shall be recommended by the area bishop in consultation with the provisional general conference task force and be approved by the Free Methodist Church of North America Board of Administration.
- D. The Free Methodist Church of North America Board of Administration shall elect an elder(s), a national citizen(s) of the provisional general conference country, as a suffragan bishop(s) from the nominee(s) presented by the annual conferences or the provisional general conference. A suffragan bishop is a bishop of a provisional general conference and serves under the supervision and counsel of the Board of Bishops.
- E. The suffragan bishop(s) shall be a member(s) of the Board of Bishops of the Free Methodist Church of North America and shall report annually to the provisional general conference board of administration.
- F. The provisional general conference shall have powers and duties conferred upon it by the Free Methodist Church of North America General Conference and as set forth in its *Book of Discipline* and/or its constitution, including:
  - 1. to constitute the Free Methodist corporation which shall hold in trust all real estate belonging to the Free Methodist Church for the use and benefit of its membership;
  - 2. to have general supervision of all matters pertaining to the functions of the Free Methodist Church;

3. to be responsible for all activities such as: Bible schools, development projects, medical work, literature work, requesting and assigning missionaries, inter-denominational and cooperative relationships, legal representation, scholarships and other ministries as need may arise;
  4. to form a board of administration to carry on the work during the interim between meetings of the provisional general conference; and
  5. to establish budgets and raise funds to support the work, particularly the office of the suffragan bishop(s) and the process of legal representation.
- G. A provisional general conference, once formed, may continue for a maximum of four years before moving to general conference status, unless an extension is granted by the Free Methodist Church of North America General Conference Board of Administration.

## Free Methodist Foundation

- ¶4600 The board of administration approves Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the Free Methodist Foundation which govern the business and affairs of the foundation. These documents provide that the:
- A. Free Methodist Foundation is a separate religious and charitable corporation formed to establish, promote, fund, extend and maintain the Christian faith according to the tenets of, and for the exclusive benefit and support of, the Free Methodist Church of North America;
  - B. Board of Administration shall elect the Directors of the Foundation. Directors shall be laypersons and ordained ministers who are members in good standing of the Free Methodist Church. At least two members of the Foundation Board shall be ordained ministers, one of whom shall be a U.S. Bishop (see ¶4320.F).
  - C. denomination may assign to the Foundation the man-

agement of appropriate activities related to estate planning, wills, trusts, estates and other types of deferred gifts;

- D. denomination may assign to the Foundation the management of investments for the denomination, its departments, subsidiaries, and related agencies, pension funds and all other funds assigned by the board of administration;
- E. denomination may assign to the foundation the management of the Free Methodist Loan Fund; and
- F. Foundation reports annually to the board of administration, providing a statement of philosophy of operation, any significant changes in policies or procedures, audited financial reports and related federal income tax returns and other items requested by the board of administration or its budget and finance committee.
- G. The president of the Free Methodist Foundation shall be an honorary member of the board of administration.

## Chaplains

### ¶4700

- A. The Free Methodist Church of North America provides ministry to persons in special situations beyond the local church, such as in the military, prisons, institutions and law enforcement agencies, through ordained ministers who are chaplains.
- B. Ecclesiastical chaplain endorsement procedures and guidelines of the Free Methodist Church of North America are established and approved by the Board of Bishops and the board of administration. Endorsement procedures are printed in the *Chaplain Guidelines Manual*.
- C. All ordained ministers wishing to serve as Free Methodist chaplains in the military, Veterans Affairs or civilian institutions must be approved by the Board of

Bishops and credentialed by the Free Methodist Church  
Chaplain Endorsing Agent.

- D. All credentialed chaplains shall be appointed to denominational service. No non-credentialed ordained minister shall be appointed as chaplain by any annual conference.
- E. The Free Methodist Church of North America recognizes the association of chaplains, whose name is The Free Methodist Chaplains Association of North America, together with its constitution and duly elected officers.

## **Association of Human Service Ministries**

¶4750

- A. The Association of Human Service Ministries members accredited by and receiving support from the Free Methodist Church shall report annually to the board of administration
- B. The board of administration shall:
  - 1. receive and examine the annual reports of each accredited ministry, including financial reports, their work and the general plan and scope of their activities;
  - 2. determine if the ministry continues to qualify for accreditation by the Free Methodist Church; and
  - 3. regulate the establishment of new human service ministries so as to avoid jeopardizing accredited institutions.
- C. A new Human Service Ministry shall not be approved without an official recommendation from its annual conference.
- D. Accredited members of the Association of Human Service Ministries shall be listed in the *Yearbook*.
- E. Pastors are encouraged to preach on the subject of prac-

tical charity, receiving offerings and providing opportunities for financial support. These offerings are to be used for the relief of the poor in that society or sent to an accredited human service ministry.

- F. The president of the Association of Human Service Ministries shall be an honorary member of the board of administration.

## **Educational Institutions**

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

### **Denominational Institutions**

¶4810 The Free Methodist Church of North America recognizes as denominational institutions those colleges and universities whose commitments are consistent with the history, theology, mission and character of the Free Methodist Church.

#### **A. Leadership Commitments**

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

#### **B. Mission Commitments**

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

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

C. Connectional Commitments

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

7. The institutions shall have an intentional plan for Free Methodists to speak at chapel, colloquia and events.
8. The institutions shall participate in the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions.

D. Recognition Process

Based upon an application to the Free Methodist Church of North America Board of Administration in the year prior to general conference, an institution of higher education which meets these leadership, mission and connectional commitments may be endorsed as a denominational institution. Denominational institutions shall be recognized at each general conference.

**Affiliated Institutions**

¶4820

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

of higher education, which meets these criteria may be endorsed as an affiliated institution.

### **Associate Institutions**

¶4830

- A. Other institutions (see Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions Constitution and Bylaws) may apply to the annual meeting of the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions (see ¶4850) for endorsement as associate institutions. The minimum expectations for this relationship shall be:
  1. The institution shall have Free Methodist representation on the board of trustees.
  2. The institution's instruction shall be in harmony with and conformity to the teachings of the Scriptures and the Free Methodist Articles of Religion.
  3. The institution's mission shall connect to and support the mission of the Free Methodist Church of North America.
- B. Based upon a letter of request, with substantiating documents regarding how it meets these criteria, the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions, at its annual meeting may endorse such an institution as an associate institution.

### **Educational Funds**

¶4840

All educational endowment funds, including the permanent endowment fund, designated to educational institutions (including John Wesley Seminary Foundation) and such as may be raised or otherwise received for the Educational Endowment Fund, shall be held for investment as directed by the board of administration. The income shall be distributed annually to the Free Methodist denominational schools in the United States as directed by the board of administration. When funds are available for operating budgets or capital projects, the board of administration shall determine the appropriation for each school according to the numeric enrollment of full-time Free Methodist students in those institutions.

## **The Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions**

¶4850

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

## **John Wesley Seminary**

¶4860

- A. The Free Methodist Church shall maintain a theological seminary for the post-college training of candidates for the pastoral ministry and other types of Christian service. This institution shall be known as John Wesley Seminary and shall be incorporated to secure the rights and privileges belonging to such educational institutions.
- B. The board of administration shall constitute the membership of the John Wesley Seminary corporation.
- C. John Wesley Seminary shall be supported by United Ministries for Christ (UMC) Home Ministries and special project funds, as approved by the board of administration.

## **Auxiliary Organizations**

### **Men's Ministries International**

¶4900 Men's Ministries International of the Free Methodist Church is recognized as an auxiliary of the Free Methodist Church of North America, and is governed by its own constitution and bylaws. The director of Men's Ministries International shall be an honorary member of the board of administration (see ¶4320.J.3).

### **Women's Ministries International**

¶4910 Women's Ministries International of the Free Methodist Church is recognized as an auxiliary of Free Methodist World Missions and is governed by its own constitution and bylaws. The president of Women's Ministries International shall be an honorary member of the board of administration (see ¶4320.J.3).