

Chapter 5

Annual Conferences

Preamble

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

Organization

Ministerial and Lay Delegates

¶5010

- A. The general conference shall organize the work at large into annual conferences. Each annual conference shall be composed of all ministers in full membership, and lay delegates elected by the several societies.
- B. One lay delegate shall be admitted from each society. If there is more than one pastor in full membership appointed to a society, the society shall be entitled to one additional lay delegate for each additional pastor. A society that has more than one hundred full members, may elect an additional lay delegate; and for each additional two hundred full members, an additional lay delegate may be elected. The election of a delegate and any reserve delegate shall be by separate ballot

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.

and each shall require a majority vote of those present and voting.

- C. Delegates are not members of the annual conference until they are present with their credentials and have been seated. Conference ministerial candidates are without vote except for those who are appointed as pastors in charge of a society.
- D. In consultation with the area bishop, each annual conference shall provide for substantially equal ministerial lay representation in its annual sessions.

Responsibilities of Delegates

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

Voting

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

Time and Place

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

Conference Year

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

Limitation of Powers

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

Organizational Structure

¶5070 In consultation with the area bishop, the annual conference may choose any organizational structure which appropriately reflects the operational values and desired outcomes of the Free Methodist Church.

Nominating Committee

¶5080

- A. Each annual conference shall elect a standing nominating committee of not less than six members, giving consideration to equal representation of ministerial and lay members. General considerations in the selection of the local church nominating committee shall also apply to the annual conference (see ¶6310). Representation by districts/regions or other appropriate distinctions shall be determined in advance by the conference body.
- B. Nominating committee members may be elected to rotating terms as determined by the conference. The chair shall be elected by the nominating committee.
- C. The nominating committee shall:
 1. prepare for the annual conference a list of nominations for positions vacated by either resignations or expiration of terms; and
 2. review board and committee memberships in light of the standing rules of the annual conference.

Officers

Presiding Officer

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

Superintendent

¶5110

A. Nomination, Election and Terms

1. Each annual conference shall elect one elder as superintendent, except as otherwise provided (see ¶5110.A.7). A conference may elect, appoint, or make provision to employ one or more elders to serve as assistant(s) to the superintendent.
2. Superintendents must be elected from among the ordained elders of the denomination upon due nominating process. The annual conference shall designate the ministerial education and guidance board or a special committee of not less than six plus the area bishop as chair to nominate the superintendent. The incumbent superintendent shall not serve on the committee.
3. Should the nominating process fail, the superintendent may, by decision of the conference, be elected by open ballot without debate or petition.
4. Should the area bishop not be available to chair an overseas conference, the special committee to nominate the superintendent may elect its own chair or the conference may elect a superintendent by open ballot without debate or petition.
5. Superintendents shall be elected by a majority vote for four-year terms, except for special arrangements approved by the area bishop for a shorter term.
6. If two or more contiguous conferences so desire, they may request that they be under common direction of an area superintendent. The superintendent shall be nominated by a committee com-

posed of at least one lay and one ministerial member from each of the conferences with the area bishop serving as chair. The nominee must receive a majority vote in each conference involved. Election shall be by ballot.

7. A conference may propose to have a stationed superintendent and/or stationed assistant(s) to the superintendent, in which event the ministerial appointments committee will nominate candidates.
8. If a vacancy should occur in the office of the superintendent between conferences, the area bishop shall call an adjourned sitting of the annual conference, authorizing the conference secretary to notify the members of the conference, the delegates, or the reserve delegates, of the time and place of such sitting at least ten days prior to the sitting, for the purpose of filling the vacancy and for any other items of business.
9. The conference may instruct a superintendent to work under the general direction of an advisory committee, provided that there be no infringement of the disciplinary powers of the superintendent.
10. Recall of a superintendent shall be by a two-thirds ballot vote by any succeeding annual conference.

B. Qualifications

1. The area bishop shall assist the annual conference in determining the qualifications desired in a superintendent.
2. A prospective superintendent shall:
 - a. have demonstrated productive leadership within the past five years of pastoral ministry;
 - b. have a favorable result from a job-related professional evaluation;
 - c. articulate a vision for the conference for review and approval by the area bishop and the superintendency nominating committee;
 - d. commit to spending a total of four to ten weeks in leadership training programs on a sabbatical

accountability model during the first two years in a superintendency, as approved by the Board of Bishops and the conference administrative committee;

- e. commit to attend and participate in training events provided by the church for superintendents.

C. Financial Support

1. Annual conferences in the United States are expected to demonstrate fiscal viability by providing a workable budget, including a base remuneration for the superintendent that is at least equivalent to the level of a denominational executive director. Each society shall contribute its proportion as adopted by the annual conference.
2. Where this salary level is not attainable, the area bishop shall assist the conference administrative committee in preparing a leadership plan that shall be presented to the Board of Bishops, and upon its approval, implemented.
3. Superintendents shall be supported by the conferences to which elected in the manner determined by the conferences. Stationed superintendents shall receive an appropriate portion of their support from the pastoral charges to which appointed. The conference shall remain responsible for assuring that the total compensation of a stationed superintendent is consistent with provisions of ¶5110.C.2. A conference shall provide for the superintendent's office and travel expenses, whether stationed or itinerant.
4. A home purchased for the superintendent can be rented to others only if the superintendent consents and receives the rent.

D. Duties

The conference superintendent shall:

1. look after the spiritual and temporal interests of the churches within their assigned areas; to take

- charge of societies without pastors; and to have general oversight of the work in their areas;
2. see that the permanent record book of each society is kept up-to-date and that all other parts of the *Book of Discipline* are enforced;
 3. visit each church as deemed to be in the best interest of the work. They may hold a local board of administration, a society or an annual meeting in connection with the visits.
 4. visit a society when requested to do so by the local board of administration in an emergency, with power to call a local board of administration, a society or an annual meeting and preside over it;
 5. convene and preside over area conventions, workshops and rallies in cooperation with the interests and needs of the varied organizations of the conference as is deemed necessary and advisable by the conference administrative committee;
 6. labor as an evangelist in the assigned area when directed to do so by the annual conference;
 7. promote and oversee the development of specific strategies and to mobilize personnel and financial resources for church planting;
 8. maintain close contact with the conference's ministers for the purpose of encouragement and counsel by meeting periodically with them, being a pastor to pastors. The superintendent may assign a mutually acceptable experienced pastor as mentor to each senior pastor with less than four years pastoral experience.
 9. recommend appointment, reception and change of pastors in the assigned area to the ministerial appointments committee in the interim between the annual reading of the appointments;
 10. suspend a conference appointee according to ¶7170.B, C;
 11. see that deeds of lands upon which it is proposed to build churches or parsonages are properly made out and recorded, or that good and sufficient bonds or contracts are given before the buildings are begun (see ¶6400);

12. divide societies in the interval of the annual conferences, if in their judgment the interests of the work require it and the pastor and local board of administration consent. They may not appoint a pastor to serve two pastoral charges at once, but may unite an unsupplied one with another with the consent of the local board of administration of the former.
13. give the bishop all the necessary information regarding the state of the conference and cooperate in setting goals and framing plans;
14. be the liaison between the pastor and the general church;
15. notify the superintendent of another conference before giving serious consideration to the employment of a minister from that conference, and, when feasible, to provide sixty days notification; and
16. be an ex-officio member of all boards and committees.

Secretary

¶5120

- A. The annual conference shall elect a secretary who shall continue in office until a successor is elected.
- B. The secretary shall:
 1. record in a suitable book the proceedings of the conference, excluding non-conference business matters;
 2. keep, in a book to be preserved with the journal, the original or so-called rough minutes as approved by the conference;
 3. keep on file the reports adopted by the conference and record in the journal financial and such other reports as the conference may order;
 4. be custodian of the conference records and journal;
 5. transcribe from the annual conference records all the decisions of disciplinary law rendered by the

- president, giving the number of the pages upon which those decisions are recorded and forward the transcript promptly to the secretary of the general conference and, if there are no such decisions, to send a statement to that effect to the secretary;
6. send a copy of the annual conference minutes following completion of each annual conference to the office of the Board of Bishops for examination on behalf of the general conference;
 7. report annually to Ministerial Credentialing Services following the annual conference session the names of ministers whose ordination parchments are no longer valid, whether by issuance of certificates of transfer to other denominations, uniting with other denominations without Free Methodist papers, withdrawal, expulsion or death, listing the reason for such invalidation; and
 8. keep a proper register containing names, addresses, and dates of declaration of all members of the church within the conference who declare themselves to be conscientious objectors and to make a prompt report of these declarations to the secretary of the general conference, who shall keep a complete record of them (see ¶3470.B, and ¶4070.B).

Treasurer

¶5130

- A. The annual conference shall elect a treasurer who shall be bonded. In case of a vacancy the superintendent of the conference may appoint a treasurer to act until the next conference session. All funds due the general church shall be remitted monthly. The general church treasurer shall, immediately after the conference session, notify the conference secretary of any deficit.
- B. The annual conference shall require each society to remit a financial report of its receipts and expenditures. This report shall be published in the *Yearbook*.

Auditor

¶5140 The annual conference shall elect an auditor who shall audit the accounts of the treasurer and report to each annual session.

Pension Agent

¶5150 The annual conference shall designate a pension agent who will be responsible to oversee the administration of the pension plan at the conference level in harmony with guidelines developed by the general pension board.

Standing Boards and Committees

Administrative Committee

¶5200

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

Superintendents Cabinet

¶5210

- A. Each annual conference may establish a superintendents cabinet, to meet at the call of the superintendent.
- B. The purpose of the superintendents cabinet shall be:
 - 1. to serve as a forum for the superintendent, pastors and laity;

2. to aid the superintendent in counsel, encouragement and evaluation; and
 3. to inform the churches concerning the nature and function of the superintendency.
- C. The members of the superintendents cabinet shall be the superintendent and not more than six members elected by the annual conference, two-thirds of whom may be nominated by the superintendent. The superintendent may chair or name a member to chair the cabinet.

Ministerial Appointments Committee

¶5220

- A. Each annual conference shall have a standing ministerial appointments committee composed of the bishop as chair, the superintendent as vice chair, and one lay member. An annual conference may, if it so desires, increase the number of members by electing an additional elder and an additional lay member. The annual conference may ask the nominating committee or the administrative committee to prepare nominations for election; however nominations must also be allowed from the floor. Elections may be for three-year terms with provision for rotation and continuity. When a new superintendent is elected, the immediate past superintendent may not serve on the ministerial appointments committee for the succeeding year.
- B. If for any reason a member is unable to serve during the conference session, the board of administration may appoint an elder or lay member to serve. No person who is recommended to the annual conference to be received as a conference ministerial candidate, nor a licensed pastor (see ¶5640), though acting as a delegate, shall be eligible to serve on the ministerial appointments committee.
- C. The committee shall serve until the close of the following annual conference.

- D. The committee shall appoint pastors for an indefinite tenure. The committee shall monitor progress and make changes at each annual conference when deemed necessary.
- E. To assist in the assessment of the work, pastors shall be offered an opportunity to express themselves and shall be given opportunity every three years to participate in a ministry effectiveness evaluation (see ¶5800), which shall be considered by the ministerial appointments committee.
- F. Proposed changes shall be discussed with both pastors and delegates of churches involved.
- G. In the event a change in pastoral leadership becomes necessary between annual conferences, the committee shall have authority to make appointments. Delegates of churches involved shall be consulted, but final authority rests with the ministerial appointments committee.
- H. The ministerial appointments committee report of appointments shall be announced at the annual conference session.
- I. The committee may initiate church planting appointments, either by requesting a local church to sponsor a church planting project or by creating a new church planting project by appointing a church planter in consultation with the conference administrative committee.
- J. The committee shall follow the restrictions regarding divorced ministers or spouses (see ¶5650).
- K. The committee shall have authority to suspend any conference appointee for cause (see ¶7120) according to due process (see ¶7170.B). This is not to be construed as conflicting with an ordained minister's rights as outlined in Chapter 7.

- L. The committee planning to recommend that a pastor not receive a pastoral appointment the ensuing year shall notify that pastor at least sixty days prior to the session of the annual conference.

Ministerial Education and Guidance Board

¶5230

- A. Each annual conference shall have a standing ministerial education and guidance board, composed of the members of the ministerial appointments committee and additional members as determined by the electing body.
- B. Such additional members may be elected to rotating three-year terms, and may not serve more than nine consecutive years. Ex-officio members are excluded from term limits.
- C. Total membership of the board shall not exceed twelve nor be less than four members, with due regard to a proper division between laypersons and ministers.
- D. When a new superintendent is elected, the immediate past superintendent shall not serve on the Board for the succeeding year.
- E. The board shall assist in recruiting personnel and shall be responsible to screen candidates for reception into the conference and/or for ordination.
- F. The annual conference, acting upon the recommendation of the ministerial education and guidance board has final responsibility for the approval of conference ministerial candidates in keeping with the standards outlined in ¶5340.
- G. The board, in consultation with the area bishop, is the authority on the meeting of the standard criteria for ordination.
- H. The board shall guide and counsel those who are re-

ceived so that they may be able to meet the demands of pastoral ministry.

- I. For instructions on administration of multiple staff, see ¶¶6700-6730 and the *Ministerial Education and Guidance Board Manual*.
- J. The board shall develop and oversee a mentoring program that provides qualified mentors to assist new pastors in personal, spiritual and professional growth.
- K. The board shall identify potential church planters among current pastoral personnel and new recruits.
- L. Each pastor shall present to the board annually a program for continuing education and the board shall monitor the program.
- M. The board may grant a certificate of standing with view to transfer to another conference during the interim between annual conference sessions.
- N. The board shall give consideration to the integrity and Christian discipleship of each ministerial member and the performance of duty of each appointed pastor of the conference and shall present to the annual conference a statement to this effect: "The ministerial education and guidance board has given due consideration to the integrity and Christian discipleship of each ministerial member of the _____ Conference and affirms the integrity and Christian discipleship of each in accord with ¶5310 of the *Book of Discipline* (with the exception of _____)" (see ¶5220.K).
- O. The board shall affirm the integrity and Christian discipleship of located deacons and located elders, reporting such action to the annual conference as follows: "Upon recommendation by the various pastors and local boards of administration of the churches where they are located, the ministerial education and guidance board reviewed and affirmed the integrity and

Christian discipleship of the located deacons and located elders (except for _____)" (see ¶5220.K).

- P. The early identification of people sensing God's call to pastoral ministry shall be a primary responsibility of the ministerial education and guidance board in cooperation with the local church.
- Q. The board shall set policies for care of pastors. These policy guidelines shall address such issues as salary and benefits, maternity and paternity leave, vacations and sabbaticals.

Finance Board

¶5240 Each conference shall elect a finance board with not less than five members. Its duties may include the preparation and supervision of the conference budget. It shall assist the superintendent in stewardship education and the promotion of United Ministries for Christ throughout the conference. The conference superintendent and treasurer shall be ex-officio members.

Social Issues and Ministries Committee

¶5250

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

human and material, to assist the local church in seeking justice for all, showing mercy to the poor and empowering the disenfranchised.

World Missions Board

¶5260

- A.** The annual conference may elect a world missions board in cooperation with Free Methodist World Missions to present the interests and needs of world missions. The board shall designate its chair, who shall serve as a liaison to Free Methodist World Missions.

- B.** Functions of the board may include:
 - 1. coordinating conference-wide missions related activities, including major events and scheduling of missionaries in cooperation with Free Methodist World Missions;
 - 2. encouraging churches to achieve excellence in missions programming and promotion by such means as workshops for pastors and lay leaders; and
 - 3. stimulating churches to participate in missions projects, to recruit individuals for long-term missionary service and Volunteers in Service Abroad (VISA) short-term activities and to increase the financial support of worldwide missionary outreach.

Light and Life Christian School Board

¶5270

- A.** Each annual conference is authorized to establish a conference Light and Life Christian Schools board which shall oversee the work of all Light and Life Christian Schools within the conference in accord with guidelines established by the conference administrative committee and the annual conference (see ¶6340). The president of the conference shall instruct the nominating committee to exercise care in naming to this board persons competent to serve.

- B.** It is the responsibility of each conference having Chris-

tian schools and of the local officials administering the schools to see that the appropriate trust clause is a part of each deed pertaining to school property, the same as other church property (see ¶6400.D).

- C. The leadership commitments, mission commitments and connectional commitments as found in ¶4810 for denominational institutions shall apply, as appropriate, to Light and Life Christian Schools. Any complaint of violation of any of these principles shall be directed to the Light and Life Christian Schools board of the conference in which the school is located. Should the complaint be found to be valid, the board shall apply such penalty to the school found guilty as it deems appropriate. Such school, however, shall have the privilege of appeal, with full hearing, to the conference administrative committee.

The Ordained Ministry

Preamble

¶5300 It is biblical for the church to set apart particular persons for special tasks of leadership. These persons bear witness to an inward call of the Holy Spirit. They are examined and set apart by public ordination, including the laying on of hands after the pattern of the early church.

These men and women ordained by the church are characterized by both gifts and graces. Gifts are special endowments of abilities. Graces are special qualities of character. Both have their source in the enabling Holy Spirit. Although the church must discern and cultivate those who have such endowments, ordination is always first and foremost an act of God's calling and anointing. In each assignment, the ordained minister follows the model of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who gave His life for the sheep (John 10:1-18; Ezekiel 34), served willingly and selflessly (1 Peter 5:1-4) and commanded the undershepherds to feed the sheep (John 21:15-17).

Free Methodist ministers may carry out their task under

appointment as pastors of particular congregations or they may be given other assignments. In either case, they are called to provide Spirit-filled leadership in the church to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. A healthy church, reproducing more and better disciples as well as new churches, will be characterized by vital worship, evangelistic and social action, Christian nurture and fellowship.

Ordained ministers commit themselves to equipping the whole body of believers to these ends. Biblically and historically, they are set apart for the study and proclamation of the Word of God, intercessory prayer, the winning of persons to Christ, the administration of the sacraments and the defense of the gospel.

Free Methodist ministers under appointment as pastors of churches are called to be leaders of God's people. Leadership requires vision, daring, moving people to action and living with the turbulence change brings. Pastoral leadership is rooted in a deep love for Christ and His compassion for human need. God's resources are abundantly available for all who embrace this task in courageous and radical obedience.

Ordained elders may be elected to lead the church at large as bishops or superintendents. Under the direction of the bishop they may also be given other assignments, such as those of general church administrators, chaplains, missionaries, evangelists or theological teachers in universities or seminaries.

Qualifications for Pastoral Ministry

¶5310

- A. A person called by God enters a vocation which through biblical tradition and Methodist heritage carries significant responsibilities. Dealing with the souls of people and leading the church in making disciples requires these qualities and skills: spiritual qualifications, personal characteristics, pastoral care, communication and leadership.

- B. These qualities are intended to assist the church. Ordained ministers should examine themselves in light of these; conferences should publicly review these when designing evaluation and reporting instruments for pastors; ministerial education and guidance boards should consider these qualities and skills when interviewing and guiding ministers.
1. Spiritual Qualifications. The candidate:
 - a. is committed to Jesus Christ as Lord;
 - b. shows evidence of integrity through holiness of heart and life;
 - c. displays the fruit of the Holy Spirit;
 - d. receives and gives forgiveness;
 - e. possesses healthy self-esteem and maintains a positive attitude;
 - f. demonstrates faith, creativity and initiative;
 - g. respects people regardless of race, gender or economic status; and
 - h. models a teachable spirit.
 2. Personal Characteristics. The candidate:
 - a. is called to ministry;
 - b. practices spiritual disciplines;
 - c. is gifted for leadership;
 - d. models a balanced life and a healthy self-discipline;
 - e. maintains freedom from addictions;
 - f. engages in life-long learning;
 - g. submits biblically to authority;
 - h. seeks professional and personal accountability; and
 - i. has the support of his/her spouse, if married.
 3. Pastoral Care. The candidate:
 - a. loves his/her family as Christ loves the church;
 - b. responds appropriately and warmly to people;
 - c. embodies a passion for making disciples;
 - d. ensures appropriate care for the people of God;
 - e. builds up people and inspires hope;

- f. demonstrates interpersonal skills; and
 - g. resolves conflict effectively.
4. Communication. The candidate:
- a. handles the Word of God correctly;
 - b. calls people to faith in Christ;
 - c. understands the culture, community and congregation;
 - d. utilizes effective means of communication;
 - e. affirms and articulates Wesleyan theology;
 - f. prepares thoroughly for public presentation;
 - g. persuades people to make godly, life-changing decisions;
 - h. challenges the status quo in love, when necessary; and
 - i. facilitates an environment of holy worship.
5. Leadership. The candidate:
- a. leads out of personal and corporate prayer;
 - b. articulates a vision from God;
 - c. sets strategic goals to accomplish the vision;
 - d. instills congregational ownership of vision and goals;
 - e. mobilizes resources to fulfill the vision;
 - f. practices sound principles in accomplishing change;
 - g. identifies, attracts and equips leaders;
 - h. fosters a positive atmosphere;
 - i. participates in the denomination's mission; and
 - j. promotes involvement in world evangelization.

Steps Leading Toward Ordination.

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

- A. The person sensing the call of God and the church to pastoral ministry is first licensed as a local ministerial candidate (see ¶6500).
- B. Step two involves acceptance by the annual conference as a conference ministerial candidate.

- C. Conference ministerial candidates, upon recommendation of the ministerial education and guidance board, are received into annual conference membership and elected to elders orders.
- D. Ordination as elder completes the process.

Local Ministerial Candidate

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

Conference Ministerial Candidate

¶5340

- A. A conference ministerial candidate is a member of the Free Methodist Church who has been received by an annual conference in preparation for ordained ministry.
- B. The conference ministerial candidate shall:
 - 1. be a local ministerial candidate;
 - 2. have completed History and Polity of the Free Methodist Church (knowledge of this subject required for the Apollos Model);
 - 3. have completed application for ministry appointment;
 - 4. be interviewed, certified and recommended by the ministerial education and guidance board and received by the annual conference upon satisfactory response to the questions (see ¶8710);
 - 5. be under the guidance of the conference superintendent.
 - 6. maintain membership in a local Free Methodist church;
 - 7. maintain relationship as a conference ministerial candidate by annual recommendation of the ministerial education and guidance board.

- C. A candidate who has been involved in a divorce, annulment or dissolution of marriage shall not be admitted to the conference as a conference ministerial candidate or in full membership until approved by the Board of Bishops upon recommendation from the ministerial education and guidance board. This shall also apply to a candidate whose spouse has been divorced. Divorce prior to conversion shall not in itself bar a candidate from consideration for conference membership.

- D. The ministerial education and guidance board shall examine potential conference ministerial candidates by considering the following:
 - 1. Is the candidate holy and loving in all personal relationships?
 - 2. Has the candidate gifts as well as graces for the ministry?
 - 3. Does the candidate have good judgment, adequate discernment of the things of God, and a proper understanding of salvation by faith?
 - 4. Is the candidate able to speak effectively?
 - 5. Does the candidate present the gospel with doctrinal integrity?
 - 6. Are people convinced of sin and converted to God by the candidate's preaching and witness?

- E. A conference ministerial candidate shall be interviewed annually, allowing three years to complete the course of study required for ordination and conference membership. If the course of study is not completed in that time, status as a conference ministerial candidate may be continued only upon recommendation of the ministerial education and guidance board.

- F. When a conference ministerial candidate is under appointment to a church as pastor-in-charge, he/she is considered "clergy" (to maintain a lay/clergy balance) when serving on committees and boards. In all other matters he/she is considered a "lay person."

Ordained Deacons

¶5350 The practice of ordaining deacons has been discontinued. The church now provides for consecrated deacons who are members of a local church (see ¶¶6600-6610). Those who continue as ordained deacons are members of an annual conference and have the authority to baptize, to officiate in marriage ceremonies, to administer the Lord's Supper, and, when appointed to a church, to perform all the other responsibilities of a minister.

Elder's Orders

¶5400

- A. A minister may be received into membership, elected to elder's orders and be reported as having a seat in the annual conference after having been employed in pastoral work three successive years subsequent to reception as a conference ministerial candidate, having satisfactorily completed the required course of study (see ¶¶5410-5440) and having given satisfactory answers to conference membership questions (see ¶8720).
- B. Election to elder's orders constitutes the acknowledgement of the annual conference that the person so elected has met all the biblical (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1) and ecclesiastical requirements to serve as an overseer in the church. Only an ordained elder may serve as a ministerial delegate to General Conference, a conference superintendent or a bishop.
- C. The elder shall administer baptism and the Lord's Supper, solemnize marriages, and lead in divine worship. When appointed to a society, an elder shall perform the responsibilities of a minister.

Seminary Model

¶5410 To qualify for elder's orders using this model, one shall:

- A. be a conference ministerial candidate or ordained deacon;

- B. be a graduate of an approved John Wesley Seminary Foundation school or other accredited seminary with an M.Div. or equivalent degree, or have met the minimum educational requirements (see ¶5510.B);
- C. have completed three years of full-time pastoral experience under conference appointment after becoming a conference ministerial candidate;
- D. be interviewed, certified and recommended by the ministerial education and guidance board to elder's orders; and
- E. be approved by the annual conference and be ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee.

College Model

¶5420 To qualify for elder's orders using this model, one shall:

- A. be a conference ministerial candidate or ordained deacon;
- B. be a graduate of an approved Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions school or other accredited college, with a bachelor's degree and a major in religion or have completed approved courses in: Inductive Bible Study, 2 semester credits; Introduction to Christian Doctrine, 2 credits; Biblical studies, 10 credits; Systematic Theology, 7 credits; Wesleyan Theology, 3 credits; Pastoral Studies, 7 credits; Homiletics, 3 credits;
- C. have completed three years of full-time pastoral experience under conference appointment after becoming a conference ministerial candidate;
- D. be interviewed, certified and recommended by the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board to elder's orders; and
- E. be approved by the annual conference and ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee.

JT-XT (J-Term – Extended Studies) Model

- ¶5430 To qualify for elder's orders using this model, one shall:
- A. be a conference ministerial candidate or ordained deacon;
 - B. have completed approved courses: Inductive Bible Study, 2 semester credits; Introduction to Christian Doctrine, 2 credits; Biblical Studies, 8 credits; Systematic Theology, 3 credits; Wesleyan Theology, 3 credits; Homiletics, 3 credits; Pastoral Care, 2 credits; Church Administration/ Team Building, 2 credits; Spiritual Formation, 2 credits; Leadership/Growth, 4 credits; elective courses, 3 credits;
 - C. have completed three years of full-time pastoral experience under conference appointment after becoming a conference ministerial candidate;
 - D. be interviewed, certified and recommended by the ministerial education and guidance board to elder's orders; and
 - E. be approved by the annual conference and ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee.

Apollos Model

¶5440 This model is established for those persons of unusual giftedness, fruitfulness and experience as determined by the conference ministerial education and guidance board according to criteria described in the *Ministerial Education and Guidance Board Manual*.

To qualify for elder's orders using this model, one shall:

- A. be initially approved by the local church and granted a local ministerial candidate's license;
- B. be granted conference ministerial candidacy by the conference upon recommendation of the ministerial education and guidance board as determined by the candidate's satisfaction of the criteria for the Apollos Model;

- C. maintain an ordination readiness file which collects the data documenting assessments, reports and progress through the process as described in the *Ministerial Education and Guidance Board Manual*;
- D. complete the prescribed process of coaching, assignments and assessment under ministerial education and guidance board guidance;
- E. be interviewed, certified and recommended by the ministerial education and guidance board to elder's orders; and
- F. be approved by the annual conference and ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee.

Service Requirements for Ordination

¶5450

- A. Conference ministerial candidates are required to complete the equivalent of three years of full-time pastoral service under conference appointment to be eligible for ordination as elder. This service requirement provides the church a meaningful time frame for focused mentoring and observing the character and giftedness of the potential ministerial leader. The ministerial education and guidance board may appeal to the Board of Bishops for a reduction of this service requirement for a conference ministerial candidate. It is unusual, however, for a conference ministerial candidate to be ordained without at least three years of full-time ministry experience, including at least two years of service in the Free Methodist Church.
- B. For conference ministerial candidates appointed to part-time service, the amount of service to be granted each year is to be determined in consultation with the local board of administration and the conference ministerial appointments committee prior to the appointment using these criteria:

1. If the conference ministerial candidate is paid a salary, the ratio of the part-time salary to a full-time salary is the basis. For instance, a half-time salary is equivalent to a half-year of service. If the conference ministerial candidate is serving without salary, the ratio of the part-time service to full-time service is the basis. For instance, twenty hours per week is the equivalent of one-half year of service.
2. While conference ministerial candidates are attending seminary, up to one year of service may be earned through practical service under supervision.

Ordination in Ethnic Ministries

¶5460

- A. The ministerial education and guidance board in conferences with non-English-speaking constituencies shall be authorized to establish educational and other requirements for the ordination of pastors, taking into account their cultural and educational background. Such provisions are to be developed in consultation with the conference superintendent and the area bishop. Final approval rests with the Board of Bishops.
- B. In the case of ethnic ministries, where circumstances warrant, upon recommendation of the ministerial education and guidance board, and upon approval of the area bishop, candidates may be ordained having less than the required service requirements.
- C. An ordained deacon may be allowed to serve as acting superintendent or as assistant to the conference superintendent for ethnic districts until such time as a qualified elder is available for the position.

Ordination Credentials

¶5470

- A. Ministers, whether located or itinerant, whose ordinations are recognized by an annual conference, shall be entitled to credentials from the president of the conference, certifying their ordination. Duplicate copies

of credentials for ministers received after June 10, 1969, are remitted by the president of the conference for retention and permanent filing by Ministerial Credentialing Services.

- B. Ordained ministers in good standing who unite with another church or are granted permission to withdraw from the Free Methodist Church shall deposit their credentials with the secretary of the conference and receive a receipt for them. If the credentials are not deposited with the secretary of the annual conference from which the minister has withdrawn, the credentials shall be declared null and void by action of the annual conference.
- C. Ministers who are expelled from the church or who are allowed to withdraw under charges must surrender their credentials. If they refuse or neglect to deposit them with the secretary of the conference from which they have been separated, the conference, by official action, shall declare them null and void.
- D. In the event of the loss of ordination credentials, a certified duplicate copy shall be made available through the Board of Bishops' office.
- E. After a period of three years, an ordained person neither appointed to nor actively seeking a recognized ministry function in the life of a Free Methodist Church shall deposit his/her credentials with the secretary of the conference and receive a receipt for them (see ¶5630).

Conference Membership Transfers and Termination

¶5500

- A. The licenses of conference ministerial candidates and credentials of ordained deacons and elders may be transferred from one annual conference to another. Transfers shall be by means of a certificate of standing from the ministerial education and guidance board or

the annual conference. This certificate is valid until the next session of the annual conference to which the certificate is given.

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

Reception From Other Denominations

¶5510

- A. Ministers from other evangelical churches who desire to unite with the Free Methodist Church may be received according to the church's procedures, provided that they:
 1. satisfy an annual conference that they currently have ministerial credentials;
 2. give satisfactory answers to the questions which the church proposes to:
 - a. lay persons for membership; and
 - b. ministers for admission to annual conference membership;
 3. indicate agreement with the church's doctrine, discipline, government and usages and give evidence of appropriate gifts, graces and usefulness;
 4. complete courses in Free Methodist History and Polity and in Wesleyan theology; and
 5. be recommended by the ministerial education and guidance board and received by the annual conference.
- B. No person may be ordained more easily by transfer from another denomination than through meeting the requirements of the *Book of Discipline* for Free Methodist ministers. Equivalency is the guideline. The candidates must qualify in both educational and service requirements.
- C. Candidates received shall be given an appropriate certificate in lieu of ordination credentials.
- D. The credentials of ministers from other denominations will not be recognized if they have remarried and have a divorced spouse living, or if their spouse has a divorced spouse living, unless the Board of Bishops has reviewed the ministerial education and guidance board's recommendation and approved admission into the conference.

Termination of Conference Membership

¶5520

- A. Conference membership ceases when:
 1. a conference honors the request of an ordained minister to return to lay membership status in a local church and receives the minister's credentials;
 2. an ordained minister voluntarily withdraws from the conference and denomination, having surrendered credentials (see ¶7170.C.4);
 3. a conference allows an accused minister to surrender credentials and return to lay membership in a local church (see ¶7170.C.3);
 4. a conference allows an accused minister to surrender credentials and withdraw from the conference and denomination under charges or complaints (see ¶7170.C.5);
 5. an ordained minister joins another denomination; or
 6. an ordained minister is expelled (see ¶7170.C.6).
- B. Conference relationships change when ordained ministers are located, either voluntarily or by unilateral action of the conference. In such instances their memberships and voting rights are transferred to the churches where they are located while they remain accountable to the conference for their doctrinal integrity and character (see ¶5610, ¶5620).
- C. Ordained ministers who leave the church after complaints have been lodged against them and who regain membership by any means shall not be allowed to exercise any of the functions of the ministerial office until they have fulfilled the requirements for restoration according to ¶7230.

Special Cases of Appointments

Left without appointment

¶5600 An annual conference may, upon the unanimous recommendation of the ministerial appointments committee, leave a minister without an appointment. Any ordained minister left without an appointment two years in succession may be located by vote of the annual conference.

Leave of absence

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

Located

¶5620 When an ordained minister is located by an annual conference, the ministerial appointments committee shall fix the place of membership after consultation with the minister involved and the pastor and local board of administration of the church involved. Ordained persons in good standing shall be listed as located elders or located deacons as the case may be.

Return to Lay Status

¶5630 An ordained minister who leaves appointed ministry to pursue secular employment shall deposit his/her credentials with the secretary of the annual conference where membership is held. Individuals who wish to again pur-

sue active pastoral ministry must make application to and be recommended by the ministerial education and guidance board where their credentials are held. This does not pertain to special leaves of absence as authorized by the conference ministerial education and guidance board.

Licensed Pastor

¶5640

- A. Any person appointed to a church who is not a member of the annual conference in which he/she is appointed shall be designated a licensed pastor. A person becomes a licensed pastor when approved for ministry by the ministerial education and guidance board and appointed by the ministerial appointments committee. Licensed pastor status shall be renewed annually. Licensed pastors have the right to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper and solemnize marriages in that place if civil law permits.
- B. No person may be appointed to serve as a licensed pastor who does not meet the qualifications of a minister outlined in ¶5310, ¶5650.

Divorce and Remarriage

¶5650

A ministerial member of a conference who divorces or is divorced by his/her spouse may not remarry while the former spouse lives until, upon recommendation from the ministerial education and guidance board, the Board of Bishops reviews the case and determines that the minister has scriptural grounds for remarriage. A minister who marries contrary to these guidelines shall not be reappointed by the annual conference. This provision shall also apply to a minister whose spouse has been divorced from a mate who still lives.

Evangelists

¶5660

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

- B. General evangelists devote full time to their ministry. Conference evangelists are those limited by circumstances to a part-time ministry.
- C. All evangelists shall be recommended by the conference administrative committee and approved by the conference ministerial education and guidance board prior to their appointment by the ministerial appointments committee. They shall be entitled to the rights and privileges of those appointed to pastoral charges and shall be subject to the same rules and regulations, so far as they apply to their circumstances. They shall be subject to the restrictions of ¶5660.D. They shall prepare a prospectus for publicity and use the standard forms for evaluation.
- D. No evangelist shall appoint or hold meetings where he/she will interfere with the regular work of any society, without the consent of the pastor and the superintendent.

Located Deacons and Located Elders

¶5700

- A. Located deacons and located elders (persons holding ordination but not itinerating) shall have their names listed in the records of the annual conference and shall be accountable to the ministerial education and guidance board with respect to their character, conduct, and doctrine. They shall be located to a particular society by the ministerial appointments committee and shall function in ministry under the direction of that society (see ¶5620).
- B. A located deacon or located elder may be transferred to an itinerating ministry within the conference upon the recommendation of the ministerial education and guidance board, having given satisfactory answers to the questions of ¶8720 and having received the approving vote of the annual conference.

- C. Located deacons or located elders who move to another conference area shall approach the ministerial education and guidance board of that conference requesting that their membership be received. If and when a transfer is effected, it shall then be the responsibility of the ministerial appointments committee of the receiving conference to locate the deacon or elder.
- D. Located deacons and located elders shall function as exemplary members of the society where they are located. Neglect of duty, including persistent refusal to participate in the life of the Free Methodist Church when such participation is possible, shall subject them to the discipline of the conference ministerial education and guidance board. This discipline may include the request for surrender of ordination credentials. However, no located deacon or located elder shall be deprived of ordination credentials without due process.
- E. Located deacons and located elders shall be approved annually by the ministerial education and guidance board, upon recommendation by the pastor and local board of administration of the church where they are located.

Evaluation of Ministry Effectiveness

Preface

¶5800

- A. The evaluation of ministry effectiveness is intended to provide insight for the pastor and congregation on their effectiveness in ministry. In addition, the information gleaned from the evaluation is valuable to both the conference ministerial appointments committee and ministerial education and guidance board as each carries out its work.
- B. The ministerial education and guidance board not only certifies pastors for work in the conference but also through this evaluation, identifies areas of pas-

toral ministry which need improvement and facilitates this training.

- C. The ministerial appointments committee makes its decisions after reflection on information and perspectives from the delegate(s), recommendations from the superintendent, a confidential report from the pastor and the results from the evaluation.
- D. All who participate in the evaluation are encouraged to do so with Christian grace, prayer and fasting, as the Lord may lead.
- E. The elements of the evaluation of ministry effectiveness include:
 - 1. annual staff evaluations to be handled by the senior pastor and local board of administration. For each conference-appointed staff person, the ministerial education and guidance board will review the local board of administration's evaluation as well as the character of these individuals.
 - 2. a pastoral evaluation conducted annually by the superintendent to assist the pastor in setting goals and objectives for his/her ministry. The results of each evaluation shall be submitted in appropriate form by the superintendent to the ministerial education and guidance board and/or ministerial appointments committee. Periodically, the superintendent will review progress with the pastor. The pastor will review the evaluation with the pastors cabinet and/or the local board of administration.
 - 3. an evaluation of its ministry effectiveness by each church every three years with the society's participation. The superintendent or designee, with the pastor, will facilitate the evaluation. The results will be communicated to the church, and shared with the ministerial education and guidance board. If the stability or mission of a local church is

threatened, any member of the local board of administration may move to request assistance from a conference intervention team. If passed by a majority vote of the local board of administration, then the pastor, board of administration vice chair or annual conference delegate shall make this request known to the conference superintendent who will respond within previously-established conference guidelines.

4. an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of conference ministries, provided during the local church ministry effectiveness evaluation.
5. the use of evaluation tools developed by the ministerial education and guidance board in consultation with the area bishop.