

**CHAPTER II**  
**THE PASTOR AS SHEPHERD**  
**THE MINISTRY OF PASTORAL CARE**

The Apostle Peter urged pastors to care for God's flock like a shepherd (1 Peter 5:2). To care is to share in the joys and burdens of others: "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15). True pastoral care requires professional skill, but more importantly, a caring concern and a shepherd's heart. Beware of cold performance in ministry that does not enter into the personal lives of your people.

Like no other professional, the pastor is allowed the high privilege to be with his or her people in the important times of life such as birth, conversion/baptism, marriage and death. There will be many other occasions of celebration or crisis where the pastor is invited. At such times the pastor is a representative of Christ.

The caring pastor ministers to the flock in many ways, including the spirit in which he or she conducts worship, coordinates administration, and oversees the educational, evangelistic and outreach endeavors. But the loving concern shown to individuals is remembered most by grateful parishioners.

The 1995 General Conference recognized the responsibilities, and therefore, the requirements, of ministers. For those called to deal with the souls of people and who lead them in spiritual development the following qualities and skills for pastoral care are needed:

1. Loves his or her family as Christ loves the Church.
2. Responds appropriately and warmly to people.
3. Embodies a passion for making disciples.
4. Ensures appropriate care for the people of God.
5. Builds up people and inspires hope.
6. Demonstrates interpersonal skills.
7. Resolves conflict effectively.

*Book of Discipline, Par. A/504*

Through these natural gifts and trained skills the Holy Spirit makes ministry effective. The 1995 General Conference put spiritual qualifications first for the ordained ministry. Read and consider these carefully and prayerfully:

**Spiritual Qualifications:**

1. Committed to Jesus Christ as Lord.
2. Evidences integrity through holiness of heart and life.
3. Displays the fruit of the Holy Spirit.
4. Receives and gives forgiveness.

5. Possesses healthy self-esteem and maintains a positive attitude.
6. Demonstrates faith, creativity and initiative.
7. Respects people regardless of race, gender or economic status.
8. Models a teachable spirit.

The shepherd figure is an appropriate analogy for pastoral care. It conveys the responsibility and privilege of knowing each member of the flock and in turn being known by them. But in a growing congregation this cannot be done alone. The pastor-shepherd will recruit and train under-shepherds in the care of the flock of God. Sharing this ministry with the laity creates a loving fellowship. The Body grows as each member serves and cares for others. Blessed is the pastor-shepherd who leads a caring congregation. Such a faithful pastor will have the appreciation of the flock and the approval of the Chief Shepherd.

### **Specific Duties of Pastors**

By action of the 1995 General Conference the personal qualifications for ordained ministry in the Free Methodist Church are described in paragraphs A/502 through A/506 in the *Book of Discipline*. At the instruction of the Board of Bishops, the responsibilities of pastors as found in previous issues of the *Book of Discipline* are included here.

The duties of a pastor who has the charge of a pastoral appointment are:

1. To look after the spiritual and temporal interests of the church or churches to which appointed.
2. To receive and dismiss members according to the *Book of Discipline*; provided, however, that no person shall be recorded on the register as "withdrawn at his/her own request" until the action is approved by the official board.
3. To see that the other pastors on the pastoral charge are exemplary in conduct and are well cared for.
4. To examine each of the leaders concerning the method of leading the Christian growth group (class), observe which leaders are the most useful and have these meet the other groups as often as possible, and see that all the leaders are persons not only of sound judgment, but truly devoted to God.
5. To hold services which contribute to wholesomeness among the people.
6. To give instruction concerning the meaning and observance of the Lord's Supper.
7. To celebrate the Lord's Supper quarterly and more often when possible.\*
8. To take care that every society is duly supplied with books.
9. To provide an exact count of all members to the annual conference for publication in the *Yearbook*, recording the names of local

- elders, local deacons, local ministerial candidates, and lay ministers.
10. To enter the following information in the permanent record book furnished by the official board as prescribed in Paragraph A/402.3, Sec. 4:
    - a. A complete and up-to-date account of all baptisms, weddings, and funerals;
    - b. A list of the names and addresses of all members, with time and method of reception, date of birth and baptism, completion of pastoral instruction classes of each, and time and reason for termination of membership.
  11. To report quarterly to the official board the entries made in the record book during the quarter.
  12. To leave to the next pastor an account of the society, with the permanent record book, and a list of the subscribers to our periodicals.
  13. To enforce vigorously, but calmly, all the rules of the society.
  14. As soon as there are four believers in any place to put them into a Christian growth group (cell).
  15. To promote church planting at the general, conference, and local level; to seek opportunities to plant new churches; to encourage the pastoral charge to sponsor a church planting project.
  16. To meet the societies and Christian growth groups (classes); to visit the sick; to visit all persons in the congregation whenever practicable, and train others to do the same.
  17. To welcome the use of all means of proclamation and evangelism which can be effectively implemented and financed.
  18. To be sure that none are transferred from one society to another without a letter of transfer from the pastor.
  19. To recommend everywhere decency and cleanliness.
  20. To use the membership covenant once a year in every society.
  21. To see that the trustees are elected and that the real estate belonging to the church is secured according to the civil laws.
  22. To see that no steps are taken involving the society in financial liability, without the consent of the official board.
  23. To preach on systematic and proportionate giving, encouraging our people to tithe their incomes, warning the people of the evil consequences to themselves and the church of God of covetousness and withholding of their means from supporting the gospel. (See Par. A/804.)
  24. To see that all financial obligations ordered by the conference are raised in full.
  25. To send the name and address of any person of the constituency who moves from the community to the pastor or superintendent of the Free Methodist church in the conference to which such person moves. (See Par. B/481, Sec. 3:e)
  26. To see that our members keep their covenants with regard to financial and contract obligations, and membership in secret societies (Par. A/321) and labor organizations (Par. A/338).
  27. To employ Free Methodist evangelists whenever possible. Pastors shall not employ evangelists who are not members of our

church without first consulting with and securing the consent of the superintendent and the official board.

28. To provide for the culture of converts by such instruction and encouragement as will help them go on into a definite experience of entire sanctification; to inform youth and preparatory members of the privileges, duties, and responsibilities of membership, using particularly *Belonging*, the *Book of Discipline*, the history of the Free Methodist Church, and such other materials as the church provides; and to form classes for the purpose wherever practicable, but in no case neglecting to see that each person receives this care.
29. To remind the board of Christian education of the urgency of using Free Methodist Sunday school curriculum materials in every Sunday school class and to promote the use of the denominational magazine by every member.
30. To provide opportunities for local ministerial candidates to determine and develop their gifts for ministry in such ways as:
  - a. proclaiming the gospel;
  - b. assisting the pastor in visitation;
  - c. assisting in conducting public worship services; and
  - d. participating fully in the local church program, witnessing to the unsaved, winning them to Christ, and nurturing them in Christian living.
31. To perform the following duties on special occasions:
  - a. to observe Christian College Day;
  - b. to hold a Children's Day service the second Sunday in June;
  - c. to preach a sermon on practical charity (Par. B/463, sec.6);
  - d. to read Wesley's sermon on Evil Speaking;
  - e. to use the membership covenant once a year in every society;
  - f. to see that a day of fasting and prayer is planned in every society on the first day of each month and at such other times as required by the *Book of Discipline* (Pars. A/407, A/430(2), A/442, B/481(2:d);
  - g. to foster Sunday schools and child evangelism;
  - h. to promote on a regular basis spiritual growth and renewal through revival meetings and revival preaching; and
  - i. to encourage and engage in regular prison ministry.
32. To promote Free Methodist missions through a year-round program of missions emphasis in cooperation with the local board of world missions and the local missions coordinator. (See Par. B/496.)
33. To continually focus on equipping members for works of service, helping each one to exercise their God-given gifts in appropriate ways.
34. To encourage by example and instruction the establishment of cells and the multiplication of the same.
35. To lead the church in strengthening the "desired outcomes" noted on page 226 of this Handbook.

\* All persons appointed as pastors are authorized to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to their respective congregations.

## PASTORAL CARE IN CRISIS

A large portion of the pastor's work will be with those who are in trouble. Affliction, disguised in many forms, stalks the pathway of life. Troubled hearts need the ministry of a spiritual shepherd who understands and cares.

Sometimes disappointment or serious illness shatters the hopes of a household. Financial reverses mar the tranquility of a well-ordered family. A wayward son, an erring daughter, a reckless brother bring sadness, disgrace, and heartbreak to a home. A tragic accident or untimely death smashes ruthlessly into another home. Hearts are aching and need the ministry of comfort and understanding.

Into such tragic hours as these the pastor is privileged to come with a ministry of kindness, understanding, and helpfulness in Christ's name.

Do not hesitate. Go immediately. Comfort your people.

If conflict or misunderstanding has come between members of your congregation, you may help to heal a wound or right a wrong. Those you serve will love you ever afterward. A frank talk with those involved may halt misunderstanding or heal a festering sore. By dealing honestly in love you may save further tragedy. Nathan did a full day's work when he dealt frankly with David, "You are the man."

If a son or daughter has fallen into open disgrace, go at once to the home. You may be able to give wise and confidential counsel. This is no time to condemn, but a time to show an understanding spirit.

If tidings of serious sickness come, lose no time in visiting that home; a soul may be near eternity and need your prayers.

When a parishioner falls into temptation, perhaps unaware of tragic consequences, the pastor-shepherd will exercise the ministry of loving confrontation and rescue, just as a shepherd firmly uses his staff to save a wayward sheep. Speak the truth in love to help one of the flock from wandering far from the fold of God's protection.

When death has come, do not try to stop the tears of those in sorrow or deep grief. Tears relieve troubled hearts and often keep them from breaking. Gradually, gently, lead the sorrowing to think of the other side. True comfort comes when we think things through in the light of the eternal purposes of God for each of us. An appropriate prayer, placed naturally at the proper moment, will help greatly.

If it seems wise to read the Scriptures in the home where trouble has come, read briefly, then pray in the spirit of consolation with direct reference to those in trouble. Use whole portions of Scripture where possible rather than scattered verses, but do not let the selection

become long because the powers of concentration suffer when trouble comes.

### **Scriptures for Visitation in Crisis**

#### Scriptures for the Troubled:

Psalm 46	Isaiah 12:1-2
Isaiah 26:3-9	Isaiah 43:1-3
John 14:1-7, 27	Romans 8:28, 31, 37-39
1 Peter 5:7-11	

#### Scriptures for Use in Time of Sickness:

Psalm 23	Psalms 27:1-6
Psalms 46:10-11	Psalm 111
Psalm 121	Isaiah 40:3-5, 11, 29-31
John 10:11-18	Revelation 21:2-4

#### Scriptures for the Christian Whose Life Is Ebbing Away:

Psalms 51:10-12, 15	Isaiah 55:1a, 6-13
Matthew 11:28-30	Luke 2:29-32
John 3:16-21	John 11:25-26
Hebrews 12:1-2	

#### Scriptures for Use in the Home Where Death Has Come:

Psalms 31:24, 19, 20a	Deuteronomy 33:27
Psalms 34:4-5, 7-9	Psalms 103:1-18
2 Corinthians 4:7-12, 16-18	
James 1:2-4, 12	

## MEMBERSHIP CARE

Membership integrity is a hallmark of the authentic Body of Christ. Primary responsibility for maintaining an honorable membership role rests with the pastor. The task is too demanding to be done alone. Sensitive, dedicated, and knowledgeable members of the congregation must work with the pastor to achieve and maintain membership integrity.

The 1985 General Conference made provision to assist the local church by establishing the Membership Care Committee. (See *Book of Discipline*, Pars. A/402.3, Sec. 10, and A/404.4.) Subsequently, a Membership Care Committee Handbook was prepared to provide practical assistance to pastor and people of each local church. Every pastor is urged to become familiar with this handbook in order to guide the local Membership Care Committee in its work.

The Membership Care Committee Handbook is available through Light & Life Communications, 1-800-348-2513.

Membership care should continue when members move from their ministry area. Forms are available from the Board of Bishops office which can be used to alert fellow Free Methodist pastor(s) that a member(s) from your congregation is moving to their region. Using these forms would also provide you with a record of your timely response and pastoral follow-up. If a member moves to a region where no Free Methodist Church is located, it is recommended that the form be sent to the pastor of a sister denomination. This may require some research to assure that you are connecting your friend to a healthy congregation.

## SERVICE OF PRAYER FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN

Hymns

Old Testament Readings \*

Corporate Prayer \*\*

Pastoral Prayer

New Testament Scriptures \*\*

Sermon on Forgiveness

Prayer at the Altar

    Presentation of Forgiveness Cards \*\*\*

    Prayer by pastor for each person responding

*(The pastor must exercise complete confidentiality in both the prayer and the handling of forgiveness cards.)*

Opportunity for Testimonies

Hymn

Closing Prayer of Thanksgiving

Benediction

### \* SCRIPTURE READINGS

Old Testament: Ezra 10:1; Psalms 34:4-18; 41; 85:1-7; 103; Isaiah 43:25; 44:22; 44:7; 57:14-21; Ezekiel 18:31.

New Testament: Matthew 6:12-25; 18:21-35; Luke 15:11-13; 17:14; 18:9-14; Acts 3:19; Ephesians 1:7; 4:32; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 John 1:9.

### \*\* CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

Almighty and most merciful God, we acknowledge and confess we have sinned against Your holiness. We have not loved You with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbor as ourselves. We plead with You, O God, to forgive us for our shortcomings. Help us to amend our ways, and in Your mercy direct our future paths so that Your love and goodness may ever reign unrivaled in our hearts. May we henceforth always walk in Your ways, blamelessly, and follow in the footsteps of Jesus, Your Son, to our life's end. In His name we pray. Amen.

*or:*

Almighty Father, Lord of heaven and earth, we confess we have sinned against You and You only. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us according to Your goodness. In Your great grace, blot out our offenses. Wash us thoroughly from our wickedness and cleanse us from our sins; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**\*\*\* FORGIVENESS CARD**

I confess

It involves a broken relationship with (if appropriate)

I forego all revenge

I seek the forgiveness of Christ \_\_, others \_\_, and the church \_\_. I accept Christ's forgiveness now \_\_.

Signature

## RESTORATION OF ERRANT MEMBERS

The following is an adaptation of the covenant approved for the restoration of pastors under discipline for use by local church membership care committees or official boards in the restoration of errant lay members. It is not a mandate or official form but a guide for assisting the local church in maintaining membership integrity by restoring those who have erred.

### MODEL COVENANT OF RESTORATION

This agreement is entered into as a covenant by and between, a lay member of the \_\_\_\_\_ Free Methodist Church and the (official board, membership care committee, other group) of this church. The subject and the committee acknowledge and accept the introductory statements, and agree to abide by the covenants and promises in this agreement, all for the purpose of transcending past disciplinary action, acknowledging repentance and forgiveness of the subject, and seeking full reconciliation within the congregation and the Free Methodist Church through the restoration process and procedures detailed in this *Covenant of Restoration*.

### INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS

**Whereas**, we believe that Christians who have willfully sinned and severed their relationship with Christ may by repentance before God be granted forgiveness and restoration of their relationship with Christ; and that God has given responsibility and authority to the church to discipline a member for conduct unbecoming a Christian and to restore a penitent believer through loving reproof, counsel and acceptance; and

**Whereas**, the subject has submitted to the discipline of this church, repented from such conduct which has been confessed to God and the committee, and has demonstrated genuine sorrow; and

**Whereas**, it is the hope and desire of this church to go beyond accepting the repentance and forgiveness of the subject to nurturing full restoration to membership and service in this church

### TERMS OF AGREEMENT

**Now therefore**, in consideration of the foregoing statements, it is hereby covenanted and agreed before God that:

1. **Authority.** The subject accepts the authority of the committee and understands that growth and reconciliation through the restoration process requires submission to the guidance and counsel of the committee, which retains judgment and discretion to counsel, direct,

and determine satisfaction of the goals and agreements in this *Covenant of Agreement*.

2. **Goal of Restoration.** The parties agree to pursue every effort that love can suggest to assure complete restoration, with the express goal of seeing the subject returned to membership and service in the Free Methodist Church.

3. **Restitution for Wrongs.** Where the effects of wrongdoing have touched the lives of others, the parties acknowledge that reconciliation and restitution is required for complete healing to occur. The subject agrees that, with guidance and counsel from the committee, he or she will make every effort to seek individual forgiveness and, where appropriate, make restitution for wrongs committed which have caused harm to others.

4. **Relationship With the Church.** The support of the local church is essential to complete restoration through sharing renewal and spiritual growth, regaining confidence, and re-establishing credibility. The subject agrees to follow the guidance and counsel of the committee to maintain and expand relationships with the local church and its members, and to worship and associate regularly with them.

5. **Personal Growth and Development.** In order to assure continued personal growth and development, the subject agrees to seek out and accept the counsel and guidance of the committee for additional direction and resources which will foster the goals and purposes of this *Covenant of Restoration*.

6. **Meetings.** To assure the ongoing counsel and guidance of the committee the subject agrees to meet with them on a regular basis as agreed by both parties.

**IN WITNESS THEREOF**, the parties agree in the presence of God, and through their testament and signatures, to abide by and fulfill this *Covenant of Restoration*.

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

Local church committee by:

## PASTORAL SABBATICAL GUIDELINES

At the instruction of the 1995 General Conference, the Board of Bishops prepared the following set of guidelines to assist local churches and pastors in planning a sabbatical leave for the pastor and family.

1. A sabbatical leave is both a recognition of past service and an opportunity to enrich future ministry.
2. Time of service requirements for eligibility and the amount of lead time needed to process applications shall be established by each conference.
3. After consultation with the superintendent, sabbatical leave shall be agreed upon between the pastor and the local church before applying to the MEG Board or MAC. Preparation for sabbatical leave has two parts: The agreement with the church containing arrangements for pulpit supplies, pastoral care and administrative oversight during the absence of the pastor and the sabbatical plan to be submitted to the MEG Board for approval.
4. Requests for sabbatical leave shall be filed with the superintendent and approved by the MEG Board. Such request shall include a plan for use of sabbatical time and the expected benefits from the experience.
5. At the conclusion of the sabbatical leave a report shall be filed with the MEG Board describing the activities and benefits of the sabbatical leave and a report made to the church.
6. Sabbatical leave is not to be used for personal financial advantage.

— April 25, 1996