

2024 Edition

Ministerial Education and Guidance Manual of the Free Methodist Church USA

with excerpts from the
2023 Book Of Discipline



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2023 Book Of Discipline*

*“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ”
(Ephesians 4:11–13).*

Free Methodist Church USA 2024 *Ministerial Education and Guidance Manual*

Written and compiled by Steve Tungate, Director of the Center for Pastoral Formation

Proofreading by Jill Carr and Jeff Finley

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Dedication

*To all those who work in the training and
equipping of the next generation of ministry
leaders through their faithful service on
conference MEG Boards.*

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List of Abbreviations

AFMEI	Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions
BOA	Board of Administration (there may be distinctions among Local Church BOA, Conference BOA, and FMCUSA BOA)
BOD	2023 <i>Book of Discipline</i>
CMC	Conference Ministerial Candidate
CPF	Center for Pastoral Formation
FMCUSA	Free Methodist Church USA
JWSF	John Wesley Seminary Foundation
LMC	Local Ministerial Candidate
MEG	Ministerial Education and Guidance Board
OBO	Outcomes-Based Ordination

Preface

As I look back over my years in ministry, especially the earlier foundational years, I am grateful for the pastors, professors, and lay people who served as mentors. These women and men taught and encouraged me and provided me with opportunities to serve in ministry. Their investment in my life laid a foundation upon which further education and experience continued to build, shaping the pastor and person whom I am becoming.

Serving on the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board in your conference is a great privilege and comes with a heavy responsibility. You serve in a ministry that will form and shape the women and men with whom you work into the pastors and people whom they are becoming. Your role may impact the conference and broader denomination for decades to come.

This manual serves to inform and guide conference Ministerial Education and Guidance (MEG) Boards through the policies and procedures for training, equipping, encouraging, and credentialing women and men called to ministry from the initial training on through continued clergy care. This edition of the *MEG Manual* draws from previous editions, the most recent *Book of Discipline*, and other resources to offer teaching, best practices, forms, and guidance to help you serve in the role to which you have been elected. The excerpts from the *Book of Discipline* allow for easy access to matters of polity as they pertain to the various aspects of MEG Board service. The material was organized in a way that allows for cover-to-cover reading while also serving as a reference book with materials arranged topically in an easy-to-find manner. Therefore, you are encouraged to bring this manual with you to MEG Board meetings and interviews for occasions when consultation of the *Book of Discipline* or other materials in this book are needed.

I pray and trust that you will utilize the tools in this manual, along with a heart to encourage, strength to appropriately challenge, and wisdom to guide ministerial candidates along a trajectory of effective ministry for years to come. May your work build up others and advance the kingdom of God.

—Steve Tungate,
Director of the Center for Pastoral Formation, FMCUSA

Mission of the Free Methodist Church USA:

“To love God, love people, and make disciples.”

Vision of the Free Methodist Church USA:

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



Introduction

The Free Methodist Way: Five Values that Shape our Identity¹

Life-Giving Holiness

God's call to holiness was never meant to be a burden, but a gift that liberates us for life that is truly life by delivering us from the destructive power of sin.

All who are born again are made right with God by the finished work of Jesus Christ and called to experience the fullness of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Forgiven and filled, we approach life with confidence that we are acceptable to God even as He continues to transform our character and behavior to become more and more like Jesus. Life-giving holiness, then, is the fruit of full surrender to the loving reign of God over every aspect of our lives, establishing within us love that is truly love.

Leaving behind the legalism that once hindered our movement, *The Free Methodist Way* invites every believer to embrace the transforming work of the Holy Spirit that empowers us to love and serve God and others in joyful obedience.

Love-Driven Justice

Love is the way we demonstrate God's heart for justice by valuing the image of God in all men, women, and children, acting with compassion toward the oppressed, resisting oppression, and stewarding Creation.

We devote ourselves to our founders' deep convictions around matters of injustice as they took their stand against the evils of slavery, the oppression of the poor, the marginalization of women, and the abuse of power in the church. Our heart for justice continues and expands today, fueled by God's holy love for the unborn, the vulnerable, oppressed, marginalized, and people of all races and ethnicities.

¹ The following text was taken from the brochure by this name published by the Free Methodist Church USA.

The Free Methodist Way is not only to realize a better society, but that all may be reconciled to God and one another in ways that reflect God's just character.

Christ-Compelled Multiplication

The gospel of Jesus Christ — the message He proclaimed, the life He lived, and the ministry He modeled — set into motion a redemptive movement destined to fill the whole earth.

Jesus' approach to discipleship was primarily a relational one in which He poured His life into a few with the full expectation that they would follow His example. His aim was not merely the transmission of information, but the transformation of lives by empowering those who followed Him to do what He had been doing. His mission is now our mission. We believe this redemptive movement of multiplication applies to every believer and should permeate our Free Methodist culture at every level: the found reaching the lost, disciples making disciples, leaders developing leaders, churches planting churches, and movements birthing movements.

The Free Methodist Way is to see God's kingdom expand exponentially as ordinary people are equipped by God's power to do extraordinary things.

Cross-Cultural Collaboration

From the beginning, God's intent was to have a people from every nation, culture and ethnicity, united in Christ and commissioned to carry out His work in the world.

Today we celebrate the beauty of a multicultural and multiethnic church both in the U.S. and in over 100 countries around the world. In the U.S., we cling to the promise that we have been made one in Christ even as we dedicate ourselves to becoming a more diverse church that looks like the kingdom of God. Globally, we continue to send missionaries to other nations even as we rejoice that the nations are increasingly coming to us. Freely sharing our own gifts and resources, we are also challenged and inspired by the faithfulness, perseverance, ceaseless prayer, theological insights, and spiritual wisdom of our international brothers and sisters. Without question, we are better together.

The Free Methodist Way aspires to move beyond colonialism and ethnocentrism in favor of a collaborative partnership in God's global work in anticipation of the day when a great multitude from every tongue, tribe, people and language makes up the eternal throng before the throne of God (Revelation 7:9).

God-Given Revelation

We hold unwaveringly to our conviction that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and our final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

Drawing on our Wesleyan heritage of engaging with Scripture through the lenses of tradition, reason, and experience, we keep Scripture primary. While the church will always be tasked with authentically communicating and applying biblical truths with sensitivity to cultural dynamics, we do not subjugate the Bible's timeless truths to cultural norms or social trends.

The Free Methodist Way is to fully align our lives and our movement on the unshakeable foundation of God's Word.

Excerpts from the *Book of Discipline*

This manual includes many excerpts from the most recent edition of the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church USA. The *Book of Discipline* (BOD) serves to establish the standard for character, beliefs, organizational structures, polity, and rituals in the Free Methodist Church USA. As part of these important aspects of Free Methodism, it also presents the standards and processes for deacon and clergy credentialing, training, and care, as well as guidelines for the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board. Therefore, lengthy quotes are included in this manual for quick reference and clarification on processes and procedures as they pertain to the work of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards.

Introduction to the Center for Pastoral Formation

The Center for Pastoral Formation (CPF) began in February of 2021. The new Center formed as a partnership between the Free Methodist Church USA and Greenville University through a generous endowment given by the Bastian family. The Center for Pastoral Formation serves as a resource and networking center for annual conferences and mission districts, Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards, mentors, instructors, and Free Methodist educational institutions to provide robust spiritual, theological, and practical training platforms to equip the next generation of ministry leaders in the Free Methodist Church USA, track their progress, and uphold standards for ministerial credentialing and continuing education.

The Center may be contacted at the following:

Greenville University
315 East College Avenue
Greenville, Illinois 62246

World Ministries Center: 317-244-3660

An Overview of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board

The Ministerial Education and Guidance (MEG) Board oversees the progress, training, and screening of ministerial candidates, encourages and supports pastors in their work, affirms the integrity and Christian discipleship of those serving in ministry within their conference, and manages the transfers of clergy and ministerial candidates to and from other conferences and denominations. The MEG Board is the primary recruiting, training, vetting, encouraging, and disciplinary body for ministerial candidates and ordained women and men within their respective annual conference.

When establishing a MEG Board, it is necessary to maintain a lay and clergy balance. It is strongly recommended that the board consist of members who also represent a male and female balance and represent the diversity found within the conference. This may include racial and ethnic diversity, socioeconomic diversity, and a blend of persons representing urban, suburban, and rural subcultures. It is also helpful to include, if possible, at least one member who holds a graduate degree(s) in theology, one licensed counselor, and all who are “full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit.”

Some conferences opt to have more than one regional MEG Board, especially those covering multiple states. The above recommendations should be applied to the regional MEG Boards as well. In such cases, a conference may want to consider forming a central MEG Board to handle important matters of affirming women and men for ordination, setting policies, and dealing with occasions of clergy discipline and restoration, among others.

Most conferences follow the traditional structure outlined in the *Book of Discipline* having a Ministerial Appointments Committee (MAC) separate from but all serving on the MEG Board. Some conferences, however, opt to have a combined MEG/MAC to handle pastoral formation and appointments. Matters pertaining to the MAC may be found in a later chapter near the end of this manual.

From the 2023 *Book of Discipline of the Free Methodist Church USA*:

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. Members of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board may be re-elected to multiple rotating terms, contingent upon their ongoing effective service.

- C. The total membership of the Board shall be established by the annual conference with due regard to a proper division between laypersons and ministers, and to provide sufficient number of members so that at least four members can convene when needed and where needed to fulfill the responsibilities required by the *Book of Discipline*.
- 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 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 bishop of record, is the authority on the meeting of the standard criteria for ordination. Requests for waivers regarding any of these standard criteria shall be made to the Board of Bishops. (See ¶5410, for these standard criteria.)
- H. The Board shall guide and counsel those who are received 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 may grant a certificate of standing with view to transfer to another conference during the interim between annual conference sessions.
- K. 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).
- L. 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 societies 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).²

² 2023 *Book of Discipline of the Free Methodist Church USA*, pp. 101-102

A Note on Confidentiality

Serving on the MEG Board often involves interactions with people on a deep and personal level while also having access to sensitive information. Therefore, you are asked to maintain confidentiality to protect the privacy of the ministerial candidates and the clergy with whom you meet. This confidentiality will be in keeping with the *Book of Discipline* ¶7160-7190, and with the Ministerial Ethics Agreement, which calls for a “promise to keep sacred all that is shared in confidence” (see Appendix C). Your conference will ask you to sign a statement of confidentiality; a sample may be found in the appendices of this manual.

An Overview of Ordained Ministry

2023 *Book of Discipline* on 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.³

The Process: Local and Conference Ministerial Candidates and Consecrated Deacons

Pastoral formation in the Free Methodist Church USA focuses on developing the *heart, head, and hands* of women and men called into ministry through a process involving mentoring relationships, academic courses, and practical hands-on ministry. This threefold approach is applied to two separate paths: that leading toward Consecrated Deacon or that leading toward ordination as an Elder. When one senses a call to ministry, she or he will meet with their local church pastor or the pastor's designee to begin a process of prayerful discernment. The pastor and /or laypersons in the church may also initiate the conversation with persons in whom they may observe a possible call to ministry. If the individual, the pastor, and the church board agree, the woman or man sensing a call to ministry will begin the journey at the first stage as a Local Ministerial Candidate (LMC). After a certain pre-determined level of mentoring, coursework, and ministry experience is met, the candidate and mentor will prayerfully determine the next steps: apply their training to continued lay ministry, enter the path toward Consecrated Deacon, or begin the path of Conference Ministerial Candidate (CMC) toward possible ordination as Elder in the Free Methodist Church USA. It is important to remember that this is a discernment process with no guaranteed outcomes.

2023 Book of Discipline on Ordained Ministry

The Ordained Ministry 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 a heart attuned to God and others, a mind appropriately informed for the work of ministry, and hands equipped for effective service.

³ 2023 *Book of Discipline of the Free Methodist Church USA*, pp. 103-104

- B. The Free Methodist Church prepares elders and leaders who will serve effectively in any context. Preparing for ministry with a solid education is a rich part of our heritage as Free Methodists and an integral part of developing leaders. A baseline of a Bachelor's degree (B.S./B.A. or equivalent) and some graduate work in theology is what we envision. We urge our candidates to entrust this part of their journey to one of our AFMEI institutions. While this may not always be possible or practical, still our colleges and universities remain essential partners in shaping the future of the Free Methodist Church.
- C. Outcomes-Based Ordination emphasizes candidate proficiency in 15 areas of qualification for ministry (see ¶5410.B). Candidates will enter this process with varying degrees of preparation and readiness; as such, Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards have the freedom to design formation plans according to the needs of the candidate.
- D. 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.

Steps Leading Toward Ordination.

¶5320+

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

- A. The person recognized by the Church as having the call of God to pastoral ministry is licensed as a local ministerial candidate (LMC) (see ¶6500).
- B. Acceptance by the annual conference as a conference ministerial candidate.
- C. Conference ministerial candidates (CMC), 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. be thoroughly acquainted with the history and conversant with the polity of the Free Methodist Church, normally as provided in an approved course of study;
 - 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 and an assigned coach/mentor;
 - 6. maintain membership in a Free Methodist Society;
 - 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 Ministerial Education and Guidance Board, the conference superintendent and the bishop. 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 and determine readiness based on the 15 areas measured in the Outcomes-Based Ordination assessment (see ¶5410).

E. The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board may recommend the Consecrated Deacon track to a candidate for reasons when:

1. A Conference Ministerial Candidate (CMC) who is called to a specialized ministry but not the general itinerant ministry of a Free Methodist elder.
2. A CMC who is called to pastoral ministry in the Free Methodist Church, but due to age, or language skills is not able to complete all of the preparations for becoming an elder.
3. A CMC who desires to continue in ministry in the Free Methodist Church but needs to suspend completing the course of study for an extended season (e.g. personal, vocational, or medical reasons).

To be considered as a Consecrated Deacon the candidate must complete the Local Ministerial Candidate (LMC) vetting process and 50% or more of the core curriculum for CMCs (including FM History and Polity, Old Testament and New Testament Survey Courses, Wesleyan Theology, and one or more practical ministry courses, internship, or practicum).

The Conference MEG Board presents qualified conference ministerial candidates to be confirmed as Consecrated Deacons. Following their confirmation, a Consecrated Deacon shall receive a card stating his/her status with the Conference. A Consecrated Deacon maintains the same relationship with the annual conference that he/she had as a CMC. If at a later time a Consecrated Deacon desires to seek ordination, he/she may contact the MEG Board to reengage with the ordination process. If a Consecrated Deacon seeks a transfer to another conference, he/she could do so as a CMC/Consecrated Deacon.

- F. A conference ministerial candidate shall be interviewed annually, for sufficient time to demonstrate proficiency and fruitfulness commensurate with ordination and conference membership. Normally this will be a period of 2 to 3 years. (See ¶5010.C)
- G. When a conference ministerial candidate is under appointment to a society 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, including election as a delegate to general conference, he/she is considered a “lay person.”
- H. A conference ministerial candidate appointed by a Ministerial Appointments Committee to have charge of a society or with the superintendent’s approval may administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper and solemnize marriages in that place, if civil law permits.

Elder's Orders

¶5400

- A. A minister may be received into membership, elected to elder's orders and granted a seat in the annual conference upon providing satisfactory answers to conference membership questions (see ¶8720) and receiving the recommendation of the MEG Board based on his/her demonstrated proficiency in the 15 Outcomes-Based Ordination areas (see ¶5410).
- 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 pastor.

Section 1:
**Ministerial Preparation
and Pastoral Formation**



Chapter 1

Ministry Preparation

Ministerial Calling

The Apostle Paul provided a few different lists that describe the God-given gifts and abilities granted to followers of Jesus. In Romans 12, Paul identified some of these gifts, which are offered through the grace of God by virtue of belonging to the greater body of Christ. These include prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, and showing mercy. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul specified that these are distributed by the Holy Spirit. He also included teaching and prophesying, while adding wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in different kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

In Ephesians 4:11, Paul provided a similar list, yet with a clear distinction from the former compilations. In his letter to the believers in Ephesus, he identified roles to which women and men are appointed by the unique and specific call of Jesus. These include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. In other words, God, through the Holy Spirit, provides spiritual abilities as an offer of grace to all followers of Jesus, yet sets apart some for distinctive positions of responsibility “to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”⁴

⁴ Ephesians 4:12

God still gifts followers of Jesus today. Likewise, Jesus still sets apart women and men for specific roles in ministry for the greater good of the whole body of believers. The MEG board is tasked with an exercise of discernment—prayerfully listening and applying wisdom to affirm the call of Jesus on the lives of women and men for roles of ministry service that will move others toward spiritual maturity.

Various Means of Calling

In his book *Flourishing in Ministry: How to Cultivate Clergy Wellbeing*, Matt Bloom offers sound guidance for developing clergy health, drawing from the wealth of research conducted through the Flourishing in Ministry project funded by Templeton Religion Trust and Lilly Endowment Inc. There, he identified three means of ministerial calling experienced by women and men serving in pastoral ministry as found in their study. They include *discernment*, *exploration*, and *thunderous calling*.

Bloom summarized the *discernment* path as that which was “followed by many first-career pastors. Discernment unfolded over long periods of time, often years, and followed a process of self-discovery, mentorship, imagining possible futures, and an eventual and often powerful acknowledgment of the pastoral call.”⁵ He went on to assert that this path “was most likely to lead to the formation of an authentic, valid pastoral identity” and was “the best path to flourishing in ministry.”⁶ This type of calling often comes early in life and is accompanied by a season of self-discovery and multiple *exemplars*—women and men who model and/or mentor what it means to be a pastor.

Those who followed a path of *exploration* were often those who entered ministry as a second career. “Exploration involved a search for meaningful work that often began with a secular job and sometimes followed through a series of secular work roles. It was through trying out different jobs that explorers learned about not only their talents and aptitudes but also their deepest values and beliefs.”⁷ He went to note that this path also has potential for flourishing in ministry but tends to have the most “pitfalls and obstacles.” Bloom found that many lacked mentors or “wise guides” early on and had to figure things out on their own. Other challenges also included their often condensed and accelerated path for training and pastoral formation.⁸

Bloom explained the *thunderous calling* as the path that “was followed by a smaller group of pastors, both in their first and second careers.”⁹ This type of calling comes in a moment or short duration of time—“usually a sudden, audible voice or a powerfully vivid dream.”¹⁰ Bloom found that

⁵ Matt Bloom. *Flourishing in Ministry: How to Cultivate Clergy Wellbeing*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 56.

⁶ Bloom, 57.

⁷ Bloom, 57.

⁸ Bloom, 64.

⁹ Bloom, 57.

¹⁰ Bloom, 57.

those who followed up a thunderous calling with a discernment process “were almost universally flourishing. However, pastors who experienced only a thunderous calling often struggled throughout their time in ministry, in large part because they did not form an authentic pastoral identity.”¹¹

As a MEG Board, it is important to be sensitive to the various ways through which God calls someone into ministry. There is no one-size-fits-all calling. This is also why the Free Methodist Church has traditionally allowed for multiple ways through which a woman or man may be educated and equipped for ministry. These various paths toward ministry come with their unique challenges and strengths as the *Flourishing in Ministry* research has found. It is also worth considering the various opportunities churches and annual conferences provide to assist women and men in hearing and responding to the call to ministry. A sermon on calling may provide the environment for someone to hear the thunderous call, a mentoring relationship may assist in the discernment process of a young adult, and a friendship with someone in their midcareer sorting through a season of uneasiness in their job may lead toward an exploration of ministry.

Forming a Pastoral Identity

The *Flourishing in Ministry* research also discovered certain key components to pastoral formation that lead to ministerial longevity. Not least of these components are *authenticity* and *pastoral identity*.

They found: that pastoral identities tend to form, for better or worse, early in ministry, usually by the time pastors are leading their second or third church. This means that most pastors either form an authentic pastoral identity early in their ministry service or they struggle with a fragmented, ill-formed pastoral identity for the remainder of their time in ministry.¹²

This highlights the significance of the formation process at the LMC and CMC levels of ministry preparation.

Bloom described this time of early preparation and *integration* as “the time in which individuals found a way of being a pastor that was both an expression of their true self that was personally authentic *and* a way of being a pastor that was an authentic pastoral vocation,” or what he called, “professionally legitimate.”¹³ Thus, important components of the ministerial candidacy process include solid training in pastoral theology and practice combined with a season of self-discovery. Multiple mentors, hands-on experience, and educational development will all serve in ways that are crucial to the development of ministerial candidates.

¹¹ Bloom, 57.

¹² Bloom, 57.

¹³ Bloom, 67.

Introduction to Outcomes-Based Ordination (OBO)

Outcomes-Based Ordination explains the basic approach to ministerial preparedness for service in the Free Methodist Church USA. This method focuses more on competency than on completion of particular obligations. Although there remain needs to establish certain requirements for ordination (i.e. coursework, ministry tasks, assignments, etc.) as means toward preserving standards and uniformity, assessing a candidate's preparedness will be measured by meeting fifteen competencies divided among the categories of *heart*, *head*, and *hands*. In other words, a candidate should demonstrate a level of spiritual maturity reflecting the fruit of the Spirit—*heart*; a deep theological understanding and ability to articulate biblical and theological truths—*head*; and a life of active ministry service—*hands*.

When evaluating these competencies, it is important to keep a few things in mind. Although women and men called to ordained ministry should have a degree of arrival at the competencies stated in the *Book of Discipline*, the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board ought to consider overall trajectories as well. In other words, the MEG Board should consider whether or not the candidate demonstrates a clear path of spiritual growth that will likely continue beyond ordination. Likewise, the MEG Board should evaluate the habits and discipline of the candidate as a lifelong learner and healthy practices that will ensure practical ministry for the long haul.

The 2023 *Book of Discipline* on Outcomes-Based Ordination:

Outcomes-Based Ordination

¶5410+

A. Outcomes-Based Qualifications

A candidate shall:

1. be initially approved by the society and granted a local ministerial candidate's license;
2. be granted conference ministerial candidacy at the recommendation of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board upon review of his/her portfolio and Outcomes-Based Ordination Assessment interview;
3. complete the prescribed process of coaching, assignments, coursework, and assessment from his/her Conference Ministerial Candidate Formation Plan;
4. expand his/her portfolio with documentation showing his/her progress through the CMC Formation Plan;

5. be interviewed and recommended by the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board to elder's orders; and
6. be approved by the annual conference and ordained by the presiding bishop or appointee.

B. Outcomes-Based Assessment

Heart Formation:

1. The candidate is characterized by spiritual maturity and a strong sense of call to ministry
 - Shaped by the spiritual disciplines
 - Identity and calling rooted firmly in Jesus Christ
 - Models a life of holiness led by the Spirit
2. The candidate demonstrates a high level of self-awareness
 - Understands and is able to articulate their strengths and weaknesses
 - Builds teams around blind-spots
 - Knows how their leadership/communication style impacts others both adversely as well as positively
3. The candidate lives a life that is balanced for the demands of ministry
 - Attends adequately to physical, emotional and mental needs
 - Schedules regular time for play and recreation
 - Lives a simple life free of addiction and compulsion
4. The candidate lives a life shaped by love for others
 - Prioritizes spouse and children (if applicable)
 - Builds and maintains healthy, close relationships with people inside and outside of the church
 - Cultivates relationships of confession and accountability
5. The candidate models humility
 - Remains teachable and accepts correction when needed
 - Maintains a non-defensive posture towards leaders, followers and peers
 - Willingly seeks the perspective of others

Head Formation:

1. The candidate demonstrates biblical understanding
 - Possesses holistic biblical knowledge
 - Has a Wesleyan hermeneutic that accepts the authority of Scripture
 - Demonstrates ability to root their Wesleyan worldview in the Bible
2. The candidate demonstrates a Wesleyan theological integration
 - Knows and embraces the history, polity, Articles of Religion and core values of the FMC
 - Articulates the Wesleyan distinctives compellingly
 - Understands and embraces Wesleyan relationship theology
3. The candidate has a theological education commensurate with ordained ministry
 - Has completed an undergraduate degree or demonstrates equivalent understanding of life and ministry
 - Has completed some graduate work in theology or demonstrates theological competence at a graduate level
 - Embodies a life-long passion for learning through modeling and encouraging others
4. The candidate has an ecumenical posture towards the Church and the world
 - Actively seeks to build and maintain bridges among fellow Christian groups
 - Demonstrates an appreciation for the contribution of other Christian traditions while wholeheartedly embracing our own
 - Demonstrates a growing appreciation for humanity and value of all people regardless of their belief system
5. The candidate processes the ability to practically apply learning
 - Demonstrates an ability to make complex theology understandable to all
 - Demonstrates an ability to find God's redemptive activity in daily life
 - Demonstrates an ability to deepen faith through real life experience

Hand formation:

1. The candidate demonstrates fruitfulness in ministry
 - Has a track record of transformational preaching/teaching/leading
 - Personally and corporately engages in evangelism
 - Able to build and maintain healthy and diverse faith communities
2. The candidate embraces the ministry of justice and compassion
 - Challenges injustice and discrimination wherever it is found
 - Engages local and global needs of the broken and poor
 - Continually focuses ministry on the margin, seeking to emancipate all who exist within enslaving systems
3. The candidate operates as a servant leader
 - Promotes the development of others
 - Serves the local and global church demonstrating cross-cultural competency
 - Creates healthy ministry environments characterized by safety and non-judgement
4. The candidate empowers others to discover and function within their God given design
 - Wholeheartedly supports the role of women in leadership
 - Facilitates and promotes multicultural community and staff
 - Actively helps others discover their brilliance
5. The candidate leads with creativity and vision
 - Seeks best practices of contextual and culturally relevant ministry
 - Envisions alternatives and successfully leads others towards more creative and effective outcomes
 - Casts compelling vision and develops strategic plans to accomplish it

Service Requirements for Ordination

¶5420

The spiritual formation necessary for healthy, effective, long-term ministry happens best in the context of a local church. In order to properly observe and assess the gifting, calling and brilliance of a potential ordinand, supervised experience in a local church or in a context beyond the local church as approved by the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board, is essential. Normally a candidate will move through this season of formation and supervision in 2 to 3 years.

Heart	Head	Hands
<p>Characterized by spiritual maturity and a strong sense of a call to ministry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shaped by the spiritual disciplines• Roots identity and calling firmly in Christ• Models a Spirit-led life of holiness	<p>Demonstrates biblical understanding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Possesses holistic, biblical knowledge• Has a Wesleyan hermeneutic that accepts the authority of Scripture• Demonstrates ability to root their Wesleyan worldview in the Bible	<p>Demonstrates fruitfulness in ministry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has a track record of transformational preaching/teaching/leading• Personally and corporately engages in evangelism• Able to build and maintain healthy and diverse faith communities
<p>Demonstrates a high level of self-awareness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understands and articulates their strengths and weaknesses• Builds teams around blind spots• Knows how their leadership/communication style impacts others both positively and negatively	<p>Demonstrates a Wesleyan Theological Integration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knows and embraces the history, polity, Articles of Religion, and core values of the Free Methodist Church• Articulates Wesleyan distinctives compellingly• Understands and embraces Wesleyan relational theology	<p>Embraces ministry of justice and compassion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Challenges injustice and discrimination wherever it is found• Engages local and global needs of the broken and poor• Continually focuses ministry on the margin, seeking to emancipate all who exist within enslaving systems

Lives a well-balanced life that can sustain the demands of ministry.

- Attends adequately to physical, emotional, and mental needs
- Schedules regular time for play and recreation
- Lives a simple life, free of unhealthy addiction and compulsion

Lives a life shaped by love for others.

- Prioritizes spouse and children (if applicable)
- Builds and maintains close, healthy relationships with people inside and outside of the church
- Cultivates relationships of confession and accountability

Models humility.

- Remains teachable and accepts corrections when given
- Maintains a non-defensive posture toward leaders, followers, and peers
- Willingly seeks the perspective of others

Has a theological education commensurate with ordained ministry.

- Has completed an undergraduate degree
- Has completed some graduate work in theology
- Models and promotes lifelong learning

Has an ecumenical posture toward the Church and the world.

- Actively seeks to build and maintain bridges among fellow Christian groups
- Demonstrates an appreciation for the contribution of other Christian traditions while wholeheartedly embracing our own
- Demonstrates a growing appreciation for humanity and value for all people regardless of their belief system

Possesses the ability to practically apply learning.

- Demonstrates an ability to make complex theology understandable to all
- Demonstrates an ability to find God's redemptive activity in daily life
- Demonstrates an ability to deepen faith through real-life experiences

Operates as a servant-leader.

- Promotes the development of others
- Serves the local and global church, demonstrating cross-cultural competency
- Creates healthy ministry environments characterized by safety and non-judgment

Empowers others to discover and function within their God-given design.

- Demonstrates wholehearted support for women in ministry
- Facilitates and promotes multicultural community and staff
- Actively helps others discover their brilliance

Leads with creativity and vision.

- Seeks best practices of contextual and culturally relevant ministry
- Envisions alternatives and successfully leads others toward more creative and effective outcomes
- Casts compelling vision and develops strategic plans to accomplish it

The Free Methodist Way should also remain at the forefront of outcomes-based assessment expressed through the *heart, head, and hands* model. For example, candidates should demonstrate heart-level commitment and devotional practices that move them toward holiness, practices of justice, cross-cultural friendships and working relationships, lifestyle evangelism, and dedication to Scripture. Likewise, candidates ought to maintain the ability to articulate biblical, theological, and historical framework in support of the five core values of The Free Methodist Way along with demonstrated application of these values in their ministry context.

The Steps

The above *heart, head, and hands* model will be applied at every step along the paths toward ordination as elder and consecration as a Consecrated Deacon to ensure the development of well-rounded ministers of Jesus Christ. Mentoring relationships, coursework, and practical hands-on ministry will be employed at each phase of the journey as means toward pastoral formation. The following summarizes the steps through each of these phases; each individual stage will be further detailed in later chapters.

LMC Steps

The ministerial journey within the Free Methodist Church begins with conversation. When one begins to sense a call to vocational ministry, or a possible call is identified within a person by another, she or he will meet with her or his local pastor or their designee to share their spiritual journey and perceived call to ministry. If they are both in agreement, the individual will write out her/his Statement of Faith expressing the experience of coming to faith, call to ministry, and faith journey to date as a way of articulating the working of God and for later submission.

The prospective ministerial candidate will then be invited to appear before the local church Board of Administration for an interview, responding to the questions in the *Book of Discipline*, ¶8700 A. If the pastor, the BOA, and the potential candidate remain in agreement that God may in fact be calling her/him into vocational ministry, then the individual may appear before the congregation to respond to the questions in the *Book of Discipline*, ¶8700 B. Please note that if the potential candidate is not yet a member of a local Free Methodist Church, she or he will need to become a member prior to moving forward in the process. The mentoring pastor will then fill out a Pastoral Request for LMC Registration located on the Center for Pastoral Formation website.

For the next steps, candidates will be invited to begin the LMC

Path on the Pathwright software. This will lead them through a process of assembling a prayer team to support and encourage them in their journey and developing a Formation Plan with their mentoring pastor following the *heart, head, and hands* model. As part of the training as an LMC, the candidate will complete the following courses: The Free Methodist Way, Introduction to Christian Doctrine, History and Polity of the Free Methodist Church, and Wesleyan Theology (the latter may be met at the CMC level) or meet their equivalency. The candidate will also engage in practical ministry experience under supervision.

Throughout this process, the candidate will need to complete the Divorce Clearance Documents (if applicable), submit them to their conference's MEG Board, and undergo a criminal background check to be conducted by the annual conference before proceeding to the next phase toward the deaconate or conference ministerial candidacy. When candidates are ready to explore the next steps, they will take an LMC Theological Proficiency Assessment and set up an interview with the conference MEG Board.

If the MEG Board and the candidate agree on their perceived call to ministry, they will discuss next steps toward the Consecrated Deaconate or Conference Ministerial Candidate. At this time, if they have not done so already, they will fill out the online application with the Center for Pastoral Formation with the FMCUSA and submit copies of all post-secondary academic transcripts from accredited colleges, universities, and seminaries, and prayerfully consider which path to pursue.

Steps Toward Consecrated Deacon

To enter the path leading toward consecration as a Consecrated Deacon, candidates must complete all of the above LMC requirements, then, with confirmation from the local church board and local pastor., they may begin the process of Consecrated Deacon Candidacy. At this point, they will work with their local mentor to develop a Deacon Formation Plan as outlined in the book *Wholistic Mentoring*. This plan will follow the *heart, head, and hands* model utilizing a mentoring relationship, coursework, and practical hands-on ministry experience under supervision. In addition to the coursework completed as an LMC, part of this process will also include participation in the following courses: Old and New Testament Bible Surveys, and two practical theology courses in an area of interest or specialty.

Upon satisfactory completion of the Consecrated Deacon Candidate requirements, the candidate will appear again before the local church board for an interview. If the mentoring pastor, local church board, and the candidate agree, a service of consecration will be scheduled following the ceremony outlined in the *Book of Discipline*, ¶8500. During the ceremony, the candidate(s) will be presented to the superintendent or their designee for consecration. Consecrated Deacons will be reviewed annually by their local church Board of Administration.

CMC Steps

If a candidate has satisfactorily completed all the requirements at the LMC level and is approved by the MEG Board to be received as a Conference Ministerial Candidate (CMC), the candidate will appear before the Annual Conference and answer the questions found in the *Book of Discipline*, ¶8710, at which time she/he will be given a certificate of licensure as a CMC. At this point, candidates will work closely with their respective mentors to develop a formation plan in keeping with the *heart, head, and hands* model as guided by the CMC Path on Pathwright. This formation plan will be submitted to the MEG Board for approval.

Early in the process as CMC, the candidate will undergo a psychological evaluation arranged by the annual conference with a licensed counselor, therapist, or psychologist. The details of the psychological evaluations are outlined in a later chapter. The psychological evaluation is designed to aid the candidate in developing a healthy self-awareness, work through potential areas of challenge and unhealth, and identify any possible red-flag areas. The psychological evaluation should be approached with the candidates' spiritual growth in mind.

Throughout the duration of the CMC experience, candidates will meet regularly (at least once a month when possible) with their respective mentors and once per year with the MEG Board for an annual check-in. These meetings should evaluate and encourage candidates in their personal spiritual growth and participation in the means of grace, gage progress in coursework and theological formation, and discuss their involvement in practical ministry. Specific action plans for the meantime between meetings should be clearly articulated at the conclusion of each session.

Candidates will establish a plan for completing coursework as part of their theological formation. Ideally, courses will be taken as part of a degree program at an Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions (AFMEI) or John Wesley Seminary Foundation (JWSF) approved college, university, or seminary; course requirements may also be met through conference approved and denominational course offerings or by displaying competency equivalence for select ministry areas.

The following courses or demonstrated equivalency are required for ordination in the Free Methodist Church USA. Note that some were likely completed at the LMC level.

Courses include:

- Free Methodist Way (Completed as LMC)*
- History and Polity of the Free Methodist Church (Completed as LMC)*
- Introduction to Christian Doctrine (Completed as LMC)**
- Wesleyan Theology (Completed early in CMC process)*
- Old Testament Survey (Also required for Consecrated Deacon)**
- New Testament Survey (Also required for Consecrated Deacon)**

- Personal Spiritual Formation and Self Care*
- Inductive Bible Study /Hermeneutics*
- Historical and/or Systematic Theology
- Homiletics***
- Leadership, Shepherding, and Church Administration***
- Congregational Spiritual Formation and Pastoral Care***
- Community Engagement, Justice, and Evangelism***
- Cross Cultural Experience***
- Old Testament Elective or New Testament Elective*

Some of these courses may be offered under a different name or have a specialty focus attached to them. Therefore, the MEG Board should appoint an individual to evaluate transcripts and course completion documents to assess equivalencies; the Center for Pastoral Formation may help with this upon request.

As candidates near the end of the CMC process, they will need to pass a Bible competency exam and submit three important documents: their response to the Theological Questions, a reflection on their ministry experience, and a reflection on their spiritual growth and sense of calling throughout the CMC path. Upon completion of all of the above and a positive recommendation from their mentoring pastor, the candidate will interview with the MEG Board for consideration to be ordained as an elder in the FMCUSA. If approved, the candidate will need to satisfactorily answer the questions outlined in the *Book of Discipline* before the annual conference and be approved by the annual conference.

*Indicates requirements that must be met through coursework

**Indicates requirements that may be met through coursework or demonstrated mastery of the subject through passing a competency exam

***Indicates requirements that may be met through coursework or demonstrated competency through extensive practical experience and meeting the expected standards for ordination



Chapter 2

Mentoring Pastors

Types of Mentors

In their book *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*, Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton identify seven types of mentors: discipler, spiritual guide, coach, counselor, teacher, sponsor, and model. A discipler is one who models and instructs others in the basics of the Christian life—including prayer, studying the Bible, living evangelistically, etc. A spiritual guide or spiritual director is one who prayerfully listens, asks the right questions, and leads another in the practice of prayerful discernment. Like a spiritual director, a coach is a person trained in asking the right questions and drawing out the answers from the client's self. A coach may address future goals and problem solving, while focusing on the client's own responses, emotions, and reactions to a particular problem. Counselors work with clients through life challenges, past trauma, mental health needs, and healing. Teachers, on the other hand, do just that—they teach. These may include professors and instructors of courses that lead toward ordination. A sponsor walks with someone for a short time working through a specific issue or professional area of development. A model is someone who mentors from a distance. These are contemporary or past women and men whose writings and example may guide and instruct from a distance.

The mentoring pastor may be called upon to serve in any number of these mentoring roles as she/he walks alongside the ministerial candidate. However, each mentoring pastor will have her/his unique leaning and tendency based on their God-given gifting and personality. The primary mentoring pastor shall be an ordained elder in the Free Methodist Church. Often, this is the lead pastor of the candidate's local church; however, this is not necessarily the case. The MEG Board may approve someone more suitable for the task based on availability and mentoring strengths.

In addition to the primary mentoring pastor, candidates are encouraged to seek out multiple people who can speak into their lives and guide them toward fruitful, lifelong ministry. For example, a ministerial candidate may find herself/himself weak in the area of evangelism. The candidate may know someone other than their primary mentoring pastor who is gifted evangelistically. The candidate would do well to contact the person and request that they meet for a short period of time in a mentoring relationship. This may involve a couple of evangelistic appointments with the mentor through which they share their faith with another, or for a one-to-one instructional time discussing and planning an evangelistic approach that works for the candidate.

Likewise, through the ministerial candidacy process, a candidate may discover some unresolved hurts. It would be wise for the candidate to seek out a good counselor to help work through these wounds. The conference MEG Board may be able to assist a candidate in connecting with these potential mentors. Annual Conferences may also want to consider investing in the training of women and men to fill these mentoring roles. For example, many of the AFMEI and JWSF affiliate institutions offer degree and certificate programs in spiritual direction, coaching, and counseling, while gifted teachers may be supported to continue their education in a particular field of theology.

Selecting the Right Mentors

As a person's pastoral identity forms within the first few years of ministry, selecting a good mentor is critical. There are some very good pastors who may or may not be gifted in mentoring, or frankly, may be too busy to mentor well. Likewise, there may be some who fly below the radar as a pastor but prove to invest their lives well into ministerial candidates.

Stanley and Clinton offer three vital dynamics in mentoring relationships: *attraction*, *responsiveness*, and *accountability*.¹⁴ These three components work together to form a strong mentoring relationship. Regarding *attraction*, there should be a mutual draw between the mentor and mentee that has the potential to form a good working relationship. The mentee should be *responsive* to the mentor with a willingness to follow instructions, receive guidance, and learn from the mentor's experiences and wisdom. As the relationship strengthens, there should be a mutual sense of trust and respect resulting in healthy *accountability*.

Good fit is important in a mentoring relationship. However, it is equally important to own the fact that any given mentor will not be able to meet all the learning needs of the mentee. This is where healthy networks may serve the ministerial candidate well. As mentioned before, the candidate will benefit from multiple mentors speaking into their lives. A good mentor should be able to connect the candidate with other women and men who can help fill in the learning gaps.

¹⁴ Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton. *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1992), 43.

Mentoring Meetings

The MEG Board will work with candidates to develop individualized formation plans. As key areas of need are determined, the MEG Board will assist the candidate in determining what type of mentoring relationship/s may prove most helpful. The mentoring pastor assigned to the candidate should follow the processes outlined in the book *Wholistic Mentoring*. It is recommended that mentoring pastors should meet with each candidate at least once a month. There may be individual cases, however, when factors like distance may prove prohibitive. In such cases, allowances may be made for an every-other-month format. Video conferencing may be used to fill in the off months.

In these meetings, the mentoring pastor will help the candidate to grow in self-knowledge and authenticity and develop a healthy pastoral identity. The mentoring pastor will be mindful of the Outcomes-Based Ordination categories as they resource the candidate in developing their *heart, head, and hands* for effective long-term ministry service. The mentoring pastor may assign specific reading assignments for discussion around certain ministry or theological themes, ministry tasks for hands-on experience, and certain spiritual disciplines to assist in the candidate's overall growth.

For further reading:

Tungate, Steve. *Wholistic Mentoring: A Handbook for Developing Ministerial Candidates in the Free Methodist Church*. Indianapolis: Light and Life Publishing. 2023.



Chapter 3

Coursework

Theological Training and Coursework

As described earlier, the ordination process is based on a candidate meeting a series of Outcomes-Based Ordination core competencies. These competencies may be met through a number of possible means. In many cases, however, enrolling in approved courses may serve as the primary method toward meeting these core competencies. These courses hold tremendous value for the ministerial candidate in helping to shape her or his pastoral identity and theological alignment through the mentoring of an instructor and interaction with ministry peers.

In an age of moral and intellectual relativism, political extremism, and social media soundbites, it is of utmost importance that Free Methodist clergy serve as resident theologians, maintaining the ability to think critically and articulate biblical and theological truths with love and grace. It is also crucial that candidates are trained with a high level of ministry competence and spiritual maturity. Therefore, courses offered and taken should adhere to a high standard following the flexible baseline established by the Center for Pastoral Formation. As the *Book of Discipline* calls for theological competency at the graduate level for those who are to be ordained, courses should adequately move ministerial candidates toward a master's level understanding of the material.

In a desire to make theological and ministry education and training accessible, many course venues exist from the conference and denominational levels to the college, university, and seminary level. Therefore, it is important to maintain a baseline standard that is consistent and transferable from one conference to another. Although some degrees of flexibility are worked into this baseline, the standards themselves should not be reduced.

Additionally, course design should focus on a holistic approach to training. Each course should keep the *heart, head, and hands* model at the forefront. Class sessions and assignments should integrate theological truths with spiritual formation and practical ministry experience. Each course should also clearly make connections to our Wesleyan/Free Methodist heritage, theology, and distinctives, and include each of the following components of student engagement:

- 7-14 hours of course instruction
- 14-21 hours of reading, videos, or other means that provide content relating to the subject matter
- 16-23 hours of homework/integration/application/praxis (online posts, discussions, reflections, papers, etc.)
- utilize FMCUSA stated guidelines for each course, adhere to stated objectives, and choose books/resources from required and recommended resources

In order to maintain a high standard of quality and content, instructors ought to have a minimum of 18 credit hours at the master's level from an accredited college, university, or seminary. Instructors must honor a Wesleyan perspective and be able to articulate theological truths in the context of spiritual growth and ministry participation. For courses offered through non-accredited means (i.e. conference and denominational courses), the instructors are to submit a current resumé or curriculum vitae to the Center for Pastoral Formation, along with a syllabus for each course to be taught.

If these basic requirements are met, courses may be fulfilled through the following means:

- A degree from an accredited academic institution, preferably one of the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions (AFMEI) or John Wesley Seminary Foundation (JWSF) affiliate schools that fulfills the educational requirements listed above
- A Certificate of Completion of specified courses offered by an AFMEI, JWSF, or other, school
- Annual conference-sponsored courses
- Online courses
- Mentored learning
- Exhibiting competency in a subject through an FMCUSA approved assessment
- Other creative approach approved by the conference MEG Board and Center for Pastoral Formation

Required Courses and Content Areas

The following course and content areas are required.

LMC-Level Courses and Content Areas

At the Local Ministerial Candidate level, satisfactory completion of the following courses is required:

- The Free Methodist Way*
- Introduction to Christian Doctrine**
- History and Polity of the Free Methodist Church*

Consecrated Deacon Candidate Courses and Content Areas

At the Consecrated Deacon Candidate level, satisfactory completion of the above LMC-level courses and the following courses are required:

- Old Testament Survey**
- New Testament Survey**
- Two or more practical theology courses in a specific area of ministry interest and involvement***

CMC-Level Courses and Content Areas

At the Conference Ministerial Candidate level, satisfactory completion of the above LMC-level courses and the following courses are required for ordination as elder:

- Wesleyan Theology (to be taken early in the CMC process)*
- Old Testament Survey**
- New Testament Survey**
- Historical and/or Systematic Theology (Based on Articles of Religion in the Book of Discipline)**
- Inductive Bible Study/Hermeneutics*
- Old Testament or New Testament Elective (i.e. book of the Bible)*
- Personal Formation and Self Care*
- Homiletics***
- Leadership, Shepherd, and Church Administration***
- Congregational Spiritual Formation and Pastoral Care***
- Community Engagement, Evangelism, and Justice***
- Cross-Cultural Experience***

*Indicates requirements that must be met through coursework

**Indicates requirements that may be met through coursework or demonstrated mastery of the subject through passing a competency exam

***Indicates requirements that may be met through coursework or demonstrated competency through extensive practical experience and meeting the expected standards for ordination

Determining Outcomes-Based Equivalencies

As stated earlier, the Free Methodist Church USA adheres to an outcomes-based approach to ordination. Therefore, candidates will be measured on competencies over mere course completion. As the *Book of Discipline* calls for ministerial competency at the graduate level, coursework, training, and assessment must reflect this. Therefore, it is recommended that a graduate degree from an approved seminary serves as the default toward theological and ministry training. In cases where this is not feasible, other coursework, mentoring, and training may suffice. In rare cases, a candidate may demonstrate graduate-level competency in a particular topic through life experience, self-guided study, or a strong mentoring relationship. In such cases, assessments may be given to provide tangible measures of proficiency. For example, both Old and New Testament Survey courses are required. However, if a candidate satisfactorily passes a Bible competency exam, these courses may be waived toward ordination upon MEG Board approval. Likewise, requirements for Old and New Testament surveys may be met through a combined Bible survey course. Competency must be displayed at set standards.

Free Methodist Colleges and Universities and Affiliate Schools

Since its beginnings, education and the development of institutions of higher education have been highly valued in the Free Methodist Church. “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.”¹⁵ Therefore, “the Free Methodist Church USA recognizes as Denominational Institutions those colleges and universities whose commitments are consistent with the history, theology, mission and character of the Free Methodist Church.”¹⁶ These institutions adhere to clearly stated leadership, mission, and connectional commitments as outlined in the *Book of Discipline*. In addition to distinctly Free Methodist Institutions, there are classifications of affiliate and associate institutions as outlined in ¶4820 and ¶4830 of the *Book of Discipline*.

Ministerial candidates are highly encouraged to pursue training and coursework through any of the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions (AFMEI) or John Wesley Seminary Foundation (JWSF) affiliate schools. Ideally, this will be done through a degree program. Ministerial candidates may also meet their course requirements through accredited certificate programs, conference-level courses, and/or courses offered through the Center for Pastoral Formation.

¹⁵ ¶4800+ of the 2023 *Book of Discipline of the Free Methodist Church USA*, p. 87

¹⁶ Ibid. ¶4810+

AFMEI Schools

Azusa Pacific University

<https://www.apu.edu/> (affiliate)

901 E. Alosta Ave.

Azusa, CA 91702

Central Christian College of Kansas

<https://www.centralchristian.edu/>

1200 S. Main St. P.O. Box 1403

McPherson, KS 67460

620-241-0723

Greenville University

<https://www.greenville.edu/>

Greenville University

315 E. College Ave

Greenville, IL 62246

800.345.4440 / 618.664.7100

Roberts Wesleyan University

<https://www.roberts.edu/>

2301 Westside Dr.

Rochester, NY 14624

800.777.4RWC

Seattle Pacific University

<https://spu.edu/>

3307 3rd Ave West

Seattle, WA 98119-1997

206-281-2000

Spring Arbor University

<https://www.arbor.edu/>

106 E. Main St.

Spring Arbor, MI 49283

800-968-0011

JWSF Schools

Asbury Theological Seminary

<https://www.asburyseminary.edu>

Kentucky Campus

204 N Lexington Ave.

Wilmore KY 40390

859-858-3581

Azusa Pacific Graduate School of Theology

<https://www.apu.edu/seminary>

701 E Foothill Blvd.

PO Box 7000

Azusa CA 91702-7000

626-815-5439

George Fox Evangelical Seminary

<https://www.georgefox.edu/seminary>

12753 SW 68th Ave.

Portland OR 97223

503-554-6100

Northeastern Seminary at Roberts Wesleyan College

<https://www.nes.edu>

2265 Westside Dr.

Rochester NY 14624-1997

585-594-6800

Seattle Pacific Seminary

<https://www.spu.edu/theology>

3307 3rd Ave. West

Seattle WA 98119-1997

206-281-2342

Wesley Biblical Seminary

<https://www.wbs.edu>

787 E Northside Dr.

Jackson MS 39206

601-366-8880

George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University

Wesley House of Studies

<https://truettseminary.baylor.edu/>

[programs-centers/wesley-house-studies](https://truettseminary.baylor.edu/programs-centers/wesley-house-studies)

1100 South 3rd Street

Waco, TX 76706

254-710-3755

Funding for School and the John Wesley Seminary Foundation

The cost of higher education has increased significantly for many years. The burden and the potential for the accumulation of debt remains high. Ministerial candidates are encouraged to step out in faith while applying wisdom as they prepare for ministry. Pursuing a degree may provide a ministerial candidate with the opportunity to prayerfully trust in God's provision. Beyond the classroom experience, the act of living by faith through the educational process may serve as another foundational component of the ministerial training process.

That being said, it is also crucial that ministerial candidates apply wisdom to their discernment process of following God's lead for their training. The accumulation of debt can be stifling for persons serving in ministry. The stresses of ministry can be high enough without adding the burden of financial strain that comes with debt. Decisions on education must be handled with both faith and frugality in mind.

To help offset the cost of education, the Free Methodist Church USA maintains a fund managed under the John Wesley Seminary Foundation to provide loan/grant finances to students working toward ordained ministry in the FMCUSA and pursuing their education at a master's level. These loan/grant funds are repaid through five years of full-time service in the Free Methodist Church or through cash repayment when the service requirements are unable to be met. Annual conferences are also encouraged to raise scholarship and loan/grant funds to help supplement the educational needs of their ministerial candidates. You may check with the Center for Pastoral Formation for other scholarship opportunities.

2023 Book of Discipline of the Free Methodist Church USA on the John Wesley Seminary Foundation:

John Wesley Seminary Corporation¹⁷

¶4860+

- A. The John Wesley Seminary Corporation, doing business as John Wesley Seminary Foundation, offers scholarship aid for the post-college training of persons for the pastoral ministry and other types of Christian service within the Free Methodist Church USA. This corporation shall be incorporated to secure the rights and privileges belonging to such educational foundations.
- B. The Board of Administration shall constitute the membership of the John Wesley Seminary Corporation.
- C. John Wesley Seminary Corporation shall be supported by the General Church Budget and special project funds, as approved by the Board of Administration.

¹⁷ The John Wesley Seminary Corporation was dissolved as a separate corporation in 2012. The John Wesley Seminary Foundation fund is now overseen by the Center for Pastoral Formation.

Each recipient of JWSF funds signs a repayment agreement as follows: Repayment of the JWSF grant/loan through service is based on five years of full-time¹⁸ appointed service (twenty percent reduction per year) as follows:

- Full-time appointment to a Free Methodist ministry by an annual conference.
- Full-time appointment through Free Methodist World Missions.
- Full-time military or institutional chaplaincy appointment, endorsed by the denomination.
- Full-time administrative appointment by the Free Methodist denomination.
- Full-time faculty or administrative appointment at a Free Methodist elementary, secondary, or post-secondary school.

Repayment of the JWSF grant/loan by appointed service begins after graduation or after discontinuing the seminary program, even if the recipient is in full-time appointed service while attending school.

Recipients who do not receive a full-time appointment or who choose to serve outside of the Free Methodist Church agree to repay the grant/loan plus interest to the John Wesley Seminary Foundation beginning nine months after graduation with quarterly payments over ten years and nine months.

Recipients agree to keep the JWSF office¹⁹ informed of their full-time appointments in the Free Methodist Church, or ministry/work outside the Free Methodist Church (including current address), until repayment is made in full.

The Application Process

Applications may be found under the tab labeled “grants” on the Center for Pastoral Formation webpages on the Free Methodist Church USA website at fmcusa.org. Candidates may simply follow the instructions and fill out the appropriate information requested. The applications will be processed through the Center for Pastoral Formation and submitted to the Board of Bishops for approval. Candidates will be notified when the processing period is completed.

¹⁸ As the availability of full-time positions is increasing limited and a growing number of co-vocational ministry opportunities exist, the full-time appointment requirement is being amended to active conference ministry appointment.

¹⁹ Now under the Center for Pastoral Formation

Stackable Credentials

As the Center for Pastoral Formation develops over time, the approach to ministerial credentialing will move toward a stackable system. For example, Local Ministerial Candidacy is the starting point for ministerial discernment and training. As one completes courses, mentoring, and ministry experience at the LMC level, one will decide in counsel with their MEG Board and mentor whether to move toward CMC or the diaconate. The CMC and Deacon training will be stackable upon the foundation of the LMC training. Likewise, if someone begins the deacon track, then later senses a call toward ordination as an elder, the deacon training will cover the early phases of the CMC track so that one may enter the CMC path further along based on the deacon and CMC equivalencies.

In time, the Center will seek to partner with AFMEI and JWSF affiliate institutions to provide stackable endorsements beyond ordination and deacon consecration to train women and men toward an area of ministry specialization. These endorsements may also serve as stand-alone credentials for lay persons looking to receive specialization in a particular ministry area. Some of these are in development, please check with the Center for Pastoral Formation for availability.



Chapter 4

Local Ministerial Candidacy

An Overview of Local Ministerial Candidacy

As summarized earlier, when one senses a call to ministry or a possible call is identified by another, she or he will initiate a conversation with her or his local church pastor or their designee. Through conversation and prayerful discernment, if the pastor and the individual are in agreement, the individual will be interviewed by the local church board following the questions listed in ¶8700 A of the *Book of Discipline*. If the board also discerns a potential call into ministry on the individual, the person may answer the questions in ¶8700 B of the *BOD* before the congregation and then be licensed as a Local Ministerial Candidate (LMC).

The emphasis on prayerful discernment is intentional as the LMC process is designed to help the candidate seek to understand and clarify God's call. At this phase, the candidate will engage in spiritual disciplines, course work, and practical experience as she or he works with their mentor and local church board to further develop their *heart, head, and hands* with an eye to the unfolding path ahead.

2023 *Book of Discipline* on Local Ministerial Candidacy

Local Ministerial Candidates

¶6500

- A. A local ministerial candidate is one who is seriously considering a call to vocational ministry and who has completed the processes of licensing. Local ministerial candidate status provides the opportunity to explore the perceived call to ministry with the pastor in the context of the local church. Prior to being approved to work toward a local ministerial candidate license, the person shall have been a member of the church long enough to have given evidence of possessing the developing qualities and gifts normally expected of a Christian minister: a heart for God and the mission of the church, leadership potential, good conduct and the ability to work with people.

- B. Persons who do not show adequate potential of being an elder who can lead a congregation to fulfill the mission of the Church and our expected outcomes should be counseled at an early time to consider the support and service role of a deacon.
- C. The pastor shall enter into a mentoring relationship with the potential local ministerial candidate, establishing a Formation Plan (see Local Ministerial Candidate Handbook). The pastor shall journey with the individual through licensing as a local ministerial candidate, and possibly even through licensing as a conference ministerial candidate. A local ministerial candidate shall be amenable to instruction, supervision and related discipline to assure growth in grace, knowledge and leadership skill (see ¶6300.Q, ¶6320.B.10).
- D. Licensing as a local ministerial candidate is contingent upon:
 - 1. membership in the Free Methodist Church;
 - 2. exploring a call to ordained ministry in a mentoring relationship with pastor / designee (see Local Ministerial Candidate Handbook);
 - 3. an interview with and approval by the local Board of Administration upon satisfactory answers to the questions provided in ¶8700.A; and
 - 4. receiving a local ministerial candidate certificate before the congregation upon satisfactory answers to the questions provided in ¶8700.B.
- E. Following licensing, the new local ministerial candidate opens a file with Ministerial Credentialing Services (see Local Ministerial Candidate Handbook).
- F. The names of all local ministerial candidates shall be reported to the annual conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board.
- G. A local ministerial candidate shall maintain membership in the society that licensed him / her, unless appointed as a licensed pastor (see ¶6500.H).
- H. A local ministerial candidate appointed as a licensed pastor shall hold membership in the society served (see ¶5640).
- I. A local ministerial candidate's license is subject to annual review and renewal by the local Board of Administration.
- J. A local ministerial candidate, who after four years does not actively progress toward conference ministerial candidacy leading to elder's orders, shall choose to study for the diaconate or to serve in another lay capacity, thus discontinuing the local ministerial candidate license.

- K. A local ministerial candidate appointed by a Ministerial Appointments Committee to have charge of a society may administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper and solemnize marriages in that place if civil law permits.
- L. Finally, the local Board of Administration recommends to the conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board that the candidate be accepted as a conference ministerial candidate.

The Process

When candidates sign on to the Pathwright system, they will see their Ministry Discernment LMC Path. This system will offer a clear guide to their Local Ministerial Candidate journey. The path is divided into six stages. Under each stage, they will be directed to particular tasks to accomplish and information to upload. Each conference will designate a person or persons who will maintain responsibility for the signing off on the information inputted by the candidate (this process is discussed in the chapter titled "Tracking Progress"). The stages and their respective tasks are set up as follows: (note that this is regularly updated so the actual web-based path may not exactly match the outline below)

Welcome

- Watch: Welcome from the Center for Pastoral Formation
- Read: *Book of Discipline* on Local Ministerial Candidacy
- Submit: Statement of Faith expressing your coming to faith, call to ministry, and faith journey to date

Beginning the Journey: Local Ministerial Candidate (LMC) Licensing

- Watch: LMC Licensing
- Submit: Copy of Membership Certificate from a local Free Methodist Church, or a copy of an email or letter from the local church confirming membership in good standing
- To-Do: Share your call to ministry with local pastor
- Read: LMC Handbook
- To-Do: Local church Board of Administration Interview (*Book of Discipline*, ¶8700 A)
- To-Do: Questions for the Congregation (*Book of Discipline*, ¶8700 B)
- Submit: Online application at FMCUSA

The Formation Plan

- To-Do: Assemble prayer team to help in your journey
- Read: Example Formation Plans
- To-Do: Develop a Formation Plan with your mentoring pastor using the *LMC Handbook*
- Submit: Formation Plan

Submission of Documents

- Submit: Copies of all post-secondary academic transcripts from accredited colleges, universities, and seminaries
- Read: Criminal Background Check to be performed by your annual conference
- Submit: Divorce Clearance Documents
- Submit: Sample video or audio recording of sermon or lesson

The Courses

- Watch: Courses Introductory Video
- Submit: Review course opportunities at The Center for Pastoral Formation website
- To-Do: Complete Free Methodist Way Course
- To-Do: Complete Introduction to Christian Doctrine Course
- To-Do: Complete History and Polity of the Free Methodist Church Course
- To-Do: Complete a Wesleyan Theology Course

Discerning Next Steps

- Watch: Closing LMC Video
- Take: LMC Theological Proficiency Assessment
- Read: *Book of Discipline* on Consecrated Deacon
- Read: *Book of Discipline* on Ordination as Elder
- Attend: Set up an interview with your Conference Ministerial Education and Guidance (MEG) Board
- To-Do: Following your interview, choose Consecrated Deacon or CMC as the next Ministerial Discernment Path

Criminal Background Check

Each conference will conduct a criminal background check on every Local Ministerial Candidate. Since these background checks may vary by state or region, it is advised that each conference check with local or state law enforcement agencies for recommended background check programs and organizations available online. Criminal background checks are also recommended for all church volunteers, especially for those who will work with children.

The results of the background checks will be handled by the MEG Board on a case-by-case manner. If prior offenses are revealed, please keep these questions in mind:

- How much time has lapsed since the offense?
- How severe was the crime?
- Has the candidate shown sufficient remorse, repentance, and reconciliation?
- Has the candidate participated in a proper amount of counseling and appropriate recovery programs?
- Is the candidate currently under probation, owing fines, or in any way not fulfilling the consequences of their offenses?
- Did their crime include the abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult?

After these questions have been sufficiently answered, the candidate and relevant persons interviewed, the MEG Board will decide if the candidate may move forward in the ministerial candidacy discernment process, pause the candidacy process until further steps are taken or more time has passed, or bring a stop to the process altogether. This will require prayerful consideration on the part of each person serving on the MEG Board.

Divorce Clearance

Divorce clearance is required for both CMCs and Consecrated Deacons according to the *Book of Discipline* and must be sought if either or both a ministerial candidate and his/her spouse has been previously married and divorced. Divorce clearance is designed to ensure that potential clergy and their spouses work through past wounds, maintain accurate self-awareness, and sustain healthy relationships moving forward. This process has the potential of resurfacing past wounds and should be handled with the utmost care and compassion while being attuned to matters of strict confidentiality. Therefore, it is recommended that interviews and divorce clearance forms be handled by the superintendent and /or one or two others from the MEG Board who will then report back to the MEG Board their recommendations. Details shared to the MEG Board should be sufficient for adequate decision-making, but general enough so as not to overshare sensitive information.

The Conference MEG works in tandem with the Board of Bishops to consider divorce clearance requests for LMCs and clergy seeking to transfer their credentials into the FMC. The candidate and his/her spouse will be asked to fill out the appropriate forms appended at the end of this manual and available on the Center for Pastoral Formation website and the LMC tracking path on Pathwright. Questionnaire A is for a divorcee seeking ministry in the Free Methodist Church; Questionnaire B is for a candidate seeking ministry in the Free Methodist Church who has not divorced, but whose spouse has been divorced; and Questionnaire C is for a divorced spouse of a candidate seeking ministry in the Free Methodist Church. These forms will then be submitted directly to the superintendent or designee. After reviewing the forms, the designated person will then interview the candidate and his/her spouse. This interview should be conducted with great compassion while also asking the appropriate questions that will help to assess the level to which the candidate and spouse have processed through past hurts and are working to develop healthy relationships moving into the future.

Next, a report will be given to the MEG Board following the recommendations above. This report will not include confidential details pertaining to ministerial candidates, spouses, or previous spouses. If the MEG Board agrees that the candidate and/or spouse have sufficiently worked through the past and are moving in a good direction toward health, wholeness, and healthy relationships, they may vote to approve the candidate for clearance, the forms and report may then be submitted to the bishop of record. Clearance will be considered by the bishop of record following recommendation by the conference superintendent and MEG Board. If, however, the MEG Board has serious reservations regarding the current emotional and relational health of the candidate and/or spouse, it is important to listen to these concerns. The MEG Board may ask the candidate to seek further counseling, work with the MEG Board to develop follow-up action plans, or be asked to discontinue the candidacy process if the concerns are too great. Although the divorce clearance process does not generally result in the candidate's discontinuance, it is possible; therefore, it is recommended that the process begins at the LMC phase or early in the CMC process.

Please review the following paragraph from the *Book of Discipline*, you may also want to look at ¶3311C-E on divorce and remarriage.

2023 Book of Discipline on Divorce Clearance

¶ 5340

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 Ministerial Education and Guidance Board, the conference superintendent and the bishop. 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.

Pastoral Responses to Marital Failure

Written by Bishop Emeritus David W. Kendall, 2012

In the gospel records, the opponents of Jesus attempt to drag him into the controversy over grounds of divorce. They put the question to Jesus: is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason (Matthew 19:3)? Clearly these Pharisees, conservative by bent, observing what they perceive to be Jesus' rather low or liberal view of law based on His treatment of people and apparent violation of the traditions of the elders, put the question in terms of the liberal interpretive view: Are they correct to say that any offense can be grounds for failing to keep the marriage covenant? Jesus refuses to go there. He cites the Genesis-Creative design and supports the permanence of the marriage covenant. He does so over against the liberal view of the law. But Jesus does not stop with a critique of the liberal view. He implies that even the conservative view may be suspect. He does so when the Pharisees respond by citing the Mosaic provision for a certificate of divorce. Why did Moses make this provision, if not to be used? Jesus answers that Moses conceded to the hardness of human hearts. The provision was made to clean up the relational and social mess created by hard-hearted refusal to keep covenant in relation to wife and God. But it was never God's intent that marriages should end. So, Jesus concludes that one who divorces his wife forces her to commit adultery, except in cases where the wife has already violated the covenant on moral grounds. Furthermore, a man who marries another woman than the wife of his youth is in fact an adulterer, even if he gave his former wife a certificate.

In other words, in His ministry setting, Jesus refused to be drawn into the controversy and side with one interpretive school over another. Hardness of heart leads people to break their covenants and dissolve their marriages. This is always wrong, whatever the particular reasons for it. Those who simply want out of the marriage over trivial matters as well as those who dismiss a wife/husband over more serious offenses both find themselves in violation of God's plan.

Given the context of His day and the background of the question, Jesus would suggest that there simply were no grounds for rejecting one's covenant promises to one's spouse. That is, disdaining the covenant to pursue another person violates God's plan. The disciples understood the absoluteness of Jesus' statements and conjectured that it might be better never to marry at all (Matthew 19:10). But they missed the main point, as have most of their successors.

Remarriage? Note what Jesus does not say or imply. Namely, divorced persons become pariah and may never again marry. No, Mosaic legislation had provided against such an outcome, which would have frightening consequences for women especially. No, a certificate must be given declaring to the community that the divorced one is no longer bound to the marriage. She may remarry, if a partner can be found.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes a similar comment about divorce (Matthew 5:31). There it is in the context of lust and adultery in the heart, and Jesus' elaboration of a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. There is some question whether this verse represents a discreet antithesis (you have heard it said . . . but I say to you) or continues that of the preceding verses which speak of adultery. In any event, this passage focuses more on the definition of adultery.

In Mark's gospel, in a parallel passage, Jesus responds to a slightly different question: is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife (see Mark 10:1–12)? Jesus answers by inviting them to recall what Moses commanded. He may have hoped they would go to Genesis, but they cited the Deuteronomy passage where Moses permits a certificate of divorce. Jesus then responds as in the Matthew text by citing Genesis but in more absolute terms: anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man she commits adultery. This is striking: against the same background as in Matthew 19 but in response to the question put in a different way, Jesus refuses to offer any justifiable basis for dissolving the marriage bonds.

Again, it is important to note what Jesus does not say. He is not saying there can never be divorce. He is saying every divorce reflects the tragic result of hardness of heart and stands in violation of God's plan for human life.

In Luke 16:18, in a section of teaching materials, Jesus simply asserts, anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. This saying also is absolute in nature but is lacking specific context in the Lukan story. It seems right to assume the same religious and social context, and the same clashing interpretive understandings of these issues, as in the other texts. Thus, Jesus likely speaks of those who use divorce procedures in order to exchange a current spouse for another (take the two clauses as a two-fold act: divorcing and marrying or divorcing in order to marry). This is adultery.

In the letters of Paul, the teachings of Jesus are reflected. That is, marriage covenants are meant to be kept, even when a new convert finds herself married to an unbeliever. (On the one hand, believers should not marry unbelievers. Yet, a Christian who converted after marrying and now finds herself married to an unbeliever must still honor the covenant she made to her spouse, as long as possible even if he never converts.) In those same letters, the spirit of Jesus and His approach to ministry is also reflected. There are situations when the intent of God for marriage simply cannot be sustained. In such cases, other courses of action are prescribed.

What I am contending is this: The concern to identify "grounds" that legitimize the divorce and permit remarriage, or re-entry into the life of the church, or leadership, is itself alien to the way of Jesus as reflected in the gospel record.

Grace. Indeed, as important as specific texts are that show Jesus' responses to the issues of marriage and divorce, it is as important to consider the entire ministry of Jesus, its focus, orientation, and spirit. Among other considerations, Jesus acknowledges unpardonable sin, but divorce and the sins related to it are not unpardonable. We must note how the record portrays Jesus acting toward and speaking to people broken by relational misadventures. We must note His message to them and His call to them. We must never interpret and apply a word from Jesus in a way that leads us to treat people contrary to Jesus' way and spirit, especially when we have reports of actual responses Jesus made.

Yet that is precisely what the church has done in responding to the complex realities of sexual misadventure, broken marital vows, divorce, and remarriage. Much of conservative evangelicalism in North America reads the New Testament as good Pharisees would—in order to identify rules or principles that are then imposed on dynamic and complex human situations. Divorce is a case in point.

The church looked for all the statements Jesus and His followers made and attempted to live by them. Such statements became the new rules the church would not violate. The orientation has been legal and impersonal, and not fundamentally relational, redemptive and kingdom based. The church's primary approach flows from her best attempts to do what Jesus said on a few occasions about divorce, rather than living as Jesus lived and responding to the real-life circumstances of people in the way Jesus did.

Whereas once the church may have played the legalist heroically or not, on this issue, inevitably the church landed in the condition of all persons and communities that are legal in orientation. A legal orientation breeds pride and rebellion. For those who conform to the law there can be pride. For those unable or unwilling to conform there can be rebellion. Rebellion often leads the community to accommodation, if the "right people," or a critical mass of people, are out of compliance. Therefore, the community can rail against the ungodliness of the culture and liberal sister-churches, while failing to note its own actual condition of noncompliance. Thus, it is common in the United States church for congregations to be full of people who have divorced, before and after their conversion to Christ. Most churches are "against" divorce and "for" marriage. Once divorce occurs however the two most common fallback positions are either to assess the divorce and the persons who experience it according to "the rules," questioning whether there are grounds and allowing or permitting a future on the basis of the answer. Or, lest the church appear to be legalistic or condemning or losing too many of its members or would-be members, the church slips into a kind of denial offering no substantive response other than perhaps comforting the hurting. Neither fallback position honors the spirit of Jesus and the intentions of Jesus for His people.

What we propose is a clear, consistent, and strong affirmation of God's good idea—from the beginning, a man leaves . . . cleaves to wife . . . and become one flesh for life. Then we propose an acknowledgement that almost from the beginning this plan experienced failure because of human sin and hard-heartedness. Moses recognized this and consented to processes

that certified the failure and provided protection for marriage partners, especially women. A divorce properly processed was in itself freedom to remarry. Among the people of God some tried to work the system, to bend the rules, the law, to accomplish their own desires. Perhaps all have this tendency.

In contrast, Jesus' saving work includes grace and power to redeem human sin in all of its manifestations. Jesus offered no less and much more than is explicitly affirmed in the first covenant. Marriages fail, for several typical reasons, but always involving some measure of the hard-heartedness Moses recognized. That heart condition often prevents people from seeking help for their broken lives and marriages. The grace and power of God can bring healing to any relational brokenness when hearts are open. Jesus welcomed the broken and battered, whether their injuries resulted from personal choice or the abuse of others. Jesus acted to heal and restore them. Jesus wanted them to have new lives. Within that redemptive intent all the blessings God planned from the beginning once again came within reach, including marriage. Divorce—certainly divorce processed under the provisions of the first covenant but also divorce tracing to strategies of sinful abuse, is not unpardonable and does not in itself disqualify one from God's plan for human life, which includes the possibility of (re)marriage. Divorced persons are to receive pastoral care, healing grace, and whatever future God may grant them. The church must exercise godly discernment in guiding divorced persons from brokenness to wholeness.

Our responses to marital threat, failure and recovery include the following features:

- Affirm the intention of God from the beginning.
- Affirm that human sin and rebellion has frequently led to marital failure.
- Affirm that all divorce is first a violation of God's intention, involving some element of human hard-heartedness, and often leading to various attempts to cast blame and justify self (which itself is another manifestation of hardness of heart).
- Affirm that marital failure—for whatever reason—leaves the family broken and wounded and calls for the church's healing ministries in Jesus' name.
- Affirm that marital failure—for whatever reason—can be the occasion for divine power and transforming grace to redeem the relationship, which the church should seek and support as its first and sustained response to the failure.
- The church welcoming divorced persons into the family of God and its own fellowship as any other sinners. Their relational brokenness in all its complexity, including the sinful choices and responses they made and the sinful wounding they have sustained from others, should be on the discipling agenda as they continue to follow Jesus.

- The church treating its own members whose marriages fail by holding them accountable for any breeches of their membership covenant that has occurred, and by offering them the same ministries of care, healing, and discipleship as persons receive who were divorced prior to their conversion to Christ.
- Persons who have experienced marital failure may remarry with the Lord's blessing and the church's providing: they have understood how the earlier failure(s) occurred, identified ways in which they contributed, repented of all sinful complicity in the failure, experienced healing for their wounds and transforming grace that empowers Christ-centered relationships in their lives, and intend to marry in the Lord and honor God's intention for their marriage.
- The church must be a community of accountability and healing for persons broken by marital failure and must resource them to become all God created and redeemed them to be.

Recap of the Process

Divorce clearance forms are available online through the Center for Pastoral Formation and in the LMC Path of the tracking software. Upon completion, the forms will be submitted to the conference office for review by the superintendent and the MEG Board. If and when approval is granted, the forms along with a summary report will be submitted to the bishop of record for consideration. The bishop will then send notification of the final determination to the conference office.

Psychological Evaluation

The psychological evaluation is an important step in pastoral formation. Although there are components to these assessments that may serve in vetting and bringing red-flag issues to light, the psychological evaluation should keep the candidate's movement toward holiness and wholeness as the goal. These assessments may serve the candidate well as tools for self-awareness and further spiritual growth.

Due to the clinical nature and the requirements for certain levels of certification and training, the conference MEG board will assign a competent licensed psychologist, counselor, or therapist to work with ministerial candidates through this process. When selecting a clinician, ideally, she or he will have a strong Christian background with some pastoral or ministry experience, or at least an understanding and sensitivity to pastoral ministry, some level of theological education or competency, be a part of or friendly toward the Wesleyan tradition, and remain current with assessment skills. It is required that the clinician will be up to date with licensure and certified within the state in which the ministerial candidate resides. If you need help locating someone in your area, you may try contacting the psychology or counseling department at a Free Methodist college or university or John Wesley Seminary Foundation seminary nearest to you.

The information gathered in this process will likely be quite sensitive in nature; therefore, the MEG board is tasked to designate who will see the final report (i.e. conference superintendent, candidate's mentor, MEG board or select subcommittee, etc.). When these persons are selected, the ministerial candidate should sign an informed consent form giving approval for these persons to view the final report. Please note that these reports may only be used for ordination purposes and not for hiring or appointment purposes in keeping with many state hiring laws. It is advised to have your conference-appointed attorney review or help draft this consent form.

The psychological evaluation begins with the ministerial candidate filling out a life history intake questionnaire. If the annual conference has a particular clinician or practice with whom they work, they may have forms available for use. If not, many samples may be found online to help draft intake forms. These questionnaires should include basic contact information, marital status, questions that delve into the family of origin, job history, general medical and psychological history, and release of information agreements.

It is essential that multiple assessments are used to gain a well-rounded view of the ministerial candidate. The use of multiple assessments may also help to determine if or to what extent an issue may be a potential challenge. The psychological evaluation should include assessments that gauge abnormal psychopathological tendencies (i.e. the MMPI-3 or PPI), normal personality indicators (i.e. 16PF or NEO-PI), strengths and weaknesses (i.e. StrengthsFinder or mCode), and a 360 assessment (i.e. Louis Pastoral Leadership Inventory, LPLI, or the Emotional Social Competency Inventory, ESCI). A 360 assessment provides a self-assessment from the candidate plus assessments from others regarding the candidate.

Upon completion of the above assessments, the candidate will have a session with a licensed clinician who will then present an integrated report available for those individuals approved through informed consent. A shortened version of the report should also be developed for the candidate. As stated above, these tools are designed to aid in the candidate's personal spiritual growth. Unless major red flags emerge, the results of this report will be used to develop a follow up with the ministerial candidate's mentor and/or with a professional counselor if needed. Having a trained counselor serving on the MEG Board may prove helpful for navigating and interpreting the psychological evaluation. She or he should not, however, serve as the therapist for the ministerial candidate in order to guard against conflict of interest and dual roles.

Due to the thorough nature of the above assessments, it is quite common for various issues to emerge. Many of these may be worked out through appropriate coaching from a mentor. Others may require a few sessions of professional therapy. Some may require a secondary follow-up assessment—for example, if a history of addiction exists (note: for issues of addiction, it is recommended that the candidate shows evidence of two to four years of sobriety and active involvement with working a recovery plan

prior to consideration for ordination). These issues in themselves should not be considered as factors that disqualify a person for further ministerial candidacy. It is recommended, when possible, that the annual conference meet the financial needs for these counseling sessions as a way of showing care for the candidate.

There may, however, be the rare occasion when significant red flags appear. If a candidate exhibits behaviors or tendencies that may place themselves or others at risk, or other such significant issues, he or she may need to be discontinued from ministerial candidacy. If such occasions occur, consultation with the clinician is strongly recommended before action is taken.

Assessment

Evaluating the progress of an LMC for consideration of next steps as a Consecrated Deacon Candidate or a Conference Ministerial Candidate requires an assessment of both current arrival and anticipated trajectory. Certain benchmarks of spiritual maturity (*heart*), theological proficiency (*head*), and ministry competency (*hands*) should be attained before moving one on to the Consecrated Deacon Candidate or CMC paths. However, as ministerial candidacy is a process of being mentored, taught, and serving under supervision, grace should be shown to allow the candidate room to grow and develop over time while at the same time holding to certain standards.



Chapter 5

Consecrated Deacon Candidacy

An Overview of Consecrated Deacon Candidacy

Historically, the Free Methodist Church followed a twofold approach to ordination including a first ordination as deacon followed by full ordination as elder after a couple of years of experience in between. This was in keeping with the Church of England tradition under which John and Charles Wesley were ordained. In 2003, the General Conference moved to have a single-stage ordination, removing the stage of deacon while preserving full ordination as elder. At that time, the deaconate was shifted to a consecration level at the local church and designed for women and men who sense a deeper call to ministry service at the local level in a particular area of specialty without entering itinerant and/or ordained ministry. In 2019, the General Conference moved to elevate the deaconate to a conference-level credential, while maintaining the emphasis of the role as serving a particular local church. In 2023, the Board of Administration of the FMCUSA voted to approve a resolution that would maintain the training requirements of the Conference Deacon but change the wording to Consecrated Deacon and move it back to the local church level while no longer holding a conference-level credential.

Some conferences may still have women or men who were ordained as a deacon under the original two-stage system and were not later ordained as elder. Many who find themselves in this category have likely been located to a local church and recorded as a *Located Deacon*. Although similar, a located deacon is not to be confused with the more recent approaches to diaconal ministry. Note that in the following quotes from the *Book of Discipline*, some changes have been made to reflect the changes which were approved by the BOA for the 2023 General Conference.

2023 Book of Discipline on Consecrated Deacons

Consecrated Deacons

¶6600

- A. Consecrated deacons are members in good standing in the Free Methodist Church. They are persons of good reputation, full of wisdom and the Spirit, whose spiritual gifts from God have been confirmed by their societies. In response to God's call on their lives, consecrated deacons offer servant-leadership in particular areas of congregational life, according to the gifts and graces God has given and they have developed. Complementing the work of elders, consecrated deacons serve the society by assisting and leading the membership to carry out its ministries to one another and the world.
- B. The specialized ministries of the Consecrated Deacons include, but are not limited to, ministries of:
 - 1. care and mercy
 - 2. worship and music
 - 3. administration and organization
 - 4. spiritual nurture and counsel
 - 5. outreach and service
- C. Under the leadership of the pastor(s), local congregations will help people recognize, accept and use their gifts in ministry. In due course, God will call some to lead the body in specialized ministries, assisting the pastor(s) in equipping the people for ministry and dedicating significant time to this work.
- D. Under the guidance of the pastor(s) and the local Board of Administration, persons called to such ministry will be recognized, encouraged, mentored, trained, examined and certified for the diaconate.
 - 1. The local Board of Administration shall guide prospective Consecrated Deacons in a process of study and mentoring appropriate for their areas of ministry and according to denominational standards. This shall begin by meeting the requirements of Local Ministerial Candidacy followed by the remaining requirements outlined in the Consecrated Deacon candidacy process. The local Board of Administration will give due consideration to character, calling, gifting, training and fruitfulness in ministry.
 - 2. When a prospective consecrated deacon or his/herspouse has been divorced, clearance for ministry shall be required, according to denominational guidelines used by the bishops. The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board will review and recommend clearance for ministry to the local Board of Administration for final approval.

The file will go to the conference office, so that if the Consecrated Deacon were later to proceed to elder's orders, the bishops would have access to the previous endorsement..^{20**}

- E. Upon meeting the requirements and completing the process of preparation, the local Board of Administration shall approve the candidate for consecration as a deacon within the society. The conference superintendent or designee shall consecrate the deacon with the assistance of the pastor(s) and other deacons. The local Free Methodist Church shall issue a certificate to the newly consecrated deacon.
- F. On an annual basis the local Board of Administration shall review and approve consecrated deacons within their care as to their character and performance in ministry. When appropriate, with due process, the local Board of Administration may discontinue certification.²¹

The Consecrated Deacon's Role

¶6610

- A. Consecrated deacons remain members of the local Free Methodist Church with no official standing in the annual conference. Consecrated deacons may therefore serve as lay delegates to annual conference and General Conference.
- B. The consecrated deacon's particular ministry role is defined by his or her individual gifts, passions and calling from God. Consecrated deacons may therefore serve the local congregation in a variety of ways.
- C. Consecrated deacons may administer the sacraments only when authorized by an elder.²²
- D. The consecration of a deacon will be valid only in that society. Whenever a consecrated deacon transfers membership to another Free Methodist Church, the receiving pastor may decline to recognize the prior consecration. If the pastor chooses to affirm the transferring deacon's consecration, the person may be approved for ministry in the new congregation after review by the pastor and local Board of Administration of the receiving society.*
- E. A composite record or list of consecrated deacons will be kept at the conference office and not listed in the denominational Yearbook. They shall be clearly distinguished from ordained located deacons who are listed in the Yearbook.

²⁰ This should be done at the LMC level, but also applies to Consecrated Deacons and CMCs.

²¹* Changed from original *Book of Discipline* to reflect change to conference-level consecration.

²² Or if appointed as a lead pastor.

¶5340

F. The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board may recommend the Consecrated Deacon track to a candidate for reasons when:

1. A Conference Ministerial Candidate (CMC) who is called to a specialized ministry but not the general itinerant ministry of a Free Methodist elder.
2. [1] A CMC who desires to continue in ministry in the Free Methodist Church but needs to suspend completing the course of study for an extended season (e.g. personal, vocational, or medical reasons).
3. A CMC who desires to continue in ministry in the Free Methodist Church but needs to suspend completing the course of study for an extended season (e.g. personal, vocational, or medical reasons).

To become a Consecrated Deacon, the candidate must complete the steps laid out in the Consecrated Deacon Handbook. Because scripture requires deacons to “keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience”, consecrated deacons will be expected to complete core ministry training courses, including but not limited to; the Free Methodist Way Course, FM History and Polity, Christian Doctrine, Old Testament and New Testament Survey Courses, Wesleyan Theology, and one or more practical ministry courses related to their specialization.

The Process

As a candidate logs into the *Consecrated Deacon Path*, they will be directed step-by-step through the following process: (note that this is updated regularly so the actual path on Pathwright may be slightly different than the following; please refer to Pathwright for the most up-to-date version)

1. Welcome

- Watch: Welcome to the Deacon Track
- Read: *Book of Discipline* on Consecrated Deacons
- To-Do: Completion of all Local Ministerial Candidate Requirements

2. Formation Plan

- Read: Deacon Handbook
- Submit: Submit a copy of your Deacon Candidate Formation Plan

3. Mentor and MEG Meetings

- Attend: Monthly Mentor Meetings

4. Theological Formation

- Watch: Introductory Video on the Courses
- Read: List of approved colleges, universities, and seminaries
- Submit: Transcripts of all post-secondary education courses
- To-Do: The Free Methodist Way (Completed as LMC)
- To-Do: History and Polity of the Free Methodist Church (Completed as LMC)
- To-Do: Introduction to Christian Doctrine (Completed as LMC)
- To-Do: Wesleyan Theology (Completed as LMC)
- To-Do: Old Testament Survey
- To-Do: New Testament Survey
- To-Do: Completion of first Practical Theology course, internship, or practicum
- To-Do: Completion of second Practical Theology course, internship, or practicum copy

5. Assessment

- Submit: Theological Questions
- Take: Bible Competency Exam
- Submit: Reflection on ministry experience
- Submit: Reflection on spiritual growth and sense of calling during the CMC discernment process

6. Next Steps

- Attend: Ceremony of Consecration, answer questions in the ceremony

Assessment

Like Local Ministerial Candidates, Consecrated Deacons will be evaluated based on an arrival point as well as gaging the overall trajectory of their spiritual growth following the heart, head, and hands model. It is important to note that Consecrated Deacons serve as representatives of the Free Methodist Church to their local ministry setting and the broader community in which they live and serve, while ultimately fulfilling their calling as ambassadors for Christ. The integrity, theological understanding and ability to articulate Free Methodist teachings, and commitment to serve must remain in keeping with that which is expected from a minister of Jesus Christ in adherence with that to which the Free Methodist Church USA has been called to be in this world. While some specific tools of assessment exist and others are to be developed, evaluate Deacon Candidates carefully before inviting them to receive consecration as Deacon in the FMCUSA. Annual review and renewal will ensue.



Chapter 6

Conference Ministerial Candidacy

An Overview of Conference Ministerial Candidacy

As one completes the process of local ministerial candidacy at the local church level, she or he may be approved by the MEG Board as a Conference Ministerial Candidate (CMC). At this phase, the candidate will continue the process of prayerful discernment, theological education, spiritual formation under a mentor, and closely observed ministry experience. Although this is a stage of further training and preparation, the CMC is also a step of licensure for ministry. Therefore, when a Local Ministerial Candidate is to be considered for Conference Ministerial Candidacy, she or he will be evaluated based on teachability, extending grace to acknowledge that they are still in process, while also examining them for a certain level of readiness to undertake ministry as a licensed CMC.

2023 Book of Discipline on Conference Ministerial Candidacy

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. be thoroughly acquainted with the history and conversant with the polity of the Free Methodist Church, normally as provided in an approved course of study;
 - 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 and an assigned coach/mentor;
 - 6. maintain membership in a Free Methodist Society;
 - 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 Ministerial Education and Guidance Board, the conference superintendent and the bishop. 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 and determine readiness based on the 15 areas measured in the Outcomes-Based Ordination assessment (see ¶5410).
- E. The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board may recommend the Consecrated Deacon track to a candidate for reasons when:
 - 1. A Conference Ministerial Candidate (CMC) who is called to a specialized ministry but not the general itinerant ministry of a Free Methodist elder.

2. A CMC who is called to pastoral ministry in the Free Methodist Church, but due to age, or language skills is not able to complete all of the preparations for becoming an elder.
3. A CMC who desires to continue in ministry in the Free Methodist Church but needs to suspend completing the course of study for an extended season (e.g. personal, vocational, or medical reasons).

To be considered as a Consecrated Deacon the candidate must complete the Local Ministerial Candidate (LMC) vetting process and 50% or more of the core curriculum for CMCs (including FM History and Polity, Old Testament and New Testament Survey Courses, Wesleyan Theology, and one or more practical ministry courses, internship, or practicum).

The Conference MEG Board presents qualified conference ministerial candidates to be confirmed as Consecrated Deacons. Following their confirmation, a Consecrated Deacon shall receive a card stating his/her status with the Conference. A Consecrated Deacon maintains the same relationship with the annual conference that he/she had as a CMC. If at a later time a Consecrated Deacon desires to seek ordination, he/she may contact the MEG Board to reengage with the ordination process. If a Consecrated Deacon seeks a transfer to another conference, he/she could do so as a CMC/Consecrated Deacon.

- F. A conference ministerial candidate shall be interviewed annually, for sufficient time to demonstrate proficiency and fruitfulness commensurate with ordination and conference membership. Normally this will be a period of 2 to 3 years. (See ¶5010.C)
- G. When a conference ministerial candidate is under appointment to a society 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, including election as a delegate to general conference, he/she is considered a "lay person."
- H. A conference ministerial candidate appointed by a Ministerial Appointments Committee to have charge of a society or with the superintendent's approval may administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper and solemnize marriages in that place, if civil law permits.

The Process

When signing on to the CMC Path on the Pathwright software, the Candidate will navigate the following steps through process. As the candidates click on each line, they will be directed to the content which they are to watch, read, attend, to do, or submit. Note that the online path is updated regularly so it may vary a bit from the example below. Please refer to the online version for the most up to date edition.

1. Welcome

- Watch: Welcome from the Center for Pastoral Formation
- Read: Book of Discipline on The Ordained Ministry
- Read: Summary *Head, Heart, Hands* Outcomes Chart
- Attend: Interview with your Conference Ministerial Education and Guidance (MEG) Board
- Attend: Annual Conference, answer the questions below
- Submit: Copy of Conference Certificate indicating your affirmation as a Conference Ministerial Candidate

2. Formation Plan with Mentor

- Read: CMC Handbook
- Submit: Submit copy of your Conference Ministerial Candidate Formation Plan
- To-Do: Psychological Evaluation to be arranged by annual conference

3. Mentor and MEG Meetings

- Attend: Please record dates of mentor meetings here
- Attend: Please record dates of MEG meetings here

4. Theological Formation

- Watch: Introductory Video on the Courses
- Read: List of approved colleges, universities, and seminaries
- Submit: Transcripts of all post-secondary education courses
- To-Do: Free Methodist Way (Course under construction to be completed as LMC)
- To-Do: History and Polity of the Free Methodist Church (Completed as LMC)

- To-Do: Introduction to Christian Doctrine (Completed as LMC)
- To-Do: Wesleyan Theology (Completed as LMC)
- To-Do: Old Testament Survey
- To-Do: New Testament Survey
- To-Do: Personal Formation and Self Care
- To-Do: Inductive Bible Study / Hermeneutics
- To-Do: Systematic Theology
- To-Do: Homiletics
- To-Do: Shepherding, Leadership, and Church Administration
- To-Do: Congregational Spiritual Formation and Pastoral Care
- To-Do: Community Engagement, Justice, and Evangelism
- To-Do: Cross Cultural Experience
- To-Do: Old Testament or New Testament Elective

5. Assessment

- Submit: Theological Questions
- Take: Bible Competency Exam
- Submit: Reflection on ministry experience
- Submit: Reflection on spiritual growth and sense of calling during the CMC discernment process

6. Next Steps

- Read: *Book of Discipline* on The Ordained Ministry
- Attend: Interview with Conference MEG Board
- Attend: Annual Conference, answer the questions in the ceremony below
- Submit: Please attach a copy of your parchment (ordination certificate) here
- Listen: Final words

Assessment and Annual Review

Conference Ministerial Candidates will be reviewed and encouraged annually through an interview with their MEG Board or its designee/s and through the final interview and assessments leading toward ordination as elder. The annual review will ensure that the candidate is on track and understanding of the next steps in the CMC process. Through meeting annually, the MEG Board has an opportunity to assess benchmarks of progress as compared to the previous year(s).

The final interview to explore a candidate's readiness for ordination remains a critical step in the process. This session allows for the MEG Board to ask tough questions, address gatekeeper issues, look for any lingering red flags, and ensure that the candidate will serve and represent the Free Methodist Church USA well. The MEG Board may enact one of the following responses in this interview: invite the candidate to wait another year with specific assignments to encourage growth in particular areas, redirect the candidate toward serving as a deacon, discontinue the candidate from ministry consideration, or invite the candidate to receive ordination as elder and follow the appropriate next steps toward that end.



Chapter 7

Ordination as Elder

An Overview of Elder's Orders

In his book *Pastoral Theology*, Tom Oden mused,

how odd that it is apparently not God's purpose to minister day by day to the world by direct revelation. Rather, the surprising fact is that God has chosen to minister to humanity through a scandalously visible community, the church, and to minister to the church through human agency, by calling ordinary, vulnerable, pride-prone persons into the ministry of word and sacrament.²⁴

Although it involves ordinary women and men, ordination is a high calling. It is the opportunity for the broader church and conference to affirm the call of God on the life of a woman or man who has been thoroughly educated, vetted, and trained for ministry service. Ordination as an elder in the Free Methodist Church is arguably part of the long line of Apostolic Succession, tracing its roots back to the Apostle Paul (see Appendix A). Therefore, it is not to be taken lightly.

Women and men may be ordained as an elder to serve in a variety of roles. These roles may be inclusive of, but not limited to, pastoral ministry as a senior or staff pastor, chaplaincy, missionary work, teaching any of the theological disciplines at an academic institution, traveling evangelism, starting new ministries, or denominational service.

²⁴ Thomas C. Oden. *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 13.

2023 Book of Discipline on Ordination as Elder

Elder's Orders

¶5400

- A. A minister may be received into membership, elected to elder's orders and granted a seat in the annual conference upon providing satisfactory answers to conference membership questions (see ¶8720) and receiving the recommendation of the MEG Board based on his/her demonstrated proficiency in the 15 Outcomes-Based Ordination areas (see ¶5410).
- B. Election to elder's orders constitutes the acknowledgment 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 pastor.

The Process

Once a candidate has met all the requirements as a Local Ministerial Candidate and those as a Conference Ministerial Candidate, has been properly affirmed by their respective Ministerial Education and Guidance Board and in consultation with the Center for Pastoral Formation, he or she may be invited by the MEG Board to be ordained as elder in the Free Methodist Church USA. After the final assessment interview as a CMC, the candidate will be notified by the conference superintendent or the MEG Board chair of his/her approval for ordination. At this point, the candidate will be given a copy of the ordination questions and invited to attend annual conference and the ordination service. The candidate will be encouraged to invite family, friends, and mentors to the ceremony. Some conferences may allow a candidate to invite one or two other Free Methodist elders who have served as mentors (officially or unofficially) to stand with the candidate at the time of the laying on of hands by the bishop.

Assessment

Once a person is ordained, the MEG Board responsibility may lighten a bit toward that candidate but will not end. Every year at annual conference, the MEG Board is asked to affirm the discipleship and Christian character of every ordained elder and those under appointment. Therefore, it is important to keep in touch with all ordained elders. In addition, women and men serving in ministry face complex challenges on a regular basis. MEG Boards are encouraged to think of creative ways to encourage and continue to equip the clergy under their care. This may occur in many ways including pastor care groups, regular calls, texts, emails, continuing education opportunities, and ongoing mentoring.



Chapter 8

Tracking of Progress

Proper record keeping for the progress of ministerial candidates is important for a number of reasons. Primarily, a good tracking system will allow a MEG Board to observe candidates' progress, locate areas where a candidate may be stuck or slowed in the process, and have tangible history to help guide a candidate toward future steps. In addition, the software will provide the Center for Pastoral Formation important documentation to serve for future consecration and/or ordination affirmation and for necessary archival records. Thus, it is recommended that every conference use the software system provided by the Center for Pastoral Formation and save their own backup files of essential documents.

Introduction to Pathwright

The tracking software platform is supplied by Pathwright. Pathwright serves as a course delivery system but is also adapted for use as a tracking system for ministerial candidates at all levels. The system is set up with the candidate in mind. Ministerial candidates will be in charge of uploading the necessary information into their path as the requirements are completed. The conference will designate a person or persons who will check each candidates' paths to ensure accuracy and accountability. Placing responsibility in the hands of the candidate allows for another level of observation from the MEG Board. For example, the candidate's diligence, attunement to detail, and administrative capabilities may be displayed through their engagement in keeping their path current and up to date.

As the name implies, Pathwright is designed as a step-by-step path that will guide the candidate through an easy-to-follow map of the LMC, Deacon, and CMC process. As they click on the next step in the path, the box will expand to invite the candidate to engage with videos, readings, meaningful quotes, and tasks to accomplish. As tasks are completed, their moderator (to be determined by the respective annual conference) will receive notification and may quickly check and confirm their progress by assigning a simple one-point value response.

The next pages contain sample screenshots of the LMC, Consecrated Deacon, and CMC Paths. These are basic shells of the paths and are subject to update and change. These samples indicate the basic format of what candidates will see to guide them through the process and keep track of their progress. Conference personnel should make note how these basic elements coincide with your conference and which sections may have additional steps to fit your context.

After the completion of all steps and review/approval by conference personnel, a completion certificate is generated by Pathwright. The Center for Pastoral Formation will download all candidate submissions and save electronically to their individual candidate file at FMCUSA. It is recommended that annual conferences also keep digital records of each candidate's submitted documents.

1. Welcome

Welcome to the discernment path as a Local Ministerial Candidate (LMC) in the Free Methodist Church. You have sensed the call of Jesus on your life. Now, you will embark on a journey to discern God's direction for you as you develop your head through theological training, your heart through spiritual formation, and your hands through practical ministry experience.

Resume



Listen: 1A. Welcome from the Center for Pastoral Formation

Start



Read: 1B. Book of Discipline on Local Ministerial Candidacy
✓ Completed



Submit: 1C. Statement of Faith expressing your coming to faith, call to ministry, and faith journey to date.
✓ Completed + 1 Points

2. Beginning the Journey: Local Ministerial Candidate (LMC) Licensing

▼ Show 7 Steps

3. The Formation Plan

▼ Show 4 Steps

4. Submission of Documents

▼ Show 4 Steps

5. The Courses

▼ Show 6 Steps

6. Discerning Next Steps

▼ Show 6 Steps

2. Beginning the Journey: Local Ministerial Candidate (LMC) Licensing

At this stage, you will enter into the discernment process for ministry in partnership with your local church. Your pastor, church board, and mentor will help you guide you through these first steps of prayerfully God's call on your life.



Listen: **2A. LMC Licensing**



Submit: **2B. Copy of Membership Certificate of a local Free Methodist Church or letter of confirmation**

1 Points



To-Do: **2C. Share your call to ministry with local pastor**

1 Points



Read: **2D. Heart, Head, Hands Outcomes**



To-Do: **2E. Local church Board of Administration Interview (Book of Discipline, ¶8700 A)**

1 Points



To-Do: **2F. Questions for the Congregation (Book of Discipline, ¶8700 B)**

1 Points



Submit: **2G. Online application at FMC-USA**

1 Points

3. The Formation Plan



To-Do: **3A. Assemble prayer team to help in your journey**

1 Points



Read: **3B. Example Formation Plan**



To-Do: **3C. Develop a Formation Plan with your mentoring pastor using the LMC Handbook**



Submit: **3D. Formation Plan (upload here)**

1 Points

4. Submission of Documents

If you plan to continue on as a Consecrated Deacon or as a Conference Ministerial Candidate, please submit the following documents.



Submit: **4A. Copies of all post-secondary academic transcripts from accredited colleges...**
Optional- 1 Points



Read: **4B. Criminal Background Check to be performed by your annual conference**
1 Points



Submit: **4C Divorce Clearance Documents**
Optional- 1 Points



Submit: **4D. Sample video or audio recording of sermon or lesson**
Optional- 1 Points

5. The Courses



Listen: **5A. Courses Introduction**



Submit: **5B. Review course opportunities at The Center for Pastoral Formation web site**



To-Do: **5C. Complete Free Methodist Way Course**
Optional- 1 Points



To-Do: **5D. Complete Introduction to Christian Doctrine Course**
Optional- 1 Points



To-Do: **5E: Complete History and Polity of the Free Methodist Church Course**
1 Points



To-Do: **5F. Complete a Wesleyan Theology course**
Optional- 1 Points

6. Discerning Next Steps



Listen: **6A. The End of the LMC Path**



Take: **6B. LMC Theological Proficiency Assessment**



Read: **6C. Book of Discipline on Consecrated Deacon**



Read: **6D. Book of Discipline on Ordination as Elder**



Attend: **6E: Set up an interview with your Conference Ministerial Education and Guidance (MEG) Board**
1 Points



To-Do: **6F. Next path?**
Optional- 1 Points

1. Welcome

Welcome to the discernment path as a Consecrated Deacon in the Free Methodist Church. You have sensed the call of Jesus on your life to serve your local church. Now, you will embark on a journey to develop your head through theological training, your heart through spiritual formation, and your hands through practical ministry experience.



Listen: **1A. Welcome to the Conference Deacon Path**

Start



Read: **1B. Book of Discipline on Conference Deacons**



Read: **1C. Summary Head, Heart, Hands Outcomes Chart**



Attend: **1D. Interview with your Local Board of Administration**
1 Points

2. Formation Plan

▼ Show 4 steps

3. Mentor and MEG Meetings

▼ Show 2 steps

4. Theological Formation

▼ Show 11 steps


5. Assessment

▼ Show 4 steps

Next Steps

▼ Show 3 steps

2. Formation Plan

 Read: **2A. Consecrated Deacon Handbook**



Submit: **Submit copy of your Deacon Candidate Formation Plan**
1 Points



To-Do: **2B. Develop a Formation Plan with your local Board of Administration**



Submit: **3C. Formation Plan (upload here)**
1 Points

3. Mentor and MEG Meetings

As part of your CMC Journey, you will meet regularly (nearly monthly) with your mentoring pastor and annually with your conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board. Please keep a record of these here.



Attend: **Please record dates of mentor meetings here**
Optional - 1 Points




Attend: **Please record dates of MEG meetings here**
Optional - 1 Points

4. Theological Formation

Here you may track your progress through required courses. There are a number of options to meet the requirements for each course. You may enroll through an approved seminary, university or college, the course offerings available through your annual conference, or through the Free Methodist Church--USA Center for Pastoral Formation.

 Watch: **4A. Introductory Video on the Courses**

 Read: **4B. List of approved, colleges, universities, and seminaries**

 Submit: **4C. Transcripts of all post-secondary education courses**
Optional- 1 Points

 To-Do: **4D. FMC: Free Methodist Way (Completed as LMC)**
1 Points

 To-Do: **4E. FMC: History and Polity of the Free Methodist Church (Completed as LMC)**
1 Points

 To-Do: **4F. THEOLOGY: Introduction to Christian Doctrine (Completed as LMC)**
1 Points

 To-Do: **4G. THEOLOGY: Wesleyan Theology (Completed as LMC)**
1 Points

 To-Do: **4H. BIBLE: Old Testament Survey**
Optional - 1 Points

 To-Do: **4I. BIBLE: New Testament Survey**
1 Points

 To-Do: **Completion of first Practical Theology course, internship, or practicum**

 To-Do: **Completion of second Practical Theology course, internship or practicum Copy**

5. Assessment

As your CMC journey draws toward completion, final assesments and prayerful discernment will help you look toward your next steps.



Submit: **5A. Theological Questions**
1 Points



Take: **5B. Bible Competency Exam**
1 Points



Submit: **5C. Reflection on ministry experience**
1 Points



Submit: **5D. Reflection on spiritual growth and sense of calling during the CMC discernment process**
1 Points

Next Steps



Read: **Book of Discipline on Consecrated Deacons**



Attend: **6B. Interview with Conference MEG Board**
1 Points



Attend: **Ceremony of Consecration, answer questions in the ceremony below.**

1. Welcome

Welcome to the discernment path as a Conference Ministerial Candidate in the Free Methodist Church. You have sensed the call of Jesus on your life. Now, you will embark on a journey to develop your head through theological training, your heart through spiritual formation, and your hands through practical ministry experience.



Listen: **1A. Welcome from the Center for Pastoral Formation**

Start



Read: **1B. Book of Discipline on The Ordained Ministry**



Read: **1C. Summary Head, Heart, Hands Outcomes Chart**



Attend: **1D. Interview with your Conference Ministerial Education and Guidance (MEG) Board**
1 Points



Attend: **1E. Annual Conference, answer the questions below**
1 Points



Submit: **1F. Copy of Conference Certificate indicating your affirmation as a Conference Ministerial Candidate**
1 Points

2. Formation Plan with Mentor

▼ Show 4 steps

3. Mentor and MEG Meetings

▼ Show 2 steps

4. Theological Formation

▼ Show 11 steps

5. Assessment

▼ Show 4 steps

Next Steps


▼ Show 3 steps

2. Formation Plan with Mentor

In this phase, you will establish a formation plan through which you will establish a mentor/mentee relationship focused on your spiritual growth and practical ministry experience.

 Read: **2A. CMC Handbook**


 To Do: **2B. Develop a Formation Plan with your mentoring pastor**


 Submit: **2C. Submit copy of your CMC Formation Plan**
1 Points

 To Do: **2D. Psychological Evaluation to be arranged by your annual conference**
1 Points

3. Mentor and MEG Meetings

As part of your CMC Journey, you will meet regularly (nearly monthly) with your mentoring pastor and annually with your conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board. Please keep a record of these here.

 Attend: **Please record the name of your mentor and dates of mentor meetings here**
Optional - 1 Points

 Attend: **Please record dates of MEG meetings here**
Optional - 1 Points

4. Theological Formation

Here you may track your progress through required courses. There are a number of options to meet the requirements for each course. You may enroll through an approved seminary, university or college, the course offerings available through your annual conference, or through the Free Methodist Church--USA Center for Pastoral Formation.



Listen: **4A. Introductory to CMC Courses**



Submit **4B. Copies of all post-secondary academic transcripts from accredited colleges...**
Optional - 1 Points



Read: **4C. Review course opportunities at The Center for Pastoral Formation web site.**



To-Do: **4D. FMC: Free Methodist Way Course**
Optional - 1 Points



To-Do: **4E. FMC: History & Polity of the Free Methodist Church Course**
1 Points



To-Do: **4F. THEOLOGY: Introduction to Christian Doctrine Course**
1 Points



To-Do: **4G. THEOLOGY: Wesleyan Theology Course**
1 Points



To-Do: **4H. BIBLE: Old Testament Survey**
Optional - 1 Points



To-Do: **4I. BIBLE: New Testament Survey**
1 Points



To-Do: **4J. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: Personal Spiritual Formation**
1 Points



To-Do: **4K. BIBLE: Inductive Bible Study/Hermeneutics**
1 Points



To-Do: **4L. THEOLOGY: Systematic Theology**
1 Points



To-Do: **4M. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: Homiletics**
1 Points



To-Do: **4N. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: Church Administration, Shepherding and Leadership**
1 Points



To-Do: **4O. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: Pastoral Care and Congregational Spiritual Formation**
1 Points



To-Do: **4P. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: Evangelism, Community Engagement, and Justice**
1 Points



To-Do: **4Q. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: Cross Cultural Experience**
1 Points



To-Do: **4R. BIBLE: Old Testament or New Testament Elective**
1 Points

5. Assessment

As your CMC journey draws toward completion, final assessments and prayerful discernment will help you look toward your next steps.



Read: **5A. Summary Head, Heart Hands Outcomes Chart**



Submit: **5B. Theological Questions**
1 Points



Take: **5C. Bible Competency Exam**
1 Points



Submit: **5D. Reflection on ministry experience (HANDS)**
1 Points



Submit: **5E. Reflection on spiritual growth & sense of calling (HEART)**
1 Points

Next Steps



Read: **6A. Book of Discipline on The Ordained Ministry**



Attend: **6B. Interview with Conference MEG Board**
1 Points



Attend: **6C. Annual Conference, answer the questions below in the ceremony**
1 Points



Submit: **6D. Please attach a copy of your parchment (ordination certificate) here.**



Listen: **6E. Final words**



Chapter 9

Interviewing Candidates

There are a few key moments when the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board will interview ministerial candidates including upon completion of the Local Ministerial Candidate process in consideration of Conference Ministerial Candidacy, annual review of CMCs, and for consideration for ordination as elder. It is also recommended that MEG Boards follow up with ordained elders one year after ordination and maintain regular check-ins with ordained and appointed clergy.

These interviews serve as important opportunities to gauge the spiritual, theological, and ministerial development of candidates and those serving in ministry positions. These interviews allow for times to encourage candidates in their spiritual journeys, pray for them, provide or recommend further training and mentoring, and look for red-flag issues. Therefore, it is important to approach the interviews with preparedness and a schedule that allows for sufficient time with the candidates without feeling rushed. You may want to assign interview questions to the individual MEG Board members in advance of the interview.

These interviews should also be followed by sufficient time for the MEG Board to debrief and take notes on their observations. Questions, assessments, and reflections should analyze the *heart*, *head*, and *hands* categories stated earlier. As mentioned in a previous chapter, the MEG Board looks for certain benchmarks of arrival, while also evaluating the overall trajectory of a particular candidate to ensure that they are on the path toward continued growth and development in ministerial service.

Interview Preparation

Schedule wisely: Ensure that plenty of time is set aside for the interview. The more work done on the front end of the process may prevent unfortunate surprises in the future. If an interview is rushed, the candidate may not feel free to share at an in-depth level.

Prepare well: Every member of the MEG Board ought to arrive to the interview well-prepared. If there are materials, questionnaires, forms, etc. these should be read through ahead of time while observing points that may call for encouragement, areas of concern, and places where the candidate may need some direction. Board members may also look for responses that require further investigation. Proper preparation allows for the interview to proceed with greater intentionality while avoiding broad-sweeping generalities.

Assign specific questions: Assigning questions in advance helps to prevent moments of awkward silence and inappropriate or unhelpful questions while maximizing the time and keeping the focus. Questions may be drawn from the resources in this manual or created by the MEG Board. The board members should be involved in this process so that individuals may focus on the questions that are in their area of expertise or passion.

Communicate clearly: When setting up the interview, the candidate should know what to expect so that she or he may arrive at the interview prepared. Ensure that the time, place, and format of the meeting are stated in the communications. If the candidate has forms or materials to complete in advance, include an easy-to-access link or attachment to the materials. Again, this helps to make the most of the interview time.

Interview Technique

Introductions: Briefly introduce each of the board members present. This allows for the candidate to use names and understand a bit of the context in which the interviewers live. Introductions may also provide information for future networking and support of the candidate.

Create a relaxed atmosphere: Many candidates will feel nervous entering into the interview. Take time to set them at ease, reaffirm the MEG Board's desire to support and encourage them on their spiritual and ministry journey, and remind them of the confidential nature of their interview.

Establish the purpose: Articulate the purpose of the interview to the candidate. If the interview is for entrance into the CMC process, define what a CMC is and don't assume that they understand all the acronyms. Do the same for Elder interviews. If the interview is established for their yearly review as CMC, affirm the work they have accomplished to date and articulate the board's role in journeying with the candidate.

Opening questions: Ask a few general questions that allow the candidate to share how she or he is doing overall. Some may jump right into deep struggles or challenges in life or ministry, others may take a while to warm up to the group. These general questions provide opportunities to the candidate to share pressing topics which may be on their mind to share with the board. Such permission may be given near the end of the interview if the candidate did not share initially.

Review materials: If the candidate submitted any materials in advance, take a moment to offer a quick review of the materials. If the materials serve as the focus of the interview, offer a general response to their work before unpacking the details.

Ask questions: Well-crafted and previously prepared questions will provide MEG Boards with immeasurably valuable tools for evaluating the progress of ministerial candidates. However, perhaps even more important are the observation skills of the team to look for non-verbal cues, body language, that which was not said, and the nuances of voice inflection. Questions should cover aspects of the *heart, head, and hands* model to assess spiritual growth and maturity, theological formation, and practical ministry experience.

Interview questions may cover broad generalities followed by specific topics to evaluate how a candidate responds. For example, a broad question like, “how do you define success?” allows the candidate an opportunity to speak from her or his own sense of values and priorities as will be reflected in their responses. On the other hand, a specific question like, “what did Martin Luther mean by *sola fide*, or faith alone, and how does it compare or contrast with a Wesleyan understanding?” allows for a candidate to demonstrate their proficiency in issues of historical theology.

For questions of a pragmatic nature, the board may want to consider offering a few hypothetical scenarios for consideration. For example, a board member may describe a church with committed people who know the Bible well but haven’t seen any new converts or attendees in a number of years. The candidate may then be asked how she or he may seek to address this issue with the congregation over the course of a few years.

This scenario approach may also be used to address theological issues. For instance, a board member may say, “suppose a family comes to you and says that they would like to have their baby baptized to ensure that the child makes it to heaven if something were to happen; how would you respond?” This way of questioning will allow the candidate to articulate their perspective on infant baptism and salvation without it feeling directed toward a specific response.

Ask follow-up questions: Good follow-up questions help to press into a candidate’s response while guiding her or him to further expand on the topic. Follow-up questions may also bring clarity to points that remain unclear.

Allow for the candidate's questions: As mentioned earlier, candidates may arrive at the interview with their own pressing questions, concerns, or struggles. It is important to allow them the opportunity to share their feelings, seek clarity, or communicate information. At times, a candidate may share what is referred to as a “doorknob issue.” These are matters of deep importance or urgency that are shared on the way out the door when time is limited and the matter may not be addressed in that moment. When such situations arise, the board may want to be prepared to invite the candidate for a follow-up meeting with the whole board or one or two members who may be available to serve as a listening ear or address the issue at hand.

Articulate next steps: The interview should conclude with clear action plans and next steps. The candidate should know what to expect moving forward. This may be the time to assign the next course(s) to be completed, areas of ministry involvement to be pursued, or matters of conversation with their mentor. A follow-up email should be sent rearticulating the steps given.

Tools of Discernment

Interviewing ministerial candidates or potential candidates requires various tools of assessment and discernment. A few of these assessments are measurable, others are observable, and some will come through prayerful consideration. For example, completion of coursework is measurable (i.e. the number of courses taken, the grades received, assignments finished). However, through the process of course completion, other attributes of the candidate may be observed. Beyond the theological, biblical, and practical training acquired through coursework, a candidate's involvement and interaction with the requirements may communicate more than merely understanding the material. Their engagement may demonstrate discipline, teachability, work ethic, or submission to authority, among other observable character qualities.

Ordination deals with spiritual matters that often exist beyond that which is directly measurable and observable. After measuring, observing, and applying the tools of assessment, the ultimate question arises, does it “seem right to us and the Holy Spirit?” This requires an additional set of tools. An ancient Christian practice for discernment calls for an awareness of the inner sense of consolation or desolation.²⁵ If one experiences consolation—peace, serenity, and rightness—when deciding on a matter of importance, it may be the leading of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, if a decision is accompanied by a sense of desolation—unsettledness and the feeling that something is not quite right, or a sense that something is off or amiss in some way—one will want to give prayerful pause before moving forward. When the measurable requirements are met, the observations affirm the character and competency of the candidate, and it seems right to the group and to the Holy Spirit, the MEG Board may confidently move forward.

“Gate-Keeper” Issues

²⁵ For example, see *Spiritual Exercises* by Ignatius of Loyola

Ordination is a public and corporate affirmation of a call to ministry on the life of a Christian sister or brother. Ordination is also an endorsement to serve in the Free Methodist Church. There are certainly many areas of flexibility within Christian orthodoxy, however, there are also very clear distinctives that make one Christian or not. Likewise, there are certain matters of doctrine and practice that are uniquely Free Methodist and some that are outside of the definition of Free Methodism. It is possible that a ministerial candidate may have a genuine call to ministry but theologically or pragmatically may not find a complete alignment with the Free Methodist Church and may be encouraged to find a home in another Christian denomination.

The *Articles of Religion* found in the first chapter of the *Book of Discipline* present the doctrinal distinctives of Free Methodism. The third chapter of the *BOD* offers the guiding principles for living out the life of faith in accord with the doctrines of the Free Methodist Church. These may be considered among the non-negotiables for ordination in the Free Methodist Church. In addition, the values expressed in *The Free Methodist Way* may also prove to serve as helpful tools when gaging alignment of a ministerial candidate with the FMC.

At times, certain “gate-keeper” issues arise for which a MEG Board needs to put a pause on someone advancing toward ordination. When analyzing such issues, the board will want to observe and assess the candidate’s teachability, willingness to reconsider, and desire to engage in further study on the topic. Though not exhaustive, the following includes some of the common issues encountered by MEG Boards:

- *Authority of Scripture*: Pay attention to the nuances among the various views of biblical authority, infallibility, and inerrancy. The Free Methodist Church believes strongly in the authority and accuracy of both the Old and New Testaments, but opts not to use the terminology of inerrancy due to some of its abuses in proof-texting or holding particular translations above the original languages.
- *Arminianism and Wesleyanism vs. Calvinism*: Free Methodists hold firmly to both the sovereignty of God and human free will without steering too far toward a Calvinistic predestination perspective or the Pelagian heresy of the Fifth Century that emphasized a human will that is capable of coming to God and growing toward perfection on one’s own power.
- *Holiness*: A statement like, “we are all sinners” should raise further questions from the MEG Board. Although we acknowledge that we are sinners saved by grace, we also believe that the grace of God can set us free from sin and bring us to a level of Christian perfection (as understood by Wesley) in this life. At this high and lofty goal of the Christian life, one can be motivated by pure love for God and pure love for others. This does not necessarily do away with all forms of ignorance or shortcoming but can do away with the need to go on sinning.

- *Infant Baptism:* As Free Methodists, we believe that the prevenient grace of God works in all people. In our sacramental theology, baptism is understood as a means of grace. In infant baptism, we acknowledge the grace of God at work even in one's infancy. Therefore, we baptize people of all ages. This does not, however, minimize the need for a child to receive that grace for herself or himself. Parents may also opt to have children dedicated as infants and later baptized when they receive that grace for themselves. Because we acknowledge the validity of infant baptism, we are not anabaptists. We do not see a need to rebaptize a person, though we may provide an opportunity for persons to reaffirm their baptism that they received earlier in life.
- *Women in Ministry:* As Free Methodists, we are egalitarian and not complementarian when it comes to our understanding of the relationship between women and men. Watch carefully for language that will speak of women and men in a hierarchical way. A candidate should be able to articulate clearly the way in which Scripture speaks of women and men as equals and how Scripture affirms the role of women in ministry.
- *LGBTQ+ Matters:* We love every human being deeply with the unconditional love of God. We also hold to an understanding of God's design for marriage as a covenant relationship between one woman and one man. We also hold to an understanding that God is the creator of both body and soul and that the two are linked in relationship such that one's gender aligns with one's sex. As Free Methodists, we hold strongly to biblical truths about sex, gender, and marriage, while maintaining a posture of love. Candidates should model and articulate these truths in a loving way.
- *Political Extremism:* As Christians, our loyalties belong to the kingdom of God over any political position or national allegiance. B. T. Roberts frequently urged Free Methodists not to promote one political party over another but to address the issues individually and biblically. Political extremism whether it leans to the left or right, liberal or conservative, and Christian nationalism should be carefully addressed by MEG Boards when it is observed in ministerial candidates.
- *Use of Social Media:* Social media can be a powerful tool for connecting with others and offering expressions of encouragement, and proclaiming good news. The use of social media to belittle or attack other people or particular groups of people is inappropriate and should be addressed when observed in posts by ministerial candidates.
- For the most up to date discussions on Free Methodist theology and doctrine, please visit the Study Commission on Doctrine (SCOD) website.

Types of Interviews

There are three key points along the journey when a MEG Board is required to establish an interview with each candidate: (1) upon completion of the LMC path for consideration to move toward the CMC path; (2) for CMC annual review; and (3) upon completion of the CMC path as they will be considered for ordination as elder.

There will also be other times when interviews may be scheduled. For example, a conference MEG Board may choose to meet with someone at crucial moments after a new appointment. Generally, these crucial times of transition occur at around eighteen months, three years, seven years, and ten years after arrival in a new ministry setting. It would be wise to anticipate these critical points by interviewing and encouraging women and men in their respective ministries.

The MEG Board has a unique opportunity to minister to pastors. If the MEG Board is made aware of particular times of stress and difficulty in the life and/or ministry of a pastor, a meeting may serve as an opportunity to offer care and support to the pastors. Maintaining an atmosphere of encouragement will set pastors at ease, helping them not to feel as though they are under scrutiny or that the meeting was established for punitive reasons. As another option, a MEG Board may assign one or two designees to meet with the pastors at these critical times.



Chapter 10

Continuing Education and Ongoing Pastoral Formation

The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board is charged with the duty to care for pastors throughout their years of service. Ministerial credentialing lays the critically important foundation and early stages of growth for women and men in ministry. However, pastoral formation does not end at ordination. The need for ongoing care, encouragement, learning, and mentoring will remain throughout one's ministry career. In fact, the *Flourishing in Ministry* research finds that in addition to the necessary training at the early stages of ministry, "forming an authentic pastoral identity [is] an on-the-job-process."²⁶

Components of Ministerial Longevity

In addition to an authentic pastoral identity, Bloom found that a critical component of ministerial longevity includes the social relationships in a pastor's life. Specifically, he identified four crucial types: "significant others (spouses, family, and friends), similar others (pastors, clergy, and other ministry workers), members of the local church a pastor is serving, and denominational leaders." He went on to state that "all are necessary, but no single one is sufficient."²⁷ These relationships develop over time and cannot be forced or mandated. However, a MEG Board or annual conference may

²⁶ Bloom, 71.

²⁷ Bloom, 82.

serve as a catalyst by providing retreats, pastoral gatherings, and offering direct support and encouragement through intentional efforts. When planning these gatherings and opportunities, consider ways of including spouses and families for some of these.

Stages of Ministry Development

As women and men serving in ministry grow personally and professionally, they will likely find themselves progressing through various stages and seasons. Personally, they will pass through times of great closeness with God along with dry times; they may endure seasons of pain and suffering, periods of quiet, stretches when they are faithfully plugging away without any extraordinary experiences, and other times of great miracles, answers to prayer, and fruitful ministry. Likewise, professionally they will experience exciting answers to prayer along with great struggle and heartache. Knowing and understanding these seasons will prove helpful in successfully navigating them and maturing through them. Awareness of these stages will also empower the MEG Board to adequately encourage and care for the clergy under their care.

Stages of Spiritual Growth

Throughout the centuries since the time of Christ, countless women and men have written about various stages of spiritual growth. Often, their understanding of the growth process may be categorized into three distinct phases: an early stage in which one enters into a relationship with God and begins working through their sinfulness and shortcomings, a middle stage that is characterized by a deeper relationship with God and growing in the virtues, and a climactic phase in which one experiences the fullness of an intimate relationship with God. An early work from which many later writers drew named these phases *purgation*, *illumination*, and *enlightenment*.²⁸ Later authors added various substages and transition experiences from one to the next. For example, John of the Cross wrote about a *Dark Night of the Soul*, which leads one from purgation to illumination, and the *Dark Night of the Spirit*, which leads one from illumination to enlightenment. Both of these *dark night* experiences are accompanied by seasons of deep pain and suffering, along with a sense that God feels distant.

John Wesley had his own version of different stages of progression. These phases and their components are summarized in the chart below.

²⁸ See the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius.

John Wesley's Stages of Spiritual Growth²⁹

Justification and the Early Stages	Further Growth in Grace	Climactic Stage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevenient Grace • Spirit of God Brings Self-Knowledge and Awareness • Faith of a Servant (Broad) • Almost Christian • Confession • Initial Repentance • Faith of a Servant (Narrow) • Forgiveness • Justification • Wilderness State • Saved from Sin • Initial New Birth • Initial Sanctification • Initial Assurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith of a Child • New Birth • Ongoing Repentance • Self-Denial • Heaviness • Growth in Faith, Hope, Love, and Joy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further Self-Denial • Divine Action • Instant and Process • To Will God's Will • Free from Sin • Born Again • Altogether Christian • Full Assurance • Perfect love • Christian Perfection • Entire Sanctification • God-Likeness

Volumes could be written about Wesley's perspectives on each of these aspects of the stages of growth—and volumes have been written; however, it is worth highlighting a few of these as they pertain to clergy care.

The first notable stage pertains to seasons of suffering. John of the Cross saw *dark night* experiences as periods of time when a person suffers great difficulties for the sake of God drawing the soul closer to himself. John Wesley's response to this concept may be found in his two sermons, *The Wilderness State* and *Heaviness through Manifold Temptations*. Wesley's primary issue with the *dark night* understanding was in the cause of these seasons. John of the Cross saw these as acts of God, whereas Wesley wrote about a *wilderness state* in which Christians sin and grieve the Holy Spirit and a season of *heaviness* when the world and the devil throw immense difficulties our way. Though there are significant theological differences between the two, they would agree that nearly all Christians go through seasons of heartache, pain, and suffering through which we can also enter into a deeper relationship with God.

²⁹Adapted from *The Almost Mystic: John Wesley's Editing of the Spanish Mystics, in his Christian Library* by Steve Tungate. 2022.

Pastors, of course, are not exempt from such experiences. During these seasons, people do well to “attend to the means of grace,” as Wesley often counseled. Pastors who find themselves in such a season may also benefit from meeting with a counselor or spiritual director and meeting regularly with a group of other pastors for mutual encouragement and accountability. Some may find it necessary to take time off through an extended vacation or sabbatical to allow time and space to pray and process. The MEG Board may serve as a helpful source of encouragement, resourcing, and counsel.

Stages of Ministry in a Particular Context

Women and men serving in ministry will find themselves traversing through different seasons in both their immediate ministry context and over the long haul across the full range of their appointments. Many of these seasons and transitions may be somewhat predictable and therefore may be anticipated. As a general pattern (although there are certainly exceptions), a newly appointed pastor enjoys a fair amount of excitement, dreaming, and relationship building within the first eighteen months at a new ministry appointment. This is often referred to as the honeymoon phase. Usually, around the eighteen-month mark, initial conflicts arise. At that point, the pastor and congregation have had a chance to get to know each other, the novelty has faded, and everyone begins to anticipate what a long-term commitment may look like. This is often the time when some laypersons may decide to leave the church due to the differences emerging from the way things were before the pastor arrived. If the pastor and congregation navigate this well, communicate through the conflicts, and work to keep relationships strong and connected, the difficult time may be short lived (again, there are exceptions). When this is accomplished, the next stretch may feel a bit smoother as everyone settles into the new relationship and ministry direction.

At the three-year mark, there often emerges another point of conflict. This one may feel more intense as relationships have formed and there seems to be more at stake. At this stage, it is important once again to keep communication open and relationships connected. The pastor and congregation will work together to develop more long-term vision and ministry direction. As the pastor and church move through this valley to the other side, they generally may enjoy a few years of working together toward their shared goals.

Year seven often emerges as another point of potential conflict and tension. At this point, many of the initial dreams and plans have come to fruition, and the pastor and congregation find themselves needing to develop new vision moving forward. Here, the pastor and congregation are determining if they are really in it for the long haul. Once again, if this is navigated well, the pastor and church may enjoy a lengthy season of ministry together as relationships are now well established and the process of determining the direction of the church has been thoroughly worked.

Stages of Ministry over the Long Haul

Just as the seasons, needs, and challenges emerge over time in one ministry context, women and men serving in ministry will find themselves navigating similar stages of pastoral development and growth over the long-term. In an article titled "Shooting the Rapids: The Cycles of Pastoral Ministry,"³⁰ Dan Pietrzyk identified three primary stages of pastoral formation that emerge over the course of a ministry career. These include a key transition point at around years 5-8, another at years 13-15, and a third near years 20-25.

Pietrzyk described the first phase of ministry as that which is marked by a season when "expectations meet reality, strengths and weaknesses come into sharper clarity through experience, and pastors begin to know what they do not know." He noted that "in this period, pastors re-examine their sense of call, and they feel an urgent need to 'catch-up' in their learning." This is a time when experienced mentors, like-minded peers, and continuing education may serve as vital sources of encouragement and necessary development to help shape their long-term pastoral identity.

In the second phase, women and men serving in ministry have already faced a lot of challenges and heartache. Pietrzyk observes, "they have been wounded from the work of ministry. Their families have paid a price. They know what they like to do and dislike doing." He identified the key questions that clergy ask at this stage include, "Do I want to keep doing this? I have been doing this for 15 years of my life. Can I imagine doing this another 15 or 20 years?" He identified this stage as a time of re-imagining their pastoral role in a way that "requires a high level of self-awareness, a growing contentment about one's gifts and liabilities, and a mission motivation that outweighs the cost." He stated that this is the period that shows the highest rate of attrition among pastors. Therefore, "being sustained through this stage . . . requires good self-awareness, healthy boundaries, relational fitness and a freshening of devotional patterns."³¹

The final stage wrestles with the idea of legacy, according to Pietrzyk. He found that pastors will either merely buy time until retirement or finish well as they seek to leave behind them a ministry legacy that will outlast their time in the role. Providing opportunities for this group to invest in the next generation of ministry leaders would be a great way to engage their gifts and to empower them to retire well.

30 Dan Pietrzyk, "Shooting the Rapids: The Cycles of Pastoral Ministry," *Faith & Leadership*, January 11, 2009, <https://faithandleadership.com/shooting-the-rapids-the-cycles-pastoral-ministry>.

31 Pietrzyk, "Shooting the Rapids."

MEG Board Guidance

When MEG Board members are attuned to the various stages of spiritual and professional growth and development, they may serve an important role in helping clergy to flourish over the long haul of ministry. Struggle, challenges, down and dry times can be painful and discouraging, to say the least; however, they are not necessarily hindrances to ministry effectiveness but opportunities for a more fruitful ministry. MEG Boards should serve as a source of encouragement through such transitions and difficulties.

Sabbath, Vacation, and Sabbaticals

In order for pastors to remain spiritually, physically, and mentally healthy, it is important that they practice healthy rhythms of rest and time away in addition to regular engagement in spiritual disciplines, or what John Wesley and others referred to as the “means of grace.” This rhythm includes a weekly day of sabbath, a monthly day away devoted specifically to prayer and study, up to one week annually for continuing education, vacation times (three weeks per annum for the first fifteen years of service and four weeks per annum thereafter), and an extended sabbatical (three to four months in length) every seven years.

Continuing Education Requirements

Training for ministry should follow a robust process with high standards that effectively prepare persons for service. However, no system can cover the entire breadth of biblical and theological knowledge, ministry best practices, and complete spiritual arrival. Therefore, ordained clergy are urged to engage regularly in continuing education opportunities. If an ordained elder does not have a graduate degree, they are encouraged to prayerfully consider and explore opportunities to work toward an MDiv, or perhaps an MA in a particular area of ministry, or an MTh or equivalent for deeper theological training. For cases in which an elder already has a graduate degree, Doctor of Ministry programs are designed for experienced pastors, missionaries, and chaplains to pursue further training, learning, and spiritual growth. For women and men particularly gifted in teaching and research, a PhD may be right for them. It is strongly encouraged that those pursuing further education for ministry turn to the AFMEI or JWSF affiliate schools.

In the case that an elder is not able or ready to complete a degree program, it is essential that they attend conferences, enroll in stand-alone courses, and seek out mentors to help them continue their spiritual and professional growth. Many colleges, universities, and seminaries offer certificate programs that make continuing education more accessible and affordable.

Many professions require a certain amount of continuing education units (CEU) annually in order to maintain licensure. One CEU is often

measured by ten contact hours in a particular training event, conference, or seminar. It is recommended that ordained elders complete the equivalent of at least one unit of continuing education per year. It is appropriate for conference MEG boards to mandate continuing education standards and require a statement or certificate of completion.

Affirming Integrity and Christian Discipleship

The *Book of Discipline* calls for MEG boards to give an annual report considering “the integrity and Christian discipleship of each ministerial member and the performance of duty of each appointed pastor of the conference” and likewise, “affirm the integrity and Christian discipleship of located deacons and located elders” (*BOD*, ¶5230, K. and L.). Therefore, annual check-ins are strongly encouraged to ensure ongoing interaction, support, and encouragement for those already ordained.

It is recommended that the MEG Board members read through the *Articles of Religion* found in the first chapter of the 2023 *Book of Discipline* and *The Christian Journey* found in the third chapter. The preaching, teaching, and character of clergy should reflect that which is communicated in these sections. If at any point an appointed and /or ordained woman or man in the conference is not in line with the doctrines or practice of the Free Methodist Church, proper follow-up will be needed before affirming their “integrity and Christian discipleship.”

Chaplaincy Endorsement³²

The chaplaincy is a specific calling to represent the Free Methodist Church USA (FMCUSA) in specialized ministry settings as an extension of the denomination and the chaplain’s ordaining conference. Chaplains minister in the branches of the United States Armed Forces, Civil Air Patrol, Bureau of Prisons, Department of Veteran Affairs, health care, hospital and hospice networks, police, law enforcement, fire and emergency services agencies, industrial, marketplace, and other community settings. Chaplaincy may also serve as a viable option for co-vocational ministry alongside pastoral service in a church setting.

There are two categories of Ecclesiastical Chaplain Credentials:

Ecclesiastical Chaplain Endorsement and Ecclesiastical Chaplain Candidate Endorsement (primarily with the United States Armed Forces).

** Laity, Local Ministerial Candidates (LMC), and Deacons are under the guidance of their local church pastor and Board of Administration in regard to local volunteer community ministry.*

³² This section reproduced from Guidelines updated 12/01/2020 (This publication supersedes 9/14/06)

Ecclesiastical Chaplain Endorsement

Ecclesiastical Chaplain Endorsement is an affirmation that the endorsed chaplain will be performing a critical extension ministry of the FMCUSA and has presented evidence to perform chaplain ministry by their ministerial calling, educational training, pastoral experience, and personal giftings.

Persons seeking endorsement to serve in the United States Armed Forces, Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), and the Bureau of Prisons are required to complete a Master of Divinity or equivalency, be fully ordained to Elder, and gain pastoral ministry experience. Additionally, the VA requires the applicant to complete some units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). Many large medical, hospital, and hospice health care systems require or prefer CPE training. Most police and fire departments require full ordination and Ecclesiastical Endorsement.

** Some chaplaincy domains do not require a Master of Divinity, only that the applicant be ecclesiastically ordained and endorsed.*

Ecclesiastical Chaplain Candidate Endorsement

A. United States Armed Forces

The United States Armed Forces offer a chaplain candidate seminarian program that requires Ecclesiastical Chaplain Candidate Endorsement as a precursor to full ecclesiastical endorsement. Approved applicants are commissioned officers by their desired branch of the Armed Forces and serve as “Chaplain Candidates” in paid status on active-duty orders for an introduction to the military setting. They do not wear the chaplain cross on their uniform, nor are they referred to as “Chaplain” until they are ordained to Elder, receive full Ecclesiastical Endorsement, and are commissioned into a branch of the military as fully trained religious ministry professionals.

B. Other Chaplain Domains

When a Conference Ministerial Candidate (CMC) is pursuing full ordination credentials, and the institutional domain in which they desire to serve (police, fire, hospital, hospice, etc.) will accept an interim credential, the Endorsing Agent may grant them an Ecclesiastical Chaplain Candidate Endorsement until they complete all requirements for full endorsement. While in this status they will be referred to as a “Chaplain Candidate.”

Ecclesiastical Application Process

Applications are available through the FMCUSA Co-Directors of Chaplain Ministries/Endorsing Agent. When all application requirements are met, the Endorsing Agent will recommend the applicant to the Board of Bishops for ecclesiastical endorsement or chaplain candidacy endorsement.

Ecclesiastically Endorsed Chaplains

1. An ordained Elder in good standing of a Free Methodist Annual Conference.
2. Recommended by their Conference Ministerial Education Guidance (MEG) Board.
3. The MEG Board will provide verification of a current background check that includes basic searches of national criminal records, national sex offender registries, financial history / credit check, and a social trace.
4. Meet all professional requirements for their chaplain setting.
5. Be an active participant in a local FM Church, or when not possible, involved in the ministry of a local church in their community.
6. A member of the Free Methodist Chaplains Association (FMCA).
7. When possible, attend the annual FMCA Professional Development Training Conference.
8. Contribute monthly a tithe of their tithe to the FMCA Chaplain Account.
9. Violation of Ordination requirements will result in forfeiture of Endorsement.

Chaplain Candidate Endorsement

1. Conference Ministerial Candidate (CMC) pursuing ordination to Elder.
2. An active member of a Free Methodist Church, under the supervision of a Lead Pastor in the FMCUSA.
3. Recommended by their Conference Ministerial Education Guidance (MEG) Board.
4. The MEG Board or their local church will provide verification of a current background check that includes basic searches of national criminal records, national sex offender registries, financial history / credit check, and a social trace.
5. A member of the Free Methodist Chaplains Association (FMCA)
6. When possible, attend the annual FMCA Professional Development Training Conference.
7. Contribute monthly a tithe of their tithe to the FMCA Chaplain Account.
8. Violation of CMC requirements will result in forfeiture of Chaplain Candidate Approval.

Review and Evaluation

Endorsement is granted for service in a specific institutional setting. Should an endorsed chaplain transfer from one employment institutional setting to another, she or he should request a new updated endorsement. Any change of setting without a new request may result in loss of endorsement.

Retirement

Chaplains who retire and remain in good standing with their ordaining FMCUSA Conference, will remain in an endorsed status (emeritus) in recognition of past service and potential to serve as a mentor.

Section 2:
**Changes of Status,
Transfers, and Restoration**



Chapter 11

Credentials and Transfers

Licenses and Credentials

The *Book of Discipline* makes a distinction between licensure and credentialing. A license may be given to non-ordained persons for a few different purposes. A lay person sensing a call to ministry and approved by a local church as a Local Ministerial Candidate shall be granted an LMC License by the local church board of administration verifying her or his status. Similarly, a conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board may grant a CMC License to persons affirmed and received as Conference Ministerial Candidates. Licenses may also be given to non-ordained women and men to serve as missionaries or local church pastors by the MEG Board; these licenses shall be reviewed annually for renewal. Credentials, on the other hand, refer to the granting of ordination certification. A person is credentialed upon ordination as an elder in the Free Methodist Church USA.

2023 Book of Discipline on Licensure
Licensed Pastor

¶5640

- A. Any person appointed to a society who is not a member of the annual conference in which he/she is appointed shall be designated a licensed pastor. Though conference ministerial candidates who are appointed as lead pastor have a vote, licensed pastors do not vote at annual conference. 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. Prior to his/her appointment, a licensed pastor, not currently a member of a local Free Methodist Church, shall answer affirmatively the questions for Free Methodist membership at a meeting of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board.
- C. Ordinarily, a person serving as a Licensed Pastor will transfer into the Free Methodist Church or will complete a process of preparation for ordination in the Free Methodist Church. Exceptions to this rule must be processed with the area bishop.

2023 Book of Discipline on Credentials
Ordination Credentials

¶5430

- 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.³³
- 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.

33 Now the Center for Pastoral Formation

- 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. Credentials may be restored only by the annual conference to which they were surrendered or which declared them void.
- E. In the event of the loss of ordination credentials, a certified duplicate copy shall be made available through the Board of Bishops' office.
- F. 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).

Transfers

One of many reasons for moving toward a denomination-wide baseline standard for licensing and credentialing includes the matter of transfers. It is relatively common for an ordained or licensed pastor to transfer from one conference to another. Therefore, it is important to ensure that women and men are well-equipped spiritually, theologically, and practically to a high standard that meets or exceeds the requirements in any particular conference. Likewise, when persons transfer to another denomination, they represent the Free Methodist Church USA and should demonstrate superior measures of competence and character. The MEG Board should serve as an encouragement to women and men serving in ministry to follow God's leading wherever that may take them.

MEG Boards will manage the following transfers: CMCs and Elders transferring *to* another conference, transferring *from* another conference, transferring *to* another denomination, and clergy transferring *from* another denomination (for the latter, the Center for Pastoral Formation provides a Transfer Path on Pathwright for tracking purposes). Please note the process for each described in the most recent *Book of Discipline* as follows.

2023 Book of Discipline on Transfers, etc.

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 the 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. produce documentation of current ministerial credentials held in good standing from the previous denomination;
 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. participate in classes or a cohort to complete either Free Methodist History & Polity and Wesleyan Theology and Wesleyan Theopraxis;
 5. complete an Outcomes-Based Ordination Assessment or equivalent interview with the MEG Board to ensure the minister's health and theological compatibility with the FMC;
 6. meet with a conference-approved clinician capable of assessing the candidate's emotional, mental, relational, and marital (if applicable) health, and
 7. receive the recommendation of the MEG Board and approval 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. Where immediate transfer of credentials is not possible due to one or more of the above steps being incomplete, a candidate may be licensed as a Licensed Pastor (see ¶5640.A) for the period of 12 months to be renewed annually by the conference, thereby providing the time necessary for proper acclimation into the conference.
- D. The credential of ministers transferring from other denominations who have been divorced or are married to a spouse who has been previously divorced will only be recognized if the MEG Board votes to approve them for conference admission and such decision is approved by the conference superintendent and the bishop of record.
- E. Upon completion of the process, they shall be issued credentials.



Chapter 12

Out-Counseling, Clergy Discipline and Restoration

Occasions arise when someone's ministry path needs to come to an end. This may occur for a Local Ministerial Candidate, a Conference Ministerial Candidate, Consecrated Deacon, or ordained Elder. The reasons are varied. Someone may decide that ordained or consecrated ministry is not that to which she or he is called; family situations or demands may lead someone to withdraw from the process; or lack of alignment with the doctrines of the Free Methodist Church may result in someone pursuing ministry in a different denomination. There are also times when the MEG Board will need to initiate withdrawal due to a lack of progress over time as a ministerial candidate, unwillingness to submit to guidance, moral failing, or other reasons.

When such occasions occur, the MEG Board should show care for the candidate, keeping their best in mind. Out-counseling is not merely about addressing an ending to one's service as a Free Methodist minister, but also as an opportunity to guide the individual into the next season of life as a lay person. Likewise, clergy discipline is not intended to serve punitively, but to look toward spiritual restoration, and if possible, ministry restoration as a potential end. The MEG Board should seek to resource the person as they are able through encouragement, counsel, prayer, and whatever means that may prove beneficial.

2023 Book of Discipline on Termination of Conference Membership

¶5520

Conference membership ceases when:

1. an ordained minister is returned to lay status in a local society and the conference receives the minister's credentials (see ¶5630); or
2. an ordained minister voluntarily withdraws from the conference and denomination, having surrendered credentials (see ¶7170.C.4); or
3. a conference allows an accused minister to surrender credentials and return to lay membership in a local society (see ¶7170.C.3), or
4. a conference allows an accused minister to surrender credentials and withdraw from the conference and denomination under charges or complaints (see ¶7190); or
5. an ordained minister joins another denomination; or
6. an ordained minister is expelled.

Policies of Protection

Proper work upfront may help to prevent clergy misconduct. The ministerial candidacy process provides tools for self-discovery and the formation of a pastoral identity. Self-discovery includes coming to an awareness of one's strengths and one's weaknesses. Policies of protection and prevention aid pastors in avoiding potentially devastating pitfalls. Guidelines regarding sexual harassment, for the handling of money, checks-and-balances pertaining to power, etc. may be implemented as found in the *Book of Discipline*.

Guidelines Regarding Sexual Harassment³⁴

It is the policy of the Free Methodist Church that all people be treated with respect and dignity, as discussed in the *Book of Discipline* ¶3220, ¶3221, ¶3230, and ¶3231. Sexual harassment of or by an employee of the FMC is not tolerated. A valid complaint of sexual harassment may lead to strict disciplinary action, including termination and/or legal action. Any form of retaliation will not be tolerated. This policy is in keeping with the spirit and intent of various local, state, and federal legal prescriptions. In addition, the FMC believes that sexual harassment is a violation of biblical principles.

34 This section was taken from the 2016 *MEG Manual*

At the same time, the FMC believes that a false accusation of sexual harassment is as devastating as sexual harassment and therefore is not tolerated.

Harassment can be defined as:

1. any unwelcomed touching;
2. demands for sexual favors;
3. any sexually oriented behavior or comments that create a hostile or offensive work environment;
4. the display of sexually explicit or otherwise offensive posters, calendars, pictures, etc.;
5. inappropriate or offensive looks, gestures, touches, or other physical conduct;
6. comments or jokes based on gender, age, race, color, sex, pregnancy, disability, religion, national origin, ethnic background, military service, marital status, citizenship, or any other protected class; and,
7. any use of the above means of sexual harassment to intimidation or to be a condition of new or continued employment.

Any report of sexual harassment or false accusation of sexual harassment will be addressed pursuant to the policies and procedures of Chapter 7 of the *Book of Discipline*.

Any sexual harassment should immediately be reported to the local pastor, conference superintendent, or the Human Resources office of the FMC.

Please refer to Restoration Process

– A Manual for Superintendents and Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards originally produced in 2006 and updated in 2024 for more information pertaining to dealing with matters of misconduct, abuse, and restoration of victims. A copy of this may be found in the appendices.

Divorce and Remarriage of Existing Clergy

The divorce clearance process for ministerial candidates is addressed in a previous chapter. However, occasions will likely arise when already ordained and appointed women and men may face the painful experience of going through a divorce. In such situations, the MEG Board will serve an important role in caring for the clergy impacted. Important steps will include providing the person with space to heal and work through the hurt, connecting them with a professional counselor, and working through the divorce clearance process.

Book of Discipline on Divorce and Remarriage **Divorce and Remarriage**

¶5650

A clergy member of a conference who divorces or is divorced by his/her spouse shall enter into the care of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board which shall design for the member a process of healing and restoration as appropriate for the circumstances. That clergy member may not remarry until the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board determines that it is appropriate according to biblical guidelines in consultation with the Bishop of record. A clergy person who refuses to enter into such a process 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.

The Process

According to the *Book of Discipline*, paragraph 5340(C) divorce clearance is required for any of the following who are divorced or in the divorce process:

- All divorced elders and CMCs, no matter their appointment, must receive divorce clearance. This includes pastors in denominational service, leave of absence, released for ministry outside the denomination, etc.
- A Conference Ministerial Candidate or their spouse (prior to them being received by the Annual Conference)
- An Elder or their spouse
- Transfers into the FMC or their spouse

Approval is required for divorce clearance by the MEG Board, the Conference Superintendent, and the Area Bishop.

The process begins with the candidate and / or the candidate's spouse completing the appropriate divorce clearance form(s). Questionnaire A is for a divorcee seeking ministry in the Free Methodist Church; Questionnaire B is for a candidate seeking ministry in the Free Methodist Church who has not divorced, but whose spouse has been divorced; Questionnaire C is for a divorced spouse of a candidate seeking ministry in the Free Methodist Church. Upon completion, the forms will be submitted to the conference office for initial evaluation by the superintendent and to be distributed in a confidential manner to the respective MEG Board for review. If and when the conference superintendent and the MEG Board affirm that the candidate makes a viable case for divorce clearance, all pertinent documents will be submitted to the Board of Bishops for review and final decision by the regional bishop assigned to that particular conference. If and when the bishop of record approves the candidate for divorce clearance, the candidate will then be free to move forward in the ministerial credentialing process.

Clergy Discipline and Restoration

Unfortunately, times arise when appointed and/or ordained persons, Conference Ministerial Candidates, or deacons may fall into temptation or act in ways that require conference discipline. Such matters call for serious prayer, wisdom, and discernment and should not be rushed or handled lightly. At the same time, discipline is not synonymous with punishment and therefore ought to seek restoration and reconciliation.

For matters of clergy discipline, clear and thorough records will prove beneficial. It is imperative that the Board of Bishops office receives MEG Board minutes regarding any issues of clergy discipline including records regarding the collection of parchments from Elders who have been disciplined and/or submitted their parchments under charges or complaints. The Board of Bishops office should also be notified of any Restoration Covenant agreement entered into with a MEG Board and a pastor under discipline.

The *Book of Discipline* offers a thorough address on matters requiring discipline and restoration. Although the section is somewhat lengthy, it is worth including in its entirety here:

Book of Discipline on Restoration **Responding to Disorder**

¶7130

Overseers, Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards (MEG Board) and Membership Care Committees (MCC) shall not ignore sin in the church. When it is clear that a member's relationship with Christ or with another person is compromised or damaged by sin, appropriate action shall be taken to speak the truth in love and restore health in the church and in the person(s) involved.

A. Matters requiring attention include such things as:

1. When there is a pattern of behavior of speaking and acting out of selfish ambition (Philippians 2:3).
2. When there is a breakdown of communication which causes divisions (2 Corinthians 12:20).
3. When there is a lack of wisdom and/or competence that brings leadership effectiveness and/or call to ministry into question.
4. When there are unhealthy personal habits which clearly contribute to a lack of fruitfulness in life and ministry.
5. When there are teachings contrary to our Articles of Religion and/or our Membership Covenant.
6. When there is a pattern of a lack of submission to an overseer, elder or church body or when there is a pattern by an overseer, elder or church body toward a person under their care that reveals a lack of reverence to Christ (Ephesians 5:21).

7. When there is accusation and evidence of a pattern of sin in the life of an elder/member.
8. When there is evidence of abusive or predatory behavior toward others.
9. When there is accusation and evidence of a pattern of living in breach of the non-negotiable fundamentals of the Free Methodist Church (§6040) or the Code of Ethics for Ministers of the Free Methodist Church.

B. Restoring Order: When there is a breach of order, the response of the church shall be directed toward both the offender and those harmed.

1. With respect to the offender, the response shall include one or more of the following:

- a. Private Counsel: The first step in restoring order usually begins with private confidential counsel. The overseer shall address the problem and call the person to deal truthfully with the issue(s) and follow Jesus with his/her whole heart, including sincere repentance. (See “Checklist For Processing Accusations of Breach of Church Order” in the Review Board and Court of Appeals Procedure Manual.)
- b. MEG Board/MCC Counsel: When a person is discovered in their sin by others, or in situations when private counsel has not been effective in stopping the sin, the MEG Board/MCC or the overseer and representative(s) from the respective Board shall address the problem and call the person to deal truthfully with the issue(s) and follow Jesus with his/her whole heart, including sincere repentance.
- c. Covenant of Restoration: If private counsel has been resisted or ineffective, or MEG Board/MCC counsel has been required due to the discovery of sin in the elder’s/member’s life, the MEG Board/MCC shall establish a “Covenant of Restoration” (see Restoration Process – A Manual for Superintendents and Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards, Church Order, see Superintendents and MEG Board Manuals).
- d. Suspension from Ministry/Membership: The MEG Board/MCC shall suspend a person from ministerial appointment/membership when he/she resists or fails to complete the Covenant of Restoration, or when the breach of order threatens the well-being of the church and the mission of Jesus Christ.

- e. Immediate Suspension from Ministry: When an overseer becomes aware of the following cases, he/she shall immediately suspend an elder/member until a MEG Board/MCC can be convened:
 - i. When the elder/member is accused of sin by at least two witnesses or has confessed to sin that reveals a long-standing brokenness in his/her life and relationships of such seriousness that it dictates the necessity of a healing process for the church, all persons involved and their families.
 - ii. When an elder/member is teaching doctrine that is contrary to our Articles of Religion.
 - iii. When a board member of a congregation has exhibited behavior in any manner described in ¶7130.A (1-8) the superintendent, in consultation with the local pastor, may remove this member from the Board.
- f. Contacting state or local enforcement authorities: In instances of abuse of a minor child, the overseer shall immediately contact state and/or local enforcement authorities in conformity with state and local laws.
- 2 With respect to those harmed or victimized, the individual shall have the opportunity to send the overseer, MEG Board or MCC a written account of the occurrence and its impact. The victim and his/her advocate may be given a copy of Chapter 7 of the Book of Discipline so that they can be aware of church expectations and procedures. When the process is complete, the affected individual shall be notified of the outcome (see Restoration Process – A Manual for Superintendents and Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards).

Processing Complaints, Accusations and/or Admission of Sin

¶7140

Overseers, MEG Boards and MCCs shall process all complaints, accusations and/or admissions of sin that are not resolved by private counsel and victim advocacy, by following both the Review Board and Court of Appeals Procedure Manual and Restoration Process – A Manual for Superintendents and Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards. When an elder's membership is suspended the suspended elder shall have the right to appeal the suspension to a regional Review Board.

Review Boards

¶7150

- A. CONFERENCE MEMBERS (elders and deacons). At each General Conference, a four-person regional Review Board shall be elected from each bishop's area. Candidates shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee of the General Conference. Each regional Review Board shall

be comprised of two lay persons and two clergy, at least one of whom shall be a superintendent and shall include at least one male and one female. Upon a MEG Board's action to suspend or expel an elder, the regional Review Board from the same bishop's area shall review the process, if review is requested by the suspended member:

1. Examine the MEG Board minutes and review the overseers/MEG Board log of notes and timelines in accordance with the "Checklist for Processing Accusations of Breach of Church Order" found in the Review Board and Court of Appeals Procedure Manual, page 5-6.
 2. Request from the accused elder the completion of the accountability questionnaires referenced in the Restoration Process – A Manual for Superintendents and Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards, page 11, ¶B.2.C.
 3. Request from any victim(s) involved that their statement(s) regarding the process be sent to the Review Board for consideration.
 4. Prepare a report to the conference MEG Board including any recommendations.
 5. If, in the opinion of the regional Review Board or the accused elder, injustice has occurred, the regional Review Board shall convene a meeting of the MEG Board and the accused elder. The accused elder shall have the right to be accompanied by another member of the FMC and/or his/her spouse.
 6. If there are victims involved, they have the right to attend and participate in the meeting or send their advocate to participate. The regional Review Board shall listen to all parties, raise any questions, and, in the absence of all parties, deliberate and make a decision. Any party may submit any information, even if new, which lends itself to a discovery of truth. The action of the regional Review Board may be appealed by right (¶213, ¶7200).
- B. LOCAL MEMBERS. The annual conference MEG Board shall be the conference Review Board. Whenever a society MCC takes action to suspend or expel a member from ministry and/or membership, the conference Review Board shall, if requested by the suspended member:
1. Examine the MCC minutes in accordance with the "Checklist for Processing Accusations of Breach of Church Order" found in the Review Board and Court of Appeals Procedure Manual, page 5-6.
 2. Request from the accused member the completion of the accountability questionnaires referenced in the Restoration Process – A Manual for Superintendents and Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards, page 11, ¶B.2.C.
 3. Request from any victim(s) a statement verifying the completion of the restoration process.

4. Prepare a report to the local MCC including any recommendations.
5. If, in the opinion of the conference Review Board or the accused member, injustice has occurred, the conference Review Board shall meet with the MCC, and/or their advocate. The accused member shall have the right to be accompanied by a member of the FMC and/or his/her spouse. The victim and/or their advocate shall be invited to attend and have a voice in the proceedings. The regional Review Board shall listen to both parties, raise any questions, and, in the absence of all parties, deliberate and make a decision. Any party may submit any information, even if new, which lends itself to a discovery of truth. The action of the regional Review Board may be appealed by right (§228 213, §7200).

C. VICTIMS. The annual conference MEG Board shall be the conference Review Board. Whenever a society's MCC takes action to clear a member from charges, the conference Review Board shall, if requested by the victim:

1. Examine the MCC minutes in accordance with the "Checklist for Processing Accusations of Breach of Church Order" found in the Review Board and Court of Appeals Procedure Manual, page 5-6.
2. Request from the member the completion of the accountability questionnaires referenced in the Restoration Process – A Manual for Superintendents and Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards, pages 11, §B.2.C.
3. Request from the victim(s) a statement as to whether the restoration process has been completed.
4. Prepare a report to the local MCC including any recommendations.
5. If, in the opinion of the conference Review Board or the victim, injustice has occurred, the conference Review Board shall meet with the MCC, the accused member and the victim and/or their advocate. The accused Pastor/Elder or member shall have the right to be accompanied by a member of the FMC and/or his/her spouse. The victim and/or their advocate shall be invited to attend and have a voice in the proceedings. The regional Review Board shall listen to all parties, raise any questions, and, in the absence of all parties, deliberate and make a decision. Any party may submit any information, even if new, which lends itself to a discovery of truth. The action of the regional Review Board may be appealed by right (§213, 7200).

Church Order Confidentiality

¶7160

The confidential care of personal information is a necessary aspect of spiritual care and congregational life. The responsibility to treat personal information confidentially extends not only to elders, but also to all persons working within the organizational and institutional life of the church. The need for confidentiality exists in two general areas: spiritual care and personnel matters.

Confidentiality in Spiritual Care

¶7170

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

- A. Elders have a responsibility to keep confessional confidences inviolate, breaking this confidentiality only if the risk of imminent bodily harm to a person is present. The exception to this confessional confidentiality includes any confessions of, or concerns regarding, sexual abuse of a minor child or any other conduct required to be reported under federal, state or local laws.
- B. The confession of one elder to another is an inviolate confidence, unless the conduct is both ongoing and unrepented. This conduct by any elder who continues to take advantage of any person under his/her care is an abuse of position. Such a confession is not confidential, but rather a request to be helped to stop this abuse and removed from the temptations and responsibilities of his/her position until repentance and healing occurs. If there is a victim involved, past or present, they or their advocate shall be allowed to participate in the process in whatever manner they are able or willing. This includes the advocate interviewing the Pastor/Elder in the presence of witnesses.

Confidentiality in Personnel Matters

¶7180

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

- A. The requirement that all financial records be public includes all salary and compensation figures of paid personnel.
- B. The appeal of a personnel decision by a committee or board assigned with this responsibility is not confidential. The decision to appeal a decision requires the information on which the decisions were made to be made public at the appeal. All such appeals are held in open session.

Communication

¶7190

Paul wrote to Timothy, stating, “Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning” (1 Timothy 5:20). He is speaking here of those who continue to sin even after the church has done what it is able to do to warn and restore the offender and restore the victim(s) as well. However, if repentance is demonstrated by a change of behavior and restitution sought, communication to the whole church is to be avoided. While each case must be carefully examined, these instructions are to be followed:

- A. If a suspended or expelled elder attempts to seek employment in another conference or denomination, the superintendent and/or bishop shall accept responsibility to make known to appropriate persons in a conference or, if asked, another denomination, the status and reasons surrounding the suspension or expulsion of the elder.
- B. If an elder is suspended or expelled, after review the regional Review Board shall send a written communication to each superintendent and bishop in the FMCUSA noting the action taken and the reason for the action.
- C. The presiding bishop of the annual conference or his/her designee shall read to the conference during the reading of Special Appointments a letter from the regional Review Board pertaining to the regional Review Board hearing and decision.
- D. The Yearbook of the FMCUSA shall list the name of the offender in one of these ways, appropriate to the case: - Under Review - Suspended - Covenant of Restoration - Withdrawn Under Complaint - Expelled.

Processing Appeals

¶7200

The Court of Appeals shall process appeals pursuant to the Review Board and Court of Appeals Procedure Manual. A Court of Appeals member is disqualified if he/she has any involvement in the matter or is in a position of conflict of interest.

- A. An elder whose suspension or expulsion has been affirmed by the regional Review Board or a society member whose suspension or expulsion has been affirmed by the conference Review Board has a right to appeal to the Court of Appeals (see ¶4320.M.1, ¶7150.A.4, ¶7150.B.4).
1. Notice of intent to appeal and the grounds for an appeal must be provided in writing to the secretary of the Board of Administration within 30 days of the regional Review Board's decision for an elder or the conference Review Board for a society member.
 2. No less than 30 days before the hearing of the appeal, the elder or member must provide in writing to the secretary of the Board of Administration a statement of the reasons why the decision of the Review Board (regional/conference) should not be affirmed. The statement shall contain all relevant information that is pertinent to the grounds of the appeal and shall not exceed ten pages, double-spaced.
 3. If there is a victim in the case, the victim advocate shall be notified and allowed to provide all relevant information that is pertinent to the grounds of the appeal and shall not exceed ten pages, double spaced.
 4. No less than 14 days before the hearing of the appeal, the designee of the MEG Board/MCC may file with the secretary of the Board of Administration a statement in rebuttal of the elder or member's statement.
 5. No less than 7 days before the hearing of the appeal, the elder or member may file with the secretary of the Board of Administration a reply to the MEG Board/MCC's rebuttal. The reply by the elder or member is confined to issues raised in the MEG Board/MCC's rebuttal and shall not restate content from the original statement.

- B. The Court of Appeals shall review all documents from the regional Review Board/conference Review Board, listen to all parties, raise any questions and, in the absence of all parties, deliberate and issue a decision.
 - 1. If the decision of the regional review/conference Review Board is affirmed, the decision of the Court of Appeals is final.
 - 2. If the decision of the regional Review Board/conference Review Board is not affirmed, a new review will occur with the Court of Appeals serving as the Review Board.
 - 3. The action of the Court of Appeals serving as a Review Board shall be final.

Conditions Leading to Restoration of Credentials and Reappointment

¶7210

- A. The MEG Board shall assess the candidate's progress in spiritual maturity, trustworthiness, moral integrity and ministerial effectiveness as attested to by references from the designated supervisor, the candidate's counselor(s), the victim and the victim advocate, and other persons familiar with the case. The candidate shall be called for a personal interview by the Board.
- B. Upon recommendation of the MEG Board, the annual conference shall make the final decision. Only in exceptional cases will credentials be restored sooner than two years after the initial disciplinary action and only after the process of restoration. Restoration of credentials does not guarantee reappointment to itinerant ministry.

Section 3:
**Ministerial Appointments
Committee**



Chapter 13

Ministerial Appointments

Introduction to the Ministerial Appointments Committee

The Ministerial Appointments Committee (MAC) serves a vital role in the ministry of the annual conference. Although distinct from the Ministerial Education and Guidance (MEG) Board, members of the MAC are also to serve on the MEG Board. The MAC shall prayerfully consider the appropriate appointments for all clergy under the care of the annual conference and MEG Board. Since every appointment impacts the life of a pastor, their respective families, and the members of the congregations and ministries in which they serve, the utmost care must be employed at every level.

The MAC should bathe every meeting and decision with prayer, seeking wisdom and discernment. The members should also do their due diligence in research and consultation. When considering new appointments or changes in appointments, the MAC is to interview the clergy involved, meet with the delegates of the local church to which they will be appointed or from which they will be moved, and perform a proper assessment to determine an appropriate match of clergy with ministry appointment.

When due diligence is completed, the MAC should continue to apply the tools of discernment. Through prayer, if any member of the MAC still has lingering feelings of desolation, or uneasiness, about the decision, these should be discussed and considered before moving forward. Due to the significant weight of MAC decisions and the number of stakeholders involved, the committee should seek unity and a sense of consolation, or rightness, as much as possible concerning every appointment made.

Ministry Alignment

The *Flourishing in Ministry* research identified three key components in measuring a good fit in ministry appointments. These include *competencies-duties alignment*, *needs-supplies alignment*, and *values alignment*. These three are critical “factor[s] in daily well-being and ministry effectiveness” (Bloom, p. 9).

According to Bloom, “competency-duties alignment . . . refers to whether a pastor has the knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience needed to undertake the duties of a particular pastoral role the pastor currently fills.” He went on to summarize that in a study out of Michigan State University, researchers DeShon and Quinn found that pastoral ministry could require up to sixty-four areas of competency to accomplish the tasks that are needed to fulfill the roll (Bloom, p. 9). It goes without saying that one person cannot be completely competent in all sixty-four skills. Therefore, when analyzing competency-duties alignment for a particular appointment, it is helpful to examine the pastor’s top strengths and the church’s or ministry’s key needs to see if the *competencies* align with the required *duties* in that distinct place at that time.

Bloom defined *needs-supplies alignment* as “the degree to which a particular pastoral role supplies the resources required to meet the needs of a pastor and the pastor’s family” (Bloom, p. 10). When determining a good match for an appointment, the bigger picture ought to be considered. Matters of adequate vacation time, financial support, proper accommodation for family needs, continuing education opportunities, health insurance, days off, and work hours all contribute to the well-being and longevity of the pastor. Therefore, assuring their sufficiency aids in finding a good ministry fit.

Likewise, pastors tend to thrive better when their “core life values, religious beliefs, and fundamental orientation to ministry and those of the church” align (Bloom, p. 12). This should be considered at the denominational level to ensure proper values alignment with the Free Methodist Church USA along with the nuances and particulars of the specific local church or ministry to which the pastor may be appointed. When proper values alignment is in place, conflict and dissatisfaction may be significantly reduced.

These alignments may serve a valuable role in empowering clergy and ministries to flourish. However, it is important not to use these too restrictively. It is good for persons to be stretched beyond their comfort zone from time to time. A minister may discover previously untapped gifts while serving in a new setting; differently held values may result in the pastor serving as a prophetic voice to a congregation needing to hear a new message. These alignments should be examined but always in close connection with prayerful discernment.

Appointment Categories at a Glance

There are a number of categories to which a MAC may appoint someone. A licensed pastor, CMC, or ordained Elder may be appointed to serve a particular local church or churches. One may also be appointed to conference service, denominational service, evangelist, or world missions. Some maintain credentials with their annual conference while being released for ministry at an institution of higher education, another Wesleyan ministry, or outside the denomination. There also exist some special case appointments. These include: *left without an appointment*, *under review*, *leave of absence*, *located*, and *returned to lay status*. *Retired* is also an official appointment in which one is no longer under the itinerant system, but still maintains credentials and may continue to administer the sacraments and serve as God leads. Please take time to familiarize yourself with the definitions and dynamics of each of these appointed positions as found in the *Book of Discipline*.

2023 Book of Discipline on the Ministerial Appointments Committee

Ministerial Appointments Committee

¶5220

- A. Each annual conference shall elect a standing Ministerial Appointments Committee (MAC) composed at least of the bishop as chair, a superintendent as vice chair, and one lay member. An annual conference may, as it deems necessary, increase the number of MAC members by electing additional elders and lay members. Each annual conference may define sub-groups within the membership of the MAC and may define the scope of responsibility of each group according to that annual conference's structure of regional oversight and the superintendency. Elections may be for three-year terms with provision for rotation and continuity.

The annual conference may ask the Nominating Committee or the Board of Administration to prepare nominations for election of the MAC and to delineate the scope of responsibilities within the MAC membership according to that annual conference's structure of oversight and the superintendency. The slate of nominees is to be brought before the annual conference for election.

When a new conference superintendent(s) 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 society 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 ¶7130) according to due process (see ¶7150). 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.

M. When a pastor's appointment is concluded at a local society (e.g., retired, left without appointment, requests release from appointment) he/she, along with their his/her immediate family, is to withdraw from the life of that society. This would include serving in official or unofficial capacities, attending worship services or activities of the society, or entertaining communication with staff, constituents or the larger community regarding the society's leadership, practices, or health. The former pastor and/or family, however, may re-engage with the local society with the consent of conference superintendent in consultation with the newly appointed pastor.

Special Appointment Status

2023 Book of Discipline on 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 for more than two years in succession may be located or returned to lay status by vote of the annual conference.

Under Review

¶5605

The MEG Board may determine that a minister in conference relationship be placed "under review" (as per paragraph 7190.D) while the MEG Board determines the minister's suitability for continued ministry. During the time they are "under review" they may not be given a certificate of good standing. After a reasonable amount of time, not to exceed a year, the MEG Board must either return the minister to good standing or proceed to terminate conference relationship. The time of review may be extended for up to one additional year if agreed upon by both the minister under review and the MEG Board.

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 Free Methodist society 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 society 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 society involved. Ordained persons in good standing shall be listed as located elders or located deacons as the case may be, and may be elected as a lay delegate to annual and General Conference.

Return to Lay Status

¶5630

An ordained minister may be returned to lay status. This may occur at the request of an elder after consultation with his or her Ministerial Education and Guidance Board, or as a result of evaluation of ministry effectiveness followed by the unanimous recommendation of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board and subject of the Annual Conference, or when an elder leaves appointed ministry to pursue secular employment. In all cases, the elder shall deposit his/her credentials with the secretary of the annual conference where membership is held. Individuals who wish to again pursue 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 society who is not a member of the annual conference in which he/she is appointed shall be designated a licensed pastor. Though conference ministerial candidates who are appointed as lead pastor have a vote, licensed pastors do not vote at annual conference. 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. Prior to his/her appointment, a licensed pastor, not currently a member of a local Free Methodist Church, shall answer affirmatively the questions for Free Methodist membership at a meeting of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board.
- C. Ordinarily, a person serving as a Licensed Pastor will transfer into the Free Methodist Church or will complete a process of preparation for ordination in the Free Methodist Church. Exceptions to this rule must be processed with the area bishop.

Divorce and Remarriage

¶5650

A clergy member of a conference who divorces or is divorced by his/her spouse shall enter into the care of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board which shall design for the member a process of healing and restoration as appropriate for the circumstances. That clergy member may not remarry until the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board determines that it is appropriate according to biblical guidelines in consultation with the Bishop of record. A clergy person who refuses to enter into such a process 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 men and women gifted by 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. All evangelists shall be approved by the conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board and appointed as evangelists by the Ministerial Appointments Committee. Securing work in local churches and other settings such as camps and retreats shall be the evangelist's responsibility.
- C. The evangelist shall seek the counsel of the superintendent whenever invited to minister outside the denomination in a region where there is a Free Methodist work. In such a case, the evangelist shall also initiate collegial contact with the pastor of the Free Methodist work.

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). Located deacons and located elders may be elected as lay delegates to annual conference and General Conference.
- 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 relocate into the boundaries of another conference 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 society where they are located.

Evaluation of Ministry Effectiveness

2023 Book of Discipline on Evaluation of Ministry Effectiveness

¶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 pastoral 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 pastor's cabinet and/or the local Board of Administration.
 - 3. an evaluation of its ministry effectiveness by each society 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 society, and shared with the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board. If the stability or mission of a society 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 bishop of record

Using Discernment in Evaluating Ministry Effectiveness

Ministry effectiveness can be difficult to measure. The book of Acts provides many accounts when thousands came to Christ in a short amount of time, people were healed, and lives were transformed. However, we also read of prophets like Isaiah who was called to preach a message to people who would not listen to him—people who would be “ever hearing, but never understanding; ever seeing, but never perceiving” (Isaiah 6:9). Likewise, Ezekiel was measured not for the response of the people, but for his obedience to proclaim the message (see Ezekiel 3). Jesus himself had an occasion when “He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them” (Mark 6:5). Given the examples found in Scripture, ministry effectiveness is not necessarily evaluated through numbers and tangible measures, but in faithfulness and obedience.

Therefore, when evaluating the ministry effectiveness of appointed clergy, many factors ought to be considered. Here are a few questions to consider:

- Are they committed to prayer, the study of Scripture, and spiritual disciplines?
- Are they faithfully using their time appropriately and effectively?
- What spiritual gifts has God given?
- Is there a call on their lives that is specific to this season?
- Are there tangible measures of fruitfulness in their ministry?
- How does the current season look compared to their long-haul experience?
- What is the spiritual climate and receptivity of the congregation and broader community?

- Are they a good fit for their current location? Would they serve better in another context?
- Are they teachable? Are they growing spiritually?
- Are they on track with the content and way in which they preach, teach, and minister?
- Do they love the people under their care? Are they building healthy relationships?

In other words, evaluation of ministry effectiveness contains two key categories, ministry effectiveness in the current, specific context and overall ministry effectiveness, considering how it may translate into other contexts. If and when any deficiencies in ministry effectiveness may be observed, the actions of the MEG Board are not to be punitive but pastoral. The MEG board may direct pastors toward certain books, seminars, courses, mentors, coaching, retreats, or other growth opportunities to equip women and men in ministry for greater effectiveness. In all tasks assigned to the MEG Board and MAC, be mindful to encourage, care for, and support ministerial candidates, active ministers, and their families to help them to be the best they can be for the sake of the church and for the glory of God.

APPENDIX A: CONFIDENTIALITY PLEDGE

I realize that the work of the _____ Conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board and its subcommittees is highly confidential and that failure on my part to recognize this may result in harm to those whom we seek to serve.

Therefore, I, _____ do hereby pledge myself to hold in strict confidence, both now and in the future, all information, written or verbal, which comes to me as a member of the _____ Conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board and/or its subcommittees.

This pledge refers to specific personal information received in connection with those interviewing with the MEG Board or MEG subcommittees, any discussion of which outside of MEG-related duties is clearly a violation of confidence.

It is understood that this pledge covers unnecessary discussion on my part with fellow MEG Board or MEG subcommittee members, and any discussion with personal friends or family in private, semi-private or public settings.

Print name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX B: APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION OF FREE METHODISM

There is a long history within the Church that began with the apostles laying hands on others to consecrate or ordain them for service. We see this with the Apostle Paul when he, along with the body of elders, laid hands on Timothy (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). As time passed, Onesimus followed Timothy in Ephesus. The history of this ongoing succession may be traced relatively reasonably throughout the centuries. As women and men are ordained in the Free Methodist Church, they are part of this ongoing passing on of the trust to serve as a minister of Jesus Christ—a calling that should not be taken lightly.

B.T. Roberts, 1852	Edmund, 1234	Maximus Lyster, 587
Thomas Morris, 1820	Richard Weathershed, 1230	Mark Pireu, 581
Robert Roberts, 1816	Stephen Langton, 1205	John, 562
William McKendree, 1808	Hubert Walter, 1197	Gregory II, 547
Francis Asbury, 1784	Fitz-Jocelin, 1191	Linus, 532
Thomas Coke, 1784	Reginal, 1183	Evarestus, 502
John Wesley, 1728	Baldwin, 1178	Christopher III, 485
Dr. John Potter, 1715	Richard, 1170	Christopher II, 472
Dr. Baxter Tenison, 1701	Thomas Becket, 1162	Timothy Eumenes, 468
Dr. Philip Tillotson, 1683	Theobald, 1139	Clement of Lyons, 436
Niles Sencroft, 1658	William de Corbeuil, 1122	Basil, 415
William Laude, 1633	Ralph d'Escures, 1109	James, 413
Kyle Abbot, 1610	Anselm of Canterbury, 1093	Christopher, 394
Richard Bancroft, 1604	Wulfstan, 1064	Paul Anencletus "the Elder," 330
Mark Whitgift, 1577	Edmund, 1012	Mark Leuvian, 312
Steven Grendall, 1575	Elphege, 1006	Pious Stephenas, 291
Dr. Parker, 1559	Aelfric, 995	Andrew Meletius, 283
Phillip Barlow, Bishop of London, 1536	Sigeric, 990	Gregory Antilas, 276
Thomas Cranmer, 1533	Ethelgar, 988	St. Matthias, 276
William Warham, 1503	Dunstan, 959	Philip Deoderus, 241
Cardinal Morton, 1488	Odo, 941	Maximus, 203
Cardinal Bouchier, 1469	Phlegmund, 890	Nicomedian, 180
Cardinal Kemp, 1452	Rufus, 859	Irenaeus, 177
Henry Chichele, 1413	Cuthbert, 814	Polycrates, 175
James Abingdon, 1381	Herefrid, 788	Lucius, 156
Simon Sudbury, 1367	Egbert, 749	Demetrius, 131
Simon Langham, 1327	Ethelburh, 712	John the Elder, 113
Walter Reynolds, 1313	Theodore, 668	Onesimus, 91
Robert of Winchelsea, 1293	Deusdedit, 652	Timothy, 62
John Peckham, 1279	Justus, 635	Paul the Apostle
Robert Kilwardby, 1269	Laurentius, 604	
Boniface of Savoy, 1252	Augustine of Canterbury, 597	
	Aetherius, 591	

APPENDIX C: MINISTERIAL ETHICS AGREEMENT

Ethical Covenant for Free Methodist Pastors and Ministry Leaders

Approved by the Board of Bishops — April 25, 2022.

INTRODUCTION

The Apostle Paul guides Timothy (1 Timothy 4:16) toward conduct as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ with, “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” Reminding the apostolic protégé of both personal and public ethics, Paul instructs in the confrontation of false teachers, ministry diligence, and public proclamation of Scripture.

As Free Methodist pastors and leaders, we covenant to be guided by these ethical and professional standards and recognize that living out these precepts, which flow from best practice in The Free Methodist Way, will increasingly bear spiritual fruit and organizational unity, whereas persistent misalignment may disqualify us from leadership and ordained ministry.

LIFE-GIVING HOLINESS

Full Surrender. I fully surrender to the loving reign of God over every aspect of my life, seeking the Spirit’s transformational power for myself, my family, relationships, church, peers, community and the world.

Perfect Love. With God’s help I will abstain from sinful and addictive behaviors that may harm my body, mind, spirit, finances and relationships, desiring to live out of Spirit-perfected love, that I may serve as a model of Christ to those I lead.

Holy Community. I will seek the help of my faith community when I struggle, especially in relationships in which I have been offended or have offended others, endeavoring to live in authentic reconciling love, trusting in their guidance and support even as I face trials and temptations with those sins that so easily entangle. I promise to keep sacred all that is shared in confidence, except in rare cases when sharing is discerned to be necessary to protect the innocent or vulnerable, for legal action/proceedings, or mandatory reporting is required by law.

LOVE-DRIVEN JUSTICE

Love Everyone. I value the image of God in all human beings.

Relational Justice. I refuse to act with bigotry, prejudice, misogyny or otherwise demean any people, and shall to the best of my ability foster an environment of mutual respect in organizations I lead and influence.

Kingdom Justice. I aim to promote a better society and healthier natural world for all people everywhere, opposing systemic, environmental and interpersonal injustice through prayer, gospel proclamation, public advocacy and community compassion, in a spirit of reconciling love, rejecting both vengeance and retaliation.

CHRIST-COMPELLED MULTIPLICATION

Proclaim Salvation. I will proclaim full salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone, inviting all who respond to experience baptism and the Spirit-fueled life of perfect love in Christian community, and consider with deep care how all of my online and in-person communication may promote rather than hinder the witness of Christ.

Multiply Disciples. I embrace Jesus' call to make disciples who make disciples, being careful to invite into leadership not those with whom I have the closest affection or personal relationship but those evidencing the gifting and call of God.

Grow Movements. I shall support and deploy leaders and groups to multiply ministries and churches throughout my community and the world, rejecting congregational maintenance in favor of participating in Spirit-led movement.

CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATION

Embrace Diversity. I seek to understand perspectives other than my own, to build relationships with and learn from people different from me and commit to developing and raising up disciples and leaders reflecting a broad range of those who comprise the community I serve.

Mission First. I refuse to place my personal comfort, remuneration, or political convictions ahead of the mission of Jesus, and commit to collaborate with people, churches, and organizations I serve, respecting the work of fellow Christian leaders regardless of their denominational, cultural, or ethnic affiliation, with special care to foster mutual respect publicly and via social media.

Kingdom Collaboration. I embrace the global movement of Christ, encouraging the congregations I lead to pray, give and go globally, being mindful that my communication from the pulpit and online may have profound impact upon my sisters and brothers in nations and under political systems that differ from my own, always giving due credit to those who have influenced me.

GOD-GIVEN REVELATION

Scriptural Authority. I hold the Bible as the inspired Word of God and my final authority in matters of faith and practice and shall regularly, prayerfully search the Scriptures alone and with others in order to better align my thoughts, beliefs, and action with divine instruction.

Biblical Community. I endeavor to deepen my biblically sound theology through exploring Scripture in the context of the global community, seeking the wisdom of interpreters ancient and modern from each continent and various social locations.

Spirit-Fueled. I seek wholeheartedly a Spirit-fueled movement through embracing the scriptural truth that God the Father's gift of biblical revelation is understood only through Holy Spirit-endowed illumination empowering my life toward a real and present experience of the resurrected Jesus Christ.

EMBRACE THE WAY

Healthy Change. I shall engage the processes available for healthy theological and practical dialogue and introduce Spirit-led, biblically consistent change in my local church, conference and denomination with respect. I recognize the importance of keeping all conversation in the light by talking directly to those involved and practicing biblical conflict resolution.

Digital World. I embrace opportunities to promote the cause of Christ and the Free Methodist Church through various virtual and social media avenues, resisting the dark lures inherent in this media, acknowledging that my personal and professional behavior and communication online is guided by this ethical statement.

Living Harmony. I understand that I represent the Free Methodist Church, our diverse people and clear values, and will refrain from publicly communicating anything contrary to our doctrine, vision, values, and practices, and that should I be unable to do so as a matter of preference or conscience, I will voluntarily withdraw from the conference and/or church in a spirit of professional respect and Christian love.

ADDRESSING MISALIGNMENT

I understand that when concerns arise that Free Methodist pastors or ministry leaders may have violated through conduct, speech, or use of social media, the clear spirit of this covenant, the annual conference will address the concerns in the following way:

The bishop, superintendent, district leader, or other appropriate overseer will have a conversation with the person(s) involved and seek resolution, calling them to wisely consider the spirit of this ethical covenant. If the person(s) refuses, they will be referred to the conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board for further review and appropriate action as with other matters of character as outlined in Chapter 7 of the *Book of Discipline*.

APPENDIX D: COURSE DESCRIPTIONS AND GUIDELINES

Please see the Center for Pastoral Formation for the most current course syllabi as these are updated regularly.

Course: Free Methodist History & Polity

Course Description

This course is designed to equip the student with a comprehensive view of the origins, history, development, structure and polity of the Free Methodist Church.

Course Goals/Student Learning Objectives (SLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- SLO1 Embrace their call to ministry in the context of the FMC. (*Heart* - Point 1)
- SLO2 Understand and embrace the history, polity, Articles of Religion, The Christian Journey and ethos of the FMC (*Head* – Point 2).
- SLO3 Integrate into their personal ministry the biblical sense of justice and compassion that is foundational to the FMC. (*Hands* – Point 2)
- SLO4 Personally understand and integrate in their ministry the FMC articulation of holiness. (*Head* – Point 2)

Required Resources

The Book of Discipline: FMCUSA. Latest edition.

Snyder, Howard. (2011). *B.T. and Ellen Roberts and the First Free Methodist*.

Ed. Runyon, Daniel. Indianapolis: Light and Life.

ISBN: 0-89367-299-8

available from www.freemethodistbooks.com

Recommended Resources

Dayton, Donald. (2014). *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage: A Tradition and Trajectory of Integrating Piety and Justice*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics.

Henderson, D. Michael. (1997). *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*. Wilmore, KY: Rafiki.

ISBN: 978-0-9903459-2-3

Also published as: *A Model for Making Disciples: John Wesley's Class Meeting*

McKenna, David. (1997). *Future with a History: The Wesleyan Witness of the Free Methodist Church, 1960-1995*. Indianapolis: Light and Life.

Free download: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/freemethodistbooks/19/>

To purchase: [https://freemethodistbooks.com/product/a-future-with-a-](https://freemethodistbooks.com/product/a-future-with-a-history)

[history](https://freemethodistbooks.com/product/a-future-with-a-history)

Marston, Leslie. (2009). *From Age to Age a Living Witness: Free Methodism's First Century*. Indianapolis: Light and Life.

Free download: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/freemethodistbooks/21/>

To purchase: <https://freemethodistbooks.com/product/from-age-to-age-a-living-witness-free-methodisms-first-century>

Roberts, Benson H. *Holiness Teachings: The Life and Work of B. T. Roberts*.

Free download: https://ccel.org/ccel/roberts_bh/holiness

Roberts, B. T. (1992). *Ordaining Women*. Indianapolis: Light and Life.

Free download: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/freemethodistbooks/17/>

To purchase: <https://freemethodistbooks.com/product/ordaining-women-biblical-and-historical-insights>

Synder, Howard. (2006). *Populist Saints: B.T. And Ellen Roberts and the First Free Methodists*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Free download: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/freemethodistbooks/17/>

To purchase: <https://freemethodistbooks.com/product/populist-saints-b-t-and-ellen-roberts-and-the-first-free-methodists>

Course: Basic Christian Doctrine

Course Description

This course will help participants understand and practice Christian doctrine in the context of historical Christianity.

Course Goals/Student Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Grow in love for the God who created you and reveals Himself through Scripture, history, reason, experience, and creation.
- Gain tools enabling you to think biblically, historically, and critically on issues of doctrine and faith.
- Be equipped to articulate a clear defense of the truths of Christian doctrine.
- Grow in holiness as orthodoxy (right belief) shapes orthopraxy (right action).

Required Resources

Jones, Beth Felker. (2014). *Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
ISBN: 0801049334

Recommended Resources

Demaray, Donald. (1992). *Basic Beliefs: An introduction to Christian Theology*.

Indianapolis, IN: Light and Life Press.

ISBN: 0893671789

Available from Light and Life Bookstore: <https://freemethodistbooks.com/product/basic-beliefs-an-introduction-to-christian-theology>

Duewel, Wesley. (2008). *God's Great Salvation*. OMS.

ISBN: 9781880338148

Available from Light and Life Bookstore: <https://freemethodistbooks.com/product/gods-great-salvation>

Purkiser, W. T. (1978). *Exploring Our Christian Faith*. Kansas City, MO:

Beacon Hill Press.

ISBN: 0834105527

Course: LMC Personal Formation and Self-Care (optional if needed)

INTRODUCTION: This **LMC Personal Formation** course/subject makes no assumptions. In a perfect world, a rudimentary formation emphasis might not be needed in a credentialing process. However, sometimes little personal formation has occurred in a candidate's past, and so assumptions should not be made by conference credentialing at the beginning of the ministerial candidacy process regarding what is or is not already in place in a student's life.

Therefore, this course/subject is an opportunity to bless all new LMC candidates with a review of spiritual foundations to be applied to their own lives, as well as to provide students with some basic tools for them to be utilizing/adapting as they disciple others throughout the candidate process.

NOTE: see the separate course syllabus for **CMC Pastoral Formation & Self Care**.

Course Description

This is the foundational LMC subject for those starting the ministerial credentialing process. It may be offered as a designated course or as a focus woven throughout the LMC year as a priority emphasis by the conference's credentialing mentors, coaches, or cadres.

It is an exploration of what it means for a follower of Jesus to not only believe, but also to be living out, the following Scriptures:

- **the Great Commandment** – Mark 12:28-31: “. . . ‘And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”
- **the Great Invitation** - Mark 1:17
“Follow Me, and I will make you *fishers of men*”
(conversion) (transformation) (mission)
- **the Great Commission** – Matt 28:18–20: “. . . Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching

them to obey all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Therefore, this course / emphasis will focus upon areas of understanding, motivation, and application of these Scriptural foundations. As such, this course emphasizes a practical, formational approach (HEART & HANDS), more than an academic, informational approach (HEAD).

Course Goals/Student Learning Objectives

Recognizing that each LMC enters candidacy with a unique background of former faith exposures, training and practices, this subject / course should be tailored to the needs of the candidate at 3 levels:

1. **REMEDIAL GUIDANCE:** providing mentoring and resourcing for those who have not yet made an intentional salvation decision (*Jesus as Savior - conversion*), OR those who have not yet benefited from an initial discipling relationship.
2. **STRENGTHENING:** providing additional encouragement & equipping, so that those who already have some patterns of discipleship in place will continue maturing. Some examples:
 - growing in awe and love for Christ (including consistent daily sacred time in prayer & God's Word, motivated by relationship not duty)
 - the reorienting of one's mind to the ways of Christ (*Jesus as Lord*) - Romans 12:1-2
 - dying to self and living by the Spirit - Galatians 5:22-25 (crisis & process of *sanctification*)
3. **APPLYING & PRACTICING:** taking on Jesus' mission as one's own life mission:
 - watching for and acting upon Spirit-orchestrated opportunities throughout the day to bring God's light and love to others
 - intentionally building relationships with others and inviting them to join me in discovering how we might both learn more about Jesus and what it means to follow Him (discipling others)
 - partnering with other individuals and groups to bless my city, nation, world (service)

Student Learning Outcomes

The student sets personal outcome goals in consultation with their instructor / mentor / coach. The 5 traits in the HEART column of the *Outcome-Based Ordination Chart*, as well as the following 3 LMC forms may be utilized in this course or during LMC year (see *04a: LMC Supplemental Resources*)

Form 1-1: *My Spiritual Journey*

Form 1-3: *LMC Formation Plan Form*

Form 1-5: *LMC Mentor Feedback* (completed just prior to Annual MEG Interview)

Required Resources & Experiences

3 Required Textbooks for all Ministry Candidates

Called:?! Following a Future Filled with the Possible by J. D. Walt; 2014, Seedbed Publishing (21 daily devotionals with journaling), several format options. To order, go to <https://my.seedbed.com/product/called-following-a-future-filled-with-the-possible/>

Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth by Richard Foster. Originally published in 1978 by Harper Collins, the 20th anniversary edition is ISBN 0-06-062839. Available in audio, and in Spanish: *Alabanza a la Disciplina*.

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It's Impossible to be Spiritually Mature While Remaining Emotionally Immature by Pete Scazzero, 2017, Zondervan, ISBN 978-0-310-34948-8. Also available in audio, and in Spanish: *Espiritualidad emocionalmente sana*

NOTE: Free articles and Seven Minute Seminary videos from my.seedbed.com are not yet included

Suggested Supplementary Readings to Strengthen a Candidate's Devotional Life

First Word. Last Word. God's Word by J. D. Walt (Seedbed Daily Text: The Bible. Order at <https://my.seedbed.com/product/first-word-last-word-gods-word-the-seedbed-daily-text-scripture/>

Workbook of Living Prayer: Twentieth Anniversary Edition by Maxie Dunnam, 1994, Upper Room, ISBN: 978-0-8358-0718-0. Available in Spanish at Koorong.com: *Cuaderno De La Oracion Viviente*

Additional Tools to Share with Others: (see separate attachment - 04a: *LMC Supplemental Resources*)

SRC LMC Handbook: Section I: Exploring Your Call, pages 4 – 11

Beginning Your Journey in Christ, also available in Spanish

First week Conversion Follow Up Booklet for Teens & Adults
(written by Peggy Riley and made available to SRC congregations)

Becoming a Part of God's Forever Family, also available in Spanish

Salvation Booklet for Parents & Sunday School Teachers to use with grade schoolers
(written by Peggy Riley and made available to SRC congregations)

Initial Bible Reader Helps (Tip Sheet when working with adults with little or no prior Bible exposure):

- **Where to Begin:** Suggestions for where to guide Initial Bible Readers to begin in God's Word
- American Bible Society research results and their recommendation that Initial Bible

Readers utilize 4 **Discovery Bible Questions** when reading any Scriptural passage

OBO: Competency Demonstrated Evaluative Tool

Part or all of this LMC course may be waived for a candidate, based upon the conference and MEG Board discerning observable demonstrations of competencies in the following 4 areas:

1. Candidate naturally shares his/her conversion experience and faith journey with others
2. Prominent patterns of personal, corporate and outward disciplines in the candidate's life
3. Growing evidence of the Fruit of the Spirit and Spirit empowerment in the candidate's life
4. Vibrancy in describing:
 - specific examples of how s/he has recently been godly salt, light, and love through
 - attitude, conversation, and action
 - tools s/he is using and recent experiences s/he has had with personally sharing a witness, praying with others, and discipling conversations with family, friends, co-workers, and others

Course: CMC Personal Formation and Self Care

Course Description

This course will assist candidates in becoming aware of the unique spiritual, emotional, relational, and physical stresses that may be experienced by those in pastoral ministry. The course will then identify tools and practices that the candidate might utilize to equip him/herself for joy and longevity in ministry. Lastly, the candidate will develop their own personalized plan for holistic formation and self-care, and practice living it out for 21 days.

A several-week course with Zoom session formatting may be utilized. However, if possible, offering this course as an overnight retreat, as part of the experience, has proven to provide optimal integration; see the third page of this syllabus for a suggested retreat format.

Course Goals/Student Learning Objectives

- A. This is an experiential course that will provide readings, discussions & video clips to explore the following topics: (HEART / HEAD)
1. The impact of one's personal wiring and family of origin upon ministry and spiritual well-being
 2. Spiritual Disciples
 3. The concept of the "Daily Office"
 4. The connection between physical and spiritual health

5. The importance of establishing healthy spiritual, emotional, relational & physical patterns / boundaries in the context of ministry.

The course will conclude with each participant integrating all readings, discussions, and experiences into a draft 21-day holistic Personal Development Plan. Then, after following their plan, the final project will be a paper reflecting on the impact of the various Spiritual Disciplines they practiced during their 21-day Personal Development experience, and their intentions moving forward. (HANDS)

Required Resources

Barton, Ruth Haley. *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry*, IVP 2008 ISBN 978-0-8308-3513-3

Scazzero, Peter. *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, 2015, Zondervan 2015. Jacketed hardcover ISBN 978-0-310-49457-7 as an e-book in English or Spanish: visit www.zondervan.com

Witt, Lance. *Replenish, Leading from a Healthy Soul*, 2011, Baker Books ISBN 978-0-8010-1354-6

Also take the free personality test <https://www.16personalities.com>

NOTE: Free articles and Seven Minute Seminary videos from my.seedbed.com have not yet been added

PDFs provided by course instructor:

Fasting, by Bill Bright

Possible future addition/substitution to above: *40 Day Fasting Daily Text* by J.D. Walt, @www.my.seedbed.com when the series is completed

Physical Activity and Your Heart, Department of Health and Human Services

Suggested Supplemental Resources

Sabbath as Resistance by Walter Brueggemann

Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life by Marjorie J. Thompson, 2014, Westminster John Knox Press, ISBN 978-0-664-23924-4

OBO: Competency Demonstrated Evaluative Tool

It is encouraged that every elder candidate take this course, to be better forewarned and prepared for the importance of tending to one's own formation and holistic wellness. However, for "competency demonstrated standards," the following guidelines are offered to conferences and their MEG Boards:

Through a written paper or recorded interview, ask the candidate to do the following:

- HEAD: Describe specific insights gleaned from 3 of his/her favorite resources on the topic of pastoral soul care
- HEART: Share 3 personal experiences that have led him/her to prioritize personal formation and self-care

HANDS: Write about/describe the Personal Holistic Plan that s/he is currently following to be growing in formation and self-care

INTENSIVE FORMAT: includes an Overnight Retreat

Consider offering this subject as an intensive course, which is divided into 3 parts:

- **Month Before the Retreat:** Participants read all 3 textbooks and write summary / personal insight papers on each book. A personality test is also taken <https://www.16personalities.com>
- **At the Overnight Retreat:** Participants bring textbooks and summary papers, as well as their personality profile, to the retreat. Facilitator guides discussion of key insights from the materials, as well as providing personal reflection times in the retreat setting. (For those interested in more details, contact Darrel Riley, seregionfmc@aim.com)

Friday: Retreat begins at 1:00 p.m.

- Session 1: Retreat Overview & Get Acquainted (includes sharing **personality profile** results)
- Session 2: Focused discussion upon **Scazzero book**, followed by:
Personal reflection time with God out in nature, focusing upon impact of your family of origin and personality profile upon your life today and your ministry.
Return to group, to personally own and discuss “looking back in order to move forward” issues. Close session by praying for one another.
- Session 3: Focus upon **Strengthening Your Soul** (first part) by Ruth Haley Barton and **fasting resources**.
- Break
- Session 4: Focus upon **Strengthening Your Soul** (complete book) by Ruth Halen Barton
- DINNER
- PM Personal
- Time: Complete **My Holistic Snapshot**
(4 page questionnaire by Lance Witt)

Saturday: Post Breakfast 8:30am – 3:00pm

- Session 5: Guided Meditation done individually out in nature
Re-Gather for moments of worship music & communion
- Session 6: Focused discussion upon Replenish book by Witt
- Session 7: Detox Your Soul: Witt
- Session 8: Start Here, Start Now: Witt (includes My Holistic Snapshot emphasis)
- LUNCH

Session 9: A Lifetime of Health: Witt

Session 10: Retreat Wrap Up and Directions for concluding month's project

Month Following the Retreat: Participants integrate what they are learning through a final 3 step process:

- Develop a draft of their personal plan for holistic formation and self-care
- Next the participant "practices their plan" for 21 days
- Then the participant revises their plan as needed, and submits it along with course feedback to the facilitator

NOTE: Times varied depending upon size of group, and whether facility had set mealtimes or flexibility.

Course: Old Testament Survey

Course Description

This course is a foundational survey of the Hebrew Bible (known as the Old Testament). Students will be introduced to the diverse types of writings within the testament, the historical sweep of the narrative, as well as many of its key characters and events. Students will also be introduced to the nuanced understanding of the Hebrew Bible from a Wesleyan perspective. The goal is for students to gain confidence in understanding this portion of His Word, and to develop a deeper love for God and following His ways.

Course Goals/Student Learning Objectives

Upon satisfactory completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- A. Articulate a basic, chronological understanding of Old Testament events.
- B. Identify 20 key chapters in the Hebrew Bible which reveal foundational themes in the Judeo-Christian faith.
- C. Summarize the basic content of each book of the Old Testament in a few words or a phrase.
- D. Have a basic understanding of the Wesleyan influence in biblical interpretation, especially as it relates to the Hebrew Bible.
- E. Pass the Old Testament Survey Assessment.
- F. Develop a list of 10 key Bible verses for personal discipleship and memorization

Required Resources

How to Read the Bible as a Wesleyan (<https://www.nph.com/vcmedia/2407/2407498.pdf>)

10 Tips for Memorizing Scripture (<https://www.thenivbible.com/blog/10-tips-memorizing-scripture/>)

- Lennox, Stephen. (2009). *God's Story Revealed: A Guide for Understanding the Old Testament*. Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House.
ISBN: 0898273773
- Spoo, Deron. (2017). *The Good Book: 40 Chapters That Reveal the Bible's Biggest Ideas*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishing.
ISBN: 0781414415

Recommended Resources

- Callen, Barry L. and Richard P. Thompson. (2017). *Reading the Bible in Wesleyan Ways: Some Constructive Proposals*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press.
ISBN: B00G0TWCD8

Drane, John. (2011). *Introducing the Old Testament*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.
ISBN: 0800698134

Course: New Testament Survey

Course Description

This course is a foundational survey of the New Testament. Students will be introduced to the diverse types of writings within the testament, the historical sweep of the narrative, as well as many of its key characters and events. Students will also be introduced to the nuanced understanding of the New Testament from a Wesleyan perspective. The goal is for students to gain confidence in understanding this portion of His Word, and to develop a deeper love for God and following His ways.

Course Goals/Student Learning Objectives

Upon satisfactory completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- A. Articulate a basic understanding of the life of Christ and the Early Church as described in the NT Canon.
- B. Identify 20 key chapters in the Newer Testament which reveal God's heart and plan for relationship with humanity.
- C. Summarize the basic content of each book of the New Testament in a few words or a phrase
- D. Have a basic understanding of the Wesleyan influence in biblical interpretation, especially as it relates to the New Testament.
- E. Pass the New Testament Survey Assessment
- F. Develop a list of 10 key NT Bible verses for personal discipleship and memorization

Required Resources

How to Read the Bible as a Wesleyan (<https://www.nph.com/vcmedia/2407/2407498.pdf>)

10 Tips for Memorizing Scripture (<https://www.thenivbible.com/blog/10-tips-memorizing-scripture/>)

Schenck, Kenneth. (2009). *God's Plan Fulfilled: A Guide for Understanding the New Testament*. Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House.
ISBN: B00C4YV6F8

Spoof, Deron. (2017). *The Good Book: 40 Chapters That Reveal the Bible's Biggest Ideas*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishing.
ISBN: 0781414415

Recommended Resources

Marshall, L. Howard and Ian Paul. (2016). *Exploring the New Testament: A Guide to the Letters and Revelation*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.
ISBN: 9780830853083

Wenham, David and Steve Walton. (2016). *Exploring the New Testament: A Guide to the Gospels and Acts*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.
ISBN: 0830853073

Course: Wesleyan Theology

Course Description

This course will help participants understand the development, distinctives, and application of holiness Wesleyan theology.

Course Goals/Student Learning Objectives (SLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

SLO1 articulate a Wesleyan concept of salvation, Christian perfection, and holiness.

SLO2 differentiate between propositional faith and incarnational faith (*head, heart, hands*)

SLO3 understand key differences between Wesleyan and Calvinist (Reformed) theologies.

Required Resources

Abraham, William J. (2013). *Sermons on Several Occasions by the Rev. John Wesley*. Dallas: Highland Loch Press.

Wesley's sermons are also available online at:

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/>

<https://ccel.org/ccel/wesley/sermons>

Maddox, Randy L. & Paul W. Chilcote (2015). *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, John Wesley*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press.

Recommended Resources

Collins, Kenneth J. (2003). *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Crutcher, Timothy J. (2015). *John Wesley: His Life and Thought*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press.

Maddox, Randy L. (1994). *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. Nashville: Kingswood Books.

Maddox, Randy L. & Jason E. Vickers (2010). *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*. Cambridge University Press.

Olson, Roger E. (2006). *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

Snyder, Howard. (2014). *The Radical Wesley: The Patterns and Practices of a Movement Maker*. Wilmore: Seedbed.

Thorsen, Don. (2013). *Calvin vs. Wesley: Bringing Belief in Line with Practice*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Tuttle, Robert. (1978). *John Wesley, His Life and Theology*. Francis Asbury Press.

Wynkoop, Mildred Bangs. (1972). *Foundations of Wesleyan Arminian Theology*. Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press.

Course: Inductive Bible Study/Hermeneutics

Course Description

Biblical interpretation is something everyone can do. The technical word for it is "Hermeneutics." This term comes from a Greek word that means, "to explain, interpret, explain or translate." Using the verb, Luke informs us that Jesus *explained* to the two disciples on the Emmaus Road what the Scriptures said about him (LK 24:27). Paul uses the noun in (1 Cor 12:10) to refer to the gift of *interpretation* of tongues. In essence, then, hermeneutics involves interpreting or explaining. The tools and techniques in the class will open up a new world of biblical literacy and ultimately, effective-obedient discipleship.

Course Goals/Student Learning Objectives

1. To provide the student with practical tools for reading the Bible and understanding its meaning.
2. To provide the student an opportunity to apply tools and practice biblical interpretation in community in a safe learning environment.

3. To provide practical tools that the student can use for the rest of their life to both know God and grow in their discipleship.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

Engage in a “close reading” of individual passages so as to make relevant observations useful for interpretation. Suggested biblical text: John 11. With the end of writing a paper, which will demonstrate the ability to make use of these hermeneutical insights in the actual interpretation and application of the New Testament text.

Understand literary characteristics of a genre; the original author’s intended meaning; the function of biblical thought blocks and units; how the basic of grammar influences meaning; how the original author applied the text and why we should follow their lead.

Be conversant with the major issues in hermeneutics (i.e., will be able to identify these issues, articulate the main contemporary positions surrounding these issues, and present in a reasonable and informed fashion his/her own perspective regarding these issues).

Required Resources

-
The Bible (NRSV).

Bauer, David R. (2011). *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic.
ISBN: 9780801097430

Other Optional Resources

Bauer, David R. (2003). *An Annotated Guide to Biblical Resources for Ministry*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
ISBN: 1-56563-723-2

Fee, Gordon. (2002). *New Testament Exegesis*. Westminster: John Knox Press.
ISBN: 9780664223168

Klien, William. (2017). *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
ISBN: 0310524172

Roetzel, Calvin. (2002). *The World That Shaped the New Testament*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
ISBN: 0664224156

Thompson, Marianne. (2001). *Introduction to the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
ISBN: 0802837174

Thompson, David. (2000). Bible Study That Works. Anderson, IN: Warner Press.
ISBN: 1593175477

Course: Homiletics

Course Description

This beginning course in preaching will examine the context of preaching and present a methodology for expository, topical and narrative preaching. It is also committed to the belief that preaching is best learned through practice under the evaluation of professor and fellow students. "The course nurtures a vision of Christian preaching as a theological and pastoral activity of the church in service to the gospel. The core objectives of this course have been established to facilitate critical understanding of and competence in view of (1) preaching as witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ revealed in the Christian Scriptures and (2) preaching as both a gift of the Holy Spirit and a human vocation, which serves the creation of a community called to worship the Triune God as revealed through the narrative of the whole biblical canon. This course approaches preaching as a theological practice and from a perspective shaped by the Wesleyan tradition; it is informed by a conscious integration of doctrinal and biblical exegesis and the practice of theological hermeneutics. Emphasis is placed on the lifelong task of acquiring practical habits appropriate for cultivating judgment required for faithful communication of the biblical witness in service of the Word of God, as an act of Christian worship and within the context of personal, social, and cultural challenge and change.

Course Goals/Student Learning Objectives

1. To introduce the ingredients of narrative, topical, and expository preaching.
2. To provide guidance in the preparation and delivery of sermons.
3. To increase awareness of the elements of good preaching.
4. To introduce preaching from various traditions for broader understanding and appreciation.
5. To incorporate the student's study of the original languages and hermeneutics to ensure that sermons are faithful to the text.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Come to terms with the theology of preaching. Please write a five-page paper. Show personal creativity, biblical sources and bibliographical documentation. Class readings and discussion will also play their part in helping you formulate your theology of preaching.
2. Master homiletical construction, you will move through the primary textbook

section by section, doing supplementary readings and processing class handouts. To establish the picture character of contemporary preaching, you will read a book and write a response to it; more, you will deliver a word picture in classroom practicum.

3. See the relevance of personal Christian religious experience and quality of character, the class will address specific issues: the call to preach, the work of the Spirit, ongoing spiritual formation, etc. Every class period will begin with sharing and prayer.
4. Begin to get acquainted with the resources for preaching, you will look at salient literature, both print and online. Note the bibliographies and resources in the books you buy, especially the primary text. The class will talk about the threat of plagiarism.
5. Explore theories of Gospel communication, the class will, here and there throughout the course, look at the dynamics of how one person can transmit ideas to others in the context of Christian public proclamation.

Textbooks:

Henderson, David W. CULTURE SHIFT. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, Inc. 1998.

Lowry, Eugene, THE HOMILETICAL PLOT. Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1980.

Robinson, Haddon. BIBLICAL PREACHING. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001.

Other Readings (optional)

Chapell, Bryan. CHRIST-CENTERED PREACHING. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books Inc., 1994.

Craddock, Fred. PREACHING. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985.

McLaren, Brian, A NEW KIND OF CHRISTIAN San Francisco, Jossie Bass, 2001.

Sine, Tom. MUSTARD SEED VS. MCWORLD. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998.

Troege, Thomas H. IMAGINING A SERMON. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990.

Willhite, Keith and Gibson, Scott, Ed. THE BIG IDEA OF BIBLICAL PREACHING. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998.

Course: Church Administration, Shepherding, and Leadership

The following are two possible classes to work toward this requirement. The first is geared more toward the leadership side and the second toward the administration side. A combination of the two may also serve candidates well.

Option 1: Course Description

Leadership can take place in many venues and on many levels — leading oneself, leading by example, leading a family, leading a project or group, leading a business, or leading a church. Christian leadership involves an inner conviction that your life has purpose and you have contributions to make on behalf of others, and so you willingly step forward and offer up who you are and what you have as your “two fish and five loaves” to be multiplied by God. This is the HEART of leadership.

In this course you will learn how to partner with both God and others so that you might grow in becoming a leader whom others want to follow, how to build teams, how to avoid self-derailment, how to adapt and keep moving strategically toward goals, and how to enjoy the journey with others despite the costs of change and the challenge of obstacles encountered along the way.

Course Goals/Student Learning Objectives

1. **Affirming that leadership is a necessary skill in ministry** as one serves the local congregation and also the local community. Regardless of whether a person is “naturally wired” toward leading OR is more comfortable teaching or providing pastoral care, the candidate makes the commitment to become a lifelong learner and practitioner of leadership. (HEART)
2. **Recognizing detrimental tendencies in leadership** — personal insecurities, being a “lone ranger” leader rather than a team-building leader, inability to accept criticism or challenge, intentionally withholding information to create an edge, dominating over others, etc. (HEART)
3. **Understanding the importance of developing a Leadership Pipeline** to develop future leaders for both specific ministries, as well as those who might become overseers of multiple ministries (HEAD / HANDS)
4. **Identifying various aspects of leading movement toward a goal:** (HEAD / HANDS)
 - beginning with seeing a need, submitting the need and oneself to God, and seeking His guidance for an appropriate response
 - having a vision that gains clarity and inspires others
 - developing a plan of strategic steps and milestones to move forward
 - deploying teams to execute the strategic plan

- monitoring process and feedback loop: cycles of celebration for movement forward, as well as evaluation of setbacks and the unexpected in order to make changes and adapt
5. **Responding well to resistance** in the midst of change, seeking to avoid polarization, and encouraging all toward unity in following God's direction. (HEART / HANDS)

Required Resources

Textbooks

Boundaries for Leaders: Results, Relationships and Being Ridiculously in Charge, Henry Cloud, 2013, Harper Collins, ppb ISBN 978-0-06-220633-6 (emphasis: practical advice on how to manage teams, coach direct reports, and instill an organization with strong values and culture)

Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church, Aubrey Malphurs & Will Mancini, 2004, Baker Books ISBN: 978-0-8010-9171-3 (Biblical & Theological emphasis as well as various church size applications)

Leadership and Self Deception: Getting Out of the Box, The Arbinger Institute, 2010, Barrett-Koehler Publishers Inc. ISBN: 978-1-57675-977-6 (avoiding derailment)

Relaunch: How to Stage an Organizational Comeback, Mark Rutland, 2013, David C Cook, ISBN 978-1-4347-0575-4 (Christian leadership emphasis upon turning around an organization or institution in crisis)

Option 2: Course Description

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: This course will help participants understand the scope of local church administration topics and related duties of an FMCUSA pastor. Administration properly understood is a vital ministry and gift to the church:

- It provides wise stewarding of resources to accomplish the mission of the church, as well as the unique purpose, vision, mission and priorities of the local church
- It creates efficient systems to oversee vital aspects of congregational life:
 - Legal compliances & insurances
 - Financial order, contributing to a spirit of well-being and generosity
 - Securing & maintaining of property, facilities, and equipment
 - Providing for personnel needs
- It safeguards against mismanagement (or neglect) and provides transparency in all business dealings, contributing to congregational health.

The above Description of Church Administration & Systems provides the HEART emphasis of this course.

The Course Goals and Resources below emphasize the HEAD (understanding of) and the HANDS (developing proficiency in executing) the various aspects of this topic.

Course Goals/Student Learning Objectives

Upon satisfactory completion of the course participants will be able to:

- 1. Display a working knowledge of conducting the following common events involving administration in the life of a Free Methodist Church, including:**
 - local church Board of Administration meetings
 - local church Annual Society meetings
 - baptisms, marriages, funerals
 - membership classes, inductions, and transfers
- 2. Display a working knowledge of the local church as a nonprofit, including:**
 - fund accounting
 - federal and state reporting requirements
 - denominational and conference reporting requirements
- 3. Display a working knowledge of denominational and online resources available, including:**
 - free resources available from FMCUSA
 - free resources available from reputable online sites (and how to evaluate online resources)

Required Resources & Experiences

TEXTBOOKS:

Pastors and Church Leaders Manual: Resources for Leading Local Churches, available at <https://freemethodistbooks.com/product/pastors-and-church-leaders-manual-resources-for-leading-local-churches>

AdMinistry: The Nuts and Bolts of Church Administration, by Thomas F. Tumblin, Abingdon Press, 2017 ISBN: 978-1426727009, available at Amazon. (This book is used at ATS for students in MDiv, MA & Church Planting programs)

OTHER RESOURCES:

The 4 Buckets of Church Facility Budgeting: Fletcher Talks with Tim Cool, Founder of Smart Church Solutions. View video at <http://vimeo.com/480514113>

Free online subscription to *CTPastors: Wisdom and Tools for Your Calling*, available at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/>

Free online subscription to *Thom S. Rainer: Growing Healthy Churches Together*, available at <http://thomrainer.com>

Additional PDFs assigned and supplied by instructor

Course: Pastoral Care

Course Description

Pastoral care is based upon biblical and theological foundations (HEAD). It values the sacred privilege of walking alongside individuals through all the highs and lows of human experience (HEART). And it mandates the ongoing development of specific skill sets to be able to care well for others (HANDS).

This course will include two basic aspects of pastoral care. First, the ability of pastors to care for their own lives. Second, the ability to provide spiritual and whole person care to other persons.

Course Goals/Student Learning Objectives

The following are the general goals of the class:

Personal Self Care:

1. Develop and incorporate a biblical and theological understanding of pastoral care as a vital component of pastoral ministry
2. Identify personal issues that may potentially strengthen or harm your ministry of pastoral care
3. Establish healthy personal boundaries and ethical behaviors

Care of Others:

4. Become familiar with and utilize personal and corporate rituals and other pastoral care guidelines provided in the *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual*.
5. Learn how to think and act as a pastor who brings God's presence, comfort, and guidance to others.
6. Understand and practice basic principles of listening, empathic responding, and conversing
7. Learn the importance of developing others who can be lay caregivers, including organizations such as Grief Share, Stephen Ministries, etc.
8. Glean insights from other professionals with whom you will interact in the care of individuals

Required Resources & Experiences

Textbooks

Pastors and Church Leaders Manual, (Sections II, III & IV, and Appendix A) 2006, revised 2013, reprinted 2020, Light & Light Publishing

Headley, A. J. (2007). *Reframing Your Ministry: Balancing Professional Responsibilities and Personal Needs*. Nappanee, IL: Evangel Publishing House. ISBN# 978-1-928915-97-3, pp. 1-205.

Scazzero, Peter (2010). *The Emotionally Healthy Church*. Grand Rapids, Zondervan. ISBN# 978-0-310-29335-4, pp. 1-226. (practical insights on leading a congregation to wholeness and maturity in Christ while staying healthy as a leader).

Switzer, David K. (2000). *Pastoral Care Emergencies: Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling Series*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press. ISBN# 978-0-8006-3228-1, pp. 1-191

Other Experiences and Other Resources

Other Experiences:

Interview five professionals, and write gleanings gained in a reflection paper for each interview:

- Hospital chaplain
- Wedding planner (or a pastor who has done many weddings)
- Funeral director
- Vocational counselor
- Law enforcement professional

Other Resources:

Become aware of the *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship Course* by Pete & Geri Scazzero
Go to emotionallyhealthy.org/your-church/?v=4096ee8eef7d

“Move Your Church Forward by Slowing Yourself Down”

Watch the 2 minute introductory video

Choose the Starting Point: Your Church

Some churches are currently this material as their initial discipleship path for their congregations:

Part 1 focuses upon *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*

Part 2 focuses upon *Emotionally Healthy Relationships*

For further training at an introductory level, you may want to look into *Stephen Ministries* training. Check out <https://www.stephenministries.org>

For a deep dive into pastoral care, you may consider **Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)** training. You may find more information at: <https://acpe.edu/>.

Seamands, S. A. (2005). *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press. ISBN#978-0-8308-3338-2, pp. 1-178.

(theological foundation for relational pastoral service)

Course: Congregational Spiritual Formation

Course Description

Congregational Spiritual Formation is more than a personal discipleship course or program taking place within the church facility or in offsite small groups. Certainly resources abound that can help a convert in their walk with Jesus — i.e. materials related to assurance of salvation, reflecting upon and living by God’s Word, talking with God in prayer, trusting God with one’s finances, sharing one’s faith experience, etc.

But what Christian leaders need is to be equipped with an understanding of how to create an intentional environment of formation in which their congregation — composed of diverse persons, at various stages of growth — is individually and collectively encouraged to journey toward spiritual maturity. The focus of this course is to “look behind the curtain” of formation in a congregational context, so that the pastor, staff and ministry leaders will better understand how to unitedly develop a culture where being disciples of Jesus and making disciples of Jesus is the heartbeat of the church . . . where all are challenged to GROW in their love for God, to LIVE out the missions of Jesus, and to MANIFEST the Spirit with increasing vibrancy through their lives.

Course Goals/Student Learning Objectives

1. to uplift the importance of community and relationship in the entire process of coming to faith in Christ and then maturing in the Christian life as a disciple of Jesus. (HEART)
2. to offer practical helps for how followers of Jesus can become more sensitive to God’s presence in the midst of daily life activities, not just during their devotional or study times. (HEART)
3. to recognize how God has created individuals with unique spiritual pathways and learning styles, and to learn how as leaders to recognize and “tap into” these diversities when selecting curriculum and designing stand-alone events and ongoing ministries for your congregation. (HEAD)
4. to awaken leaders to the unique discipling contributions various sized groupings within a congregation have, and to inspire leaders to leverage each group size’s potential to develop a comprehensive holistic Wesleyan discipling environment. (HANDS)

Required Resources & Experiences

Textbooks

Download the free digital e-booklet *Inviting Along* by Jason Dukes, at discipleship.org/inviting-along/
(related to Goal #1)

Students should order 3 additional textbooks so that the books will arrive in plenty of time for the course start date; all are available at christianbook.com or amazon.com: *Windows of the Soul: Hearing God in the Everyday Moments of Your Life* by Ken Gire. 2017, Zondervan, paperback. ISBN: 978-0-31035-227-3 (related to Goal #2)

Sacred Pathways: Discover Your Soul's Path to God by Gary Thomas. 2010, Zondervan, paperback. ISBN: 978-0-31032-988-6. (related to Goal #3)

Discipleship that Fits: The Five Kinds of Relationships God Uses to Help Us Grow by Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom. 2016, Zondervan, paperback. ISBN 978-0-310-52261-. This book is also available as a free, downloadable eBook from discipleship.com (related to Goal #4)

NOTES:

Free articles and Seven Minute Seminary videos from my.seedbed.com are not yet included

For pastors desiring to explore, be trained, and lead their congregation in moving FROM being a program-oriented church or information-oriented church TO becoming a disciple-making congregation, the 10-week *Holistic Disciple Making Masterclass & Certification* offered by discipleship.org is suggested.

Course: Community Engagement

Course Description

This course is designed to help the student fulfill the call to love God and neighbor. It will lay a foundation of biblical social justice, theology and practice of early Free Methodists, and how to develop culturally relevant community engagement ministries. Students will identify the specific needs or issues in their own community, learn how to develop programs that will bring positive change while building relationships with people in their neighborhood. Students will learn how to prioritize those needs or issues in order of urgency, capacity to address, and effectiveness in building relationships. Then students will show how to apply appropriate solutions to those priorities with a goal of building relationships.

Course Goals/Student Learning Objectives

Upon satisfactory completion of this course, participants will be able to:

Heart Objectives:

- A. Grow in love for God and neighbor with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength.
- B. Grow in our capacity to listen to and give value to **all** persons in **all** social contexts.

Head Objectives:

- A. Articulate a biblical theology of social justice and community engagement.
- B. Articulate how community engagement is a foundational practice of the Free Methodist Church.
- C. Gain ability to analyze and describe community and congregational dynamics.
- D. Learn how to identify the needs of a community and develop programs that will bring positive change and build relationships with people in their neighborhood.
- E. Learn how to prioritize those needs or issues in order of urgency, capacity to address, and effectiveness in building relationships.
- F. Ability to develop relationships within and across cultures with the purpose of communicating the gospel.

Hand Objectives:

- A. Research and listen to members of the community concerning the strengths and needs of your neighborhood. When appropriate ask for input on how they think the church could help. Write a 300-500-word summary of your discoveries.
- B. With the guidance and support of the lead pastor, prayerfully gather with key leaders in your church community, and develop a proposal that addresses how the church could effectively engage your neighborhood by meeting a felt need. This plan should include how to prepare and inspire the congregation for community engagement.
- C. Course will be considered complete when a written proposal is submitted that clearly delineates the following:
 - a. How the congregation will be spiritually and biblically prepared to embrace the mission of outreach and evangelism through community engagement.
 - b. A written plan with a clear timeline that identifies what need is going to be met, what outcomes are expected, how that need will be met by a specific program, who in the congregation/neighborhood will lead/staff the program, how the ministry will be funded, and how the outreach will be assessed on a regular basis.

A student with significant experience in community engagement may receive credit for this course by:

- A. Submitting a 600-900-word document summarizing their understanding of biblical social justice. Document needs to also articulate how Free Methodists have engaged with their communities since its inception.
- B. Submitting a resumé of past experiences in community engagement that includes specific roles and responsibilities, length of time in each role, and hours served per week.
- C. Submitting three references from those who served with you.

- D. Your document, resumé, and references will be prayerfully reviewed and you will be contacted for either further dialogue or approval of your request to receive credit for this course.

Required Resources

Please choose to read from at least two of the following

Corbett, Steve and Brian Fikkert. (2014). *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself*. Chicago, IL: Moody.
ISBN: 0802409989

Hudson, Bryan. (2020). *Biblical & Social Justice: What Is It?: An Everyday Person's Guide to Understanding Justice and the Role of the Church in Our Society*.
ASIN: B08KXTQ8XQ

Kumar, Somesh. (2002). *Methods for Community Participation: A Complete Guide for Practitioners*.
Practical Action Publishing.
ISBN: 1853395544

Mather, Mike. (2018). *Having Nothing, Possessing Everything*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
ISBN: 0802874835

Viars, Stephen. (2020). *Loving Your Community: Proven Practices for Community-Based Outreach Ministry*. Ada, MI: Baker Books Academic.
ISBN: 080109478X

Recommended Resources

Gornik, Mark. (2002). *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
ISBN: 0802846858

Horrell, Dana. (2019). *Engage!: Tools for Ministry in the Community*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.
ISBN: 1506452043

Smith, David. W. (2019). *Seeking a City With Foundations*. Langham Global Library.
ISBN: 1783684976

Stearns, Richard. (2019). *The Hole in Our Gospel: What Does God Expect from Us?* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publisher.
ISBN: 0785228675

Sweney, Chip and Kittie Murray. (2011). *New Kind of Big, A: How Churches of Any Size Can Partner to Transform Communities*. Ada, MI: Baker Books.
ISBN: B004LDLJ34

Truesdale, Al. (2020). *Wesleyan Foundations for Evangelism*. Kansas City, KS: Foundry Publishing.

ISBN: 0834138298

Course: Cross-Cultural Emphasis

These course recommendations are still in development. However, all ministerial candidates should have some training and/or experience in ministering cross-culturally. A MEG Board may assign experiences, mentoring relationships, particular readings, and/or coursework to meet this requirement. The candidate should provide some sort of reflection to demonstrate sufficient engagement and reflection with the material and awareness of matters pertaining to cross-cultural engagement.

APPENDIX E: JWSF LOAN/GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

John Wesley Seminary Foundation (JWSF) Grant/Loan Repayment Agreement

- Repayment of the JWSF grant/loan through service is based on five years of full-time appointed service (twenty percent reduction per year) as follows:
 - Full-time appointment to a Free Methodist ministry by an annual conference.
 - Full-time appointment through Free Methodist World Missions.
 - Full-time military or institutional chaplaincy appointment, endorsed by the denomination.
 - Full-time administrative appointment by the Free Methodist denomination.
 - Full-time faculty or administrative appointment at a Free Methodist elementary, secondary, or post-secondary school.
- Repayment of the JWSF grant/loan by appointed service begins after graduation or after discontinuing the seminary program, even if the recipient is in full-time appointed service while attending school.
- Recipients who do not receive a full-time appointment or who choose to serve outside of the Free Methodist Church agree to repay the grant/loan plus interest to the John Wesley Seminary Foundation beginning nine months after graduation with quarterly payments over ten years and nine months.
- Recipients agree to keep the JWSF office informed of their full-time appointments in the Free Methodist Church, or ministry/work outside the Free Methodist Church (including current address), until repayment is made in full.
- I understand the above requirements will fulfill my obligation to the Free Methodist Church of North America. I agree to abide by this agreement.

Signature Date _____

Print Name SS # _____

Send to:

John Wesley Seminary Foundation Office
• 5235 Decatur Blvd. Indianapolis, IN 46241-9532.
• PO Box 51710, Indianapolis, IN 46251



8/24/22

APPENDIX F: OUTCOMES-BASED ORDINATION INTERVIEWS³⁵

Candidate name _____ **Date** _____

Assessors' names _____

HEART FORMATION

How specifically do you care for your soul? What practices keep you most connected to God?

How have your ministry experiences as an LMC shaped your understanding of God's call on your life? Why pursue credentialing now?

Candidate is characterized by spiritual maturity and a strong sense of call to ministry			
1 - 2 - 3	4 - 5 - 6	7 - 8 - 9	10 - 11 - 12
No clear sense of ministry call. No consistent practice of spiritual disciplines. Little evidence of the fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, self-control, etc.) Little sense of personal holiness.	Able to articulate vague call to ministry. May pray and read the Bible sporadically, but little discipline beyond this. Spiritual fruit seen by others as present but inconsistent. Sense of identity developing.	Articulates increasingly clear call to ministry. Disciplines practiced but may be limited to basics (i.e., prayer, Scripture reading/study). Spiritual fruit is increasingly consistent. Growing sense of personal holiness and firm identity.	Anchors identity and calling in Jesus. Does not need to be needed. Engages in an intentional plan to grow deeper, including regular use of spiritual disciplines. Evidences mature spiritual fruitfulness and personal holiness.
Comments:			

³⁵ This section comes from the 2016 *MEG Manual*

What ministry tasks come easily for you and which are a struggle?

Describe the people you would pursue if you were to build a ministry team that would capitalize on your strengths and compensate for your weaknesses.

Candidate demonstrates a high level of self-awareness			
1 - 2 - 3	4 - 5 - 6	7 - 8 - 9	10 - 11 - 12
Testing and observation show lack of self-awareness. Ignores how their leadership and decisions impact others. Places blame and has a tendency to go it alone. Unaware of weaknesses and unable to talk about them.	Developing sense of strengths and weaknesses. Beginning to take ownership of blind spots and how their leadership impacts others. Developing ability to build a diverse team to complement weaknesses.	Strong sense of self-awareness. Able to see strengths and weaknesses. Accepts how they impact others but limited experience building teams to complement strengths/weakness profile.	Deep sense of self-awareness. Able to articulate clearly both strengths and weaknesses and use that rationale to build teams around blind spots. Knows how their leadership impacts others positively and negatively.
Comments:			

What do you do for fun? How does stress affect you, and how do you respond to this? How do you maintain balance between work and play?

What is your current level of indebtedness? What is your plan for addressing this, if necessary?

If the enemy of your soul were to target an area/areas where you struggle, what would that look like? What structures do you have in your life to deal with temptation in this area/these areas?

Candidate lives a life that is balanced for the demands of ministry			
1 - 2 - 3	4 - 5 - 6	7 - 8 - 9	10 - 11 - 12
Physical health seems disconnected from ministry. Emotional and mental health are not clearly understood as integral to spirituality. Little attention given to balance, play and recreation. Some evidence of unhealthy addiction.	Physical, emotional and mental health are beginning to get some needed attention. Occasional rest, Sabbath, play and recreation observed. Addiction and compulsion beginning to surface in the context of mentor and/or confessor.	Plan in place to address the balance of physical, emotional and mental health. Healthy margins beginning to make room for regularly observed rest, Sabbath, play and recreation. Addictions and compulsions losing their stronghold.	Physical, emotional and mental health are considered integral to life and ministry. Healthy and sustained attention given to Sabbath, retreat, play and recreation. No evidence of addiction or unhealthy compulsion.
Comments:			

How do you balance the needs of your family with the other demands of your life?

Aside from your spouse (if married), who do you have in your life with whom you can be completely honest about the struggles you face personally and in ministry?

Tell us about three people you would consider friends.

Candidate lives a life shaped by love for others			
1 - 2 - 3	4 - 5 - 6	7 - 8 - 9	10 - 11 - 12
Demonstrates a troubling sense of self-absorption. Unaware of others. Little care given to family and loved ones. No track record of building and maintaining close relationships. Unaware of the need to confess and be accountable to others.	Emerging sense of the importance of personal relationships. Family is seen as important but does not receive the best of the candidate's time and attention. Confession and accountability is only experienced when "caught".	Family and loved ones take priority over self and ministry. Some healthy relationships can be pointed to in the life of the candidate. Sporadic confession and accountability. Growing attention given to relationships outside the church.	Family and loved ones are prioritized over self. Strong track record of healthy life-giving relationships. Regular confession and accountability are seen as essential for life and ministry. Healthy relationship both inside and outside the church are understood as crucial.
Comments:			

All of us have failed at one point or another, whether it was having a project we worked hard on fall flat or coming up short on a goal we had set. Tell us about a recent time when you experienced a personal or professional failure. What happened? What did you learn from it?

Who are your personal and professional advisors, and how do you utilize them?

Candidate models humility			
1 - 2 - 3	4 - 5 - 6	7 - 8 - 9	10 - 11 - 12
Appears arrogant and/or has issues with authority. Bristles when criticized or corrected. Places blame and gives excuses when corrected or challenged. Seems uninterested in the perspective of others.	Shows basic respect for authority but fails to internalize constructive criticism completely. May react defensively when challenged and sometimes implodes when corrected. Does not actively seek the perspective of others.	Works hard to be non-defensive and respects authority. Willing to listen to leaders, peers and followers and resists imploding when corrected. Welcomes the input of others.	Maintains a posture of non-defense towards leaders, peers and followers. Actively seeks the perspective of others and internalizes constructive criticism without imploding
Comments:			

HEAD FORMATION

Tell us about something you have learned recently from the Scriptures.

What are some concepts or passages from the Bible that are a struggle for you? How do you wrestle with these?

Candidate demonstrates biblical understanding			
1 - 2 - 3	4 - 5 - 6	7 - 8 - 9	10 - 11 - 12
Exhibits weak biblical knowledge. Unable to locate Wesleyan theology in scripture. Tends to hold propositional views of particular passages while failing to balance them with the greater biblical witness.	Somewhat narrow biblical awareness. Struggles to completely locate Wesleyan theology in the scriptures. Beginning to integrate theology and practice.	Strong biblical knowledge without major gaps. Moderate ability to root Wesleyan worldview in scripture. Moderate integration of theology and practice.	Possesses holistic biblical knowledge. Able to deal with the whole of scripture with integrity. Is able to locate Wesleyan theology in the scriptures. Total integration of theology and practice.
Comments:			

How does being Wesleyan impact how we approach Scripture?

What are some of the unique core values of Free Methodism, both from our history and from the present? What is your understanding of what it means to be “connectional”?

Candidate demonstrates a Wesleyan theological integration			
1 - 2 - 3	4 - 5 - 6	7 - 8 - 9	10 - 11 - 12
Shows little understanding of our History, Polity, Articles and core values. Unable to articulate the Wesleyan distinctive and unaware of our relational theology. Weak theological integration.	Rudimentary understanding of the Wesleyan distinctive. Rudimentary understand and/or embrace of our History, Polity, Articles and core values. Developing theological integration.	Growing understanding and embrace of Wesleyan theology. Beginning to articulate with a sense of ownership our theological distinctive and relational orientation.	Demonstrates deep understanding and enthusiastic embrace of Wesleyan theology. Knows and embraces our Polity, History, Articles and cores values. Embraces wholeheartedly our relational theology. Strong theological integration.
Comments:			

What have you done in the past year to develop your mind?

What are your plans for your continued learning in the next year?

Candidate has a theological education commensurate with ordained eldership			
1 - 2 - 3	4 - 5 - 6	7 - 8 - 9	10 - 11 - 12
Has little or no education. Displays a reticence to take advantage of the opportunities they have making little use of books, online courses and other ways of gaining knowledge and experience. Intellectually lazy.	Has begun their formal education but does not readily connect the importance of it to ministry. Shows moderate effort when challenged to read, study and learn. Does the minimum to get by.	Has completed or nearly completed an undergraduate degree. Seems willing but reluctant to embark on graduate work in theology due to a less than full integration of education and ministry.	Displays a deep passion for life-long learning. Has completed an undergraduate degree as well as some graduate work in theology or equivalent. Fully integrates the importance of education and ministry.
Comments:			

Tell us about your experiences working with people or organizations that are not Free Methodist.

Candidate has ecumenical posture towards the Church and the world			
1 - 2 - 3	4 - 5 - 6	7 - 8 - 9	10 - 11 - 12
Unable and unwilling to value and affirm other Christian traditions. Remains dogmatic and defensive of their particular experience. Doesn't see the need for building bridges with people of other Christian traditions.	Growing awareness of the value of other Christian traditions, but numbers few people of other traditions among their friends. Still mostly comfortable among people of similar belief system.	Strong sense of the interconnectedness of the Body of Christ. Increasing action towards building bridges to other Christian traditions. A growing ability to articulate our tradition in spaces where others are present.	Values and affirms other Christian traditions while enthusiastically embracing our own. Builds and maintains bridges with people of other traditions and embraces the humanity of all regardless of belief system.
Comments:			

How would you explain the Gospel message to a 10-year-old who has never been to church?

Describe a recent example in which you saw God at work in an everyday situation.

Candidate possesses the ability to practically apply learning			
1 - 2 - 3	4 - 5 - 6	7 - 8 - 9	10 - 11 - 12
Seems unable or unskilled at connecting book/head learning to everyday situations. Experiences a language barrier when trying to communicate theological/biblical truths to regular people. Struggles to connect life experience with faith.	Is beginning to see connections between complex theology and everyday life. Has an increasing awareness of the distance between their theological language and the masses. Is beginning to see connections between faith and everyday life.	Works hard to make complex theological concepts accessible to others. Sees a connection between everyday life and the theology they are studying, but still struggles to span the gap between everyday experiences where people live and deep truth.	Has an ability to communicate deep and complex truth in ways that everyone can understand. Finds evidence of the redemptive activity of God in normal everyday things. Sees a strong connection between normal life and deep faith.
Comments:			

Hand Formation

What opportunities have you had to preach or teach? What have these looked like? What did you preach/teach about?

Tell us about a time recently when you had a faith conversation with someone who was not yet fully committed to Christ. What happened?

What is the demographic breakdown of your church and/or the ministry that you lead?

Candidate demonstrates fruitfulness in ministry			
1 - 2 - 3	4 - 5 - 6	7 - 8 - 9	10 - 11 - 12
Has no real track record of transformational teaching/preaching/leading. Awkward when doing personal evangelism and inexperienced at building healthy diverse faith communities.	Has led someone to Christ, but struggles to point to real lasting fruit when it comes to leading faith communities towards health and diversity. Personal engagement of evangelism is sporadic and lacking in passion. Beginning to find their voice in teaching/preaching/leading.	Has limited but promising experience in teaching/preaching/leading others towards healthy and diverse communities. Has some limited experience in personal and corporate evangelism.	Has a strong track record of transformational teaching/preaching/leading. Effective and fruitful at personal and corporate evangelism. Track record of building healthy and diverse faith communities.
Comments:			

Who would you describe as the marginalized people in your community?

What is your understanding of why they are in the situations they are in?

How are you personally involved in ministries of justice and compassion?

Candidate embraces wholeheartedly the ministry of justice and compassion			
1 - 2 - 3	4 - 5 - 6	7 - 8 - 9	10 - 11 - 12
Struggles to see where social injustice and discrimination impact people in the real world. Unaware of local and/or global need. Fails to understand the connection between ministry and the margin of society.	Beginning to see injustice and discrimination but unable to put a local face on it. Aware of international/global needs, but unable to see those who suffer within enslaving structures right around the corner. No sense of personal connection to the enslaving systems.	Growing awareness of people who exist in enslaving structures. Increasingly sees the local broken and poor as central to mission. Willing to address injustice and discrimination, while just beginning to understand the systemic implications.	Strong sense of connection between injustice, discrimination and the systems that uphold them. Willing to challenge every kind of institution that enslaves, seeing this as a natural and necessary concern of ministry.
Comments:			

In whom are you personally investing? How did you get connected with them?

Who have you identified and “shoulder-tapped” recently as someone with ministry and/or leadership potential?

Candidate operates as a servant leader			
1 - 2 - 3	4 - 5 - 6	7 - 8 - 9	10 - 11 - 12
Has a self-serving attitude when it comes to ministry. Spends the majority of their effort promoting self instead of others. Only serves the local church to see what they can gain. Creates competitive and unsafe spaces around ministry tasks. Is judgmental towards others demonstrating a lack of cross-cultural competency.	Is beginning to see the need to serve selflessly but struggles to focus on others. Still hesitates when asked to do tasks that will not advance their personal agenda. Tries to develop others but mostly ends up calling them to embrace their vision, not the vision of the person being developed. Is beginning to deal with being judgmental.	Serves the local church with increasing passion and selflessness, and is willing to serve and develop others as needed with moderate success. Actively learning how to create opportunities for others to unfold and develop. Increasingly moving away from judgment and blame with an emerging sense of cross-cultural competency.	Sees the development, advancement and deployment of others as primary to their personal mission. Serves the local church by actively seeking to develop others. Creates healthy and safe space for others to unfold in. Leads without judgment and blame demonstrating a high level of cross-cultural competency.
Comments:			

How have you crossed the gender-barrier to invest in people who are different from you? How about the racial/ethnic-barrier?

Candidate empowers others to discover and function within their God-given design			
1 - 2 - 3	4 - 5 - 6	7 - 8 - 9	10 - 11 - 12
Sees women and minorities as complimentary not essential to the ministry and call of white men. Fails to embrace a multicultural mandate when building the local church. Fails to recognize the brilliance in others.	Is beginning to see the value of women and minorities in roles of leadership. Appreciates multiculturalism but does not understand how to foster it. Sees brilliance in others but does not know how to identify and release it.	Understands and embraces the value of women and minorities in senior leadership roles but has a thin personal track record of developing and releasing them personally. Appreciates multiculturalism. Sees the brilliance in others and sometimes makes room for it to shine.	Enthusiastically promotes women and minorities in roles of senior leadership. Embraces and promotes multiculturalism in the local church. Sees the brilliance in others and understands that one of the key roles of a leader is to see it, say you saw it, and open up a pathway for that brilliance to shine.
Comments:			

Consider the ministries of your church that you lead or are involved in. What is working well and what isn't? What are your criteria for determining effectiveness?

What is the short- and long-term vision for the ministries you lead or are involved in? What would need to happen practically in order for this vision to be fulfilled?

Candidate leads with creativity and vision			
1 - 2 - 3	4 - 5 - 6	7 - 8 - 9	10 - 11 - 12
Approach to ministry is antiquated and stuck. Runs the same old ministry plays whether they continue to work or not. Speaks often of a "gilded age" when people knew how to obey God. Is unable to articulate a compelling future for the church.	Adapts some ministry techniques but remains unable to see how some contexts have changed. Lacks creativity and vision when talking about the future of the church. Has few strategic plans that motivate people to move forward.	Has a growing sense of what works and what doesn't. Is willing to change approaches and adapt models to accommodate changing contexts. Can envision a better future and has begun to motivate others towards that vision.	Remains flexible and creative when developing ministry. Can always see an alternative to an old style or model that no longer works. Casts vision with passion and develops strategic and practical plans that motivate people to accomplish that vision.
Comments:			

Additional questions:

If the MEG's goal is to prepare you for healthy, effective, long-term ministry in the Free Methodist Church, what do you think you need? What gaps do you see in yourself, whether personal, intellectual, or practical?

Ordained elders accept itineracy, meaning that they are willing to relocate to serve another church if needed there. What are your thoughts and feelings on this? (If married) How do you think your husband/wife (and children, if applicable) would respond to this?

APPENDIX G: DIVORCE CLEARANCE DOCUMENTS

Divorce Clearance for Ministry in the Free Methodist Church Checklist

Annual Conference _____

Name of Divorced Person _____

- _____ The MEG Board has approved the individual as suitable for ministry in the Free Methodist Church, considering gifts, doctrine, and educational background and recommends divorce clearance.
- _____ An assessment has been made of the impact of divorce, the emotional stability and state of healing, the status of present marriage, and viewpoint regarding marriage.

The following items are attached:

- _____ Request for Clearance (based on formal MEG board action) including a copy of MEG Board Minutes with the action.
- _____ Completed applicable questionnaire or questionnaires
 - Questionnaire A** – *Divorcee Seeking Ministry in the Free Methodist Church*
 - Questionnaire B** – *Candidate Seeking Ministry in the Free Methodist Church who has not Divorced but whose Spouse has been Divorced*
 - Questionnaire C** – *Divorced Spouse of Candidate Seeking Ministry in the Free Methodist Church*
- _____ Copy of the divorce decree
- _____ Account by the divorced person of marital history, giving relevant information bearing on the divorce, and present viewpoint on the whole issue.
- _____ Written testimony of candidate's conversion and call to ministry, including reasons for desiring ministry in the Free Methodist Church.
- _____ The candidate's present view on marriage and divorce as he/she would offer them in preaching and in potential future counseling situations with persons in a troubled or broken marriage.
- _____ Date of MEG board interview: _____
- _____ Send copy of checklist to assigned bishop and to the Board of Bishops office in Indianapolis.

Comments:

MEG Board Chair _____ Date _____

Bishop's Signature _____ Date _____

NOTE: All materials must normally be processed at least **30 days** in advance of the Annual Conference for the divorce clearance to be considered and acted on for that conference year.

QUESTIONNAIRE “A”

Divorcee seeking ministry in the Free Methodist Church

As orientation, please read Paragraph 3311 of the *Book of Discipline*.

The MEG Board needs the following information before considering for clearance any person currently in relationship to a conference, seeking ministerial candidacy, transfer of ordination, or ministry appointment in the Free Methodist Church who has experienced divorce (see *Book of Discipline* ¶5340.C, ¶5650).

The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board is responsible for seeing that the following form is completed in the process of clearing the divorced person for ministry in the conference and church. In cases of multiple divorces, complete information is required for each divorcee.

Name _____ Phone: (____) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____ Date of Birth _____

Date of conversion _____

Date of first marriage _____

First spouse’s full name _____

Date of separation _____

Date and place of divorce _____

Plaintiff in divorce _____

If children in first marriage, who has custody? _____

Legal reason for divorce in the decree _____

Copy of divorce decree is attached: ____ Yes ____ No

Present address of former spouse _____

Is former spouse remarried? _____ If yes, give date _____

Date and place of your present marriage _____

Full name of present spouse _____

Has present spouse been divorced? _____

(If yes, separate Questionnaire "B" must be completed by present spouse)

The MEG may request references. If so, you shall secure a minimum of two letters of character reference by persons, preferably non-related, who knew you at the time of divorce. Letters should include an account of your marriage and subsequent divorce. If the divorce took place prior to conversion, include the writer's view of how your conversion is making a difference in your life. If the divorce took place after conversion, include the writer's view of the role of your faith through the divorce. Also include the writer's view of the health of your present marriage.

On separate sheets, please submit the following:

1. A narrative account of your marital history, including dates of marriage and divorce giving relevant information bearing on the divorce, and your present viewpoint on the whole issue.
2. A testimony of your conversion and call to ministry. Reason for desiring ministry in the Free Methodist Church.
3. Your present view on marriage and divorce as you would offer them in preaching, and in potential future counseling situations with persons in a troubled or broken marriage.

The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board will examine your case and make a recommendation regarding divorce clearance for ministry to the bishop assigned to your conference.

Signed _____ Date _____

Annual Conference _____

QUESTIONNAIRE “B”

Candidate seeking ministry in the Free Methodist Church who has not divorced, but whose spouse has been divorced. (The spouse shall complete Questionnaire “C”).

As orientation, please read Paragraph 3311 of the *Book of Discipline*.

The assigned bishop needs the following information before considering for clearance any person currently in relationship to a conference, seeking ministerial candidacy, transfer of ordination, or ministry appointment in the Free Methodist Church who has not experienced divorce, but whose spouse has experienced divorce (see *Book of Discipline* ¶5340.C, ¶5650).

The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board is responsible for seeing that the following form is completed and presented to the assigned bishop when the spouse of the candidate being recommended for clearance has experienced divorce. In cases of multiple divorces, complete information is required for each divorcee.

Name _____ Phone: () _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____ Date of Birth _____

Date of conversion _____

Date and place of present marriage _____

Full name of present spouse _____

Date of present spouse’s conversion _____

On separate sheets, please submit the following:

1. A testimony of your conversion and call to ministry. Reason for desiring ministry in the Free Methodist Church.
2. Your present view on marriage and divorce as you would offer them in preaching, and in potential future counseling situations with persons in a troubled or broken marriage.

The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board will examine your case and make a recommendation regarding divorce clearance for ministry to the bishop assigned to your conference.

Signed _____ Date _____

Annual Conference _____

QUESTIONNAIRE "C"

Divorced spouse of candidate seeking ministry in the Free Methodist Church

As orientation, please read Paragraph 3311 of the *Book of Discipline*.

The assigned bishop needs the following information before considering for clearance any person currently in relationship to a conference, seeking ministerial candidacy, transfer of ordination, or ministry appointment in the Free Methodist Church whose spouse has experienced divorce (see *Book of Discipline* ¶5340.C, ¶5650).

The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board is responsible for seeing that the following form is completed and presented to the assigned bishop when the spouse of the person being recommended for clearance has experienced divorce. In cases of multiple divorces, complete information is required for each divorcee.

Name _____ Phone: (____) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____ Date of Birth _____

Date of conversion _____

Date of first marriage _____

First spouse's full name _____

Date of separation _____

Date and place of divorce _____

Plaintiff in divorce _____

If children in first marriage, who has custody? _____

Legal reason for divorce in the decree _____

Copy of divorce decree is attached: _____ Yes _____ No

Present address of former spouse _____

Present address of former spouse _____

Is former spouse remarried? _____ If yes, give date _____

Date and place of your present marriage _____

Full name of present spouse _____

The MEG board may request references. If so, please secure a minimum of two letters of character reference by persons, preferably non-related, who knew you at the time of divorce. Letters should include an account of your marriage and subsequent divorce. If the divorce took place prior to conversion, include the writer's view of how your conversion is making a difference in your life. If the divorce took place after conversion, include the writer's view of the role of your faith through the divorce. Also include the writer's view of the health of your present marriage.

On separate sheets, please submit the following:

1. A narrative account of your marital history, including dates of marriage and divorce giving relevant information bearing on the divorce, and your present viewpoint on the whole issue.
2. Your present view on marriage and divorce as you would offer them in potential future counseling situations with persons in a troubled or broken marriage.

The Ministerial Education and Guidance Board will examine your case and make a recommendation regarding divorce clearance for ministry to the bishop assigned to your conference.

Signed _____ Date _____

Annual Conference _____

APPENDIX H: 25 THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS FOR ORDINATION AS ELDER

Candidate Name: _____ Date Submitted: _____

1. Explain your understanding of God. What adjectives would you use to describe Him? How would you describe yourself in relation to God?
2. Who is Jesus Christ and what is His significance?
3. 3. Who is the Holy Spirit and what is the Spirit's significance?
4. Our ordination ritual gives the Scriptures and their witness to Christ a central place in our church. Speak to us about the sufficiency and authority of Scripture.
5. What are your methods of reading, understanding, teaching and applying the Scriptures?
6. One of the Ten Commandments is to keep the Sabbath. A literal interpretation of Scripture seems to require no activity for the faithful from sundown Friday to the appearance of the first stars on Saturday night and is a perpetual covenant (Ex.31.16) broken upon penalty of death. Most Christians (virtually all Free Methodists) observe the "Lord's Day" – a day set aside for worship on Sundays, the day of resurrection. How do you understand the variance between the biblically commanded practice of keeping the Sabbath and the contemporary practice of routinely breaking the literal Sabbath in lieu of the Lord's Day? (This question is not really about the Sabbath but rather your hermeneutic – interpretive – methods.)
7. Through the stream of history God has gifted the church with many influential and insightful theologians and spiritual leaders. Name a current and a classical theologian (or church leader) and describe how they have influenced your thought, spiritual life, or leadership practices.
8. Give an overview of your understanding of the salvation process—what John Wesley called the "order of salvation"—from before faith to the glory of heaven.
9. What are the key differences between a Wesleyan and Reformed view of salvation? How do you understand a Wesleyan-Arminian perspective of salvation, and do you find areas of significant agreement or disagreement with this perspective?
10. The Free Methodist Church flows within the theological streams of the holiness movement, espousing the doctrine and experience of Entire Sanctification. What is your view of Entire Sanctification and what are some ways you have or would plan on sharing this view with others?
11. What do you believe the Bible teaches about church, and what is your understanding of God's ongoing work in the world through the "body of Christ"?

12. What is your theology of worship? What are the essentials of the proper worship of God? How do matters of style and preference relate to the practice of worship?
13. What is the theological and practical significance of the Lord's Supper? What role does communion play in the life of the worshipping community?
14. What is the theological and practical significance of baptism? What role does baptism play in the life of the worshipping community? Describe your views on the baptism and/or dedication of children, and the baptism of adults.
15. Describe your devotional life (methods, resources, etc.). What have you done recently to keep your relationship with God alive and growing? Elders are encouraged to engage in the biblical and historic practice of fasting and prayer, what is your view of fasting?
16. What is your understanding of the New Testament teaching on the gifts of the Spirit? What is your specific position on "speaking in tongues"? How do you help disciples discover their spiritual gifts?
17. How do you understand the role of the pastor? What are the pastoral essentials in caring for a congregation? What are the pastoral responsibilities to the larger community to which one is called or appointed? How does the concept of being a "global Christian" fit into your point of view?
18. Ephesians 6 describes five gifts or offices of ministry as apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher (some believing the latter two, a compound word, to be one). Assuming all of these gifts are necessary for a healthy congregation, how do you understand them? Which do you feel describes your calling and ministry, and how do you bring those who complement you into partnership for fruitfulness?
19. Elders are called to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5). What is your understanding of evangelism, and what are your practices in leading people to faith in Christ?
20. What is the significance of ordination? Reflect on its meaning for the church, the church's mission, and the roles of the church's pastoral and lay leadership?
21. Free Methodists practice an Episcopal structure in church leadership, grounded in the New Testament and historic practice of the church identifying its deacons (diakonos), elders (presbuteros) and bishops (overseers/episkopos), and those so identified, working to appoint elders and Christian leaders to serve in particular communities or regions (Titus 1:5). What is your understanding of the Episcopal structure and serving within the context of church authority?
22. What is your view of women in the ordained ministry? Which Bible passages do you view as most instructive on this matter, and how do you understand them? How does Galatians 3:28 inform your understanding of this issue?

23. What is the responsibility of a contemporary pastor and congregation to the Great Commandment and Great Commission? How do you envision leading a congregation in fulfilling the Great Commandment and Great Commission?
24. What is your view of pastoral “authority” and how does this relate to your view of spiritual leadership? What is your understanding of how a pastor works with and relates to the lay leaders and the Board of Administration of the congregation to which you are assigned in bringing change in mission, vision, or styles of worship? How do you relate to those in authority over you?
25. Jesus said, “Go, make disciples . . .” What is a “disciple” and how do you “make” one?

APPENDIX I: CERTIFICATE OF STANDING FOR TRANSFERS³⁶

Certificate of Standing

This certifies that _____, a/an
_____, (elder, deacon, conference
ministerial candidate), is in good standing and of general acceptability in the

Conference of the FREE METHODIST CHURCH and is granted this certificate with
a view to being transferred to the _____ Conference.

Done by _____ at
_____ on _____ 20_____.

_____ (Bishop)

_____ (Secretary)

This certifies that _____ was received
by transfer as a/an _____ (elder, deacon,
conference ministerial candidate) by vote of the _____
_____ Conference on _____
20_____.

(Bishop Signature)

A certificate granted by an annual or district conference or conference board of ministerial education
and guidance is valid until the ensuing annual conference to which the certificate is given.

³⁶ Reproduced from the 2016 *MEG Manual*

APPENDIX J: MORAL FAILURE DEBRIEFING³⁷

Suggested Sample Format

The following is an outline for a debriefing by MEG Boards and superintendents in cases of moral failure. The intention in carrying out this checkup is to learn from the experience. With regard to process, this agenda may also be useful to outline important elements to follow as the case is treated.

Define the situation in one sentence in professional language.

How did church authorities learn of the problem?

Were there legal/civil charges?

Was there confession, contrition, and repentance?

How would you describe it (i.e., complete and remorseful; reluctant; resistant, forced)?

Describe the attitude of spouse, family, etc. Was the bishop promptly informed?

Describe the action of conference leadership relating to the minister involved, the other person(s) involved, and the local congregation:

1. What did the superintendent do?
2. What actions did the MEG Board take for both discipline and restoration? How were these decisions/actions communicated?
3. Was there counsel from the bishop?
4. Was a detailed record kept of all interactions and communications in the case, such as telephone conversations, face-to-face interviews, written correspondence?

What were the initial reactions to the superintendent/MEG Board actions by the minister involved? By the other person(s) involved? By the congregation? By the conference?

To what extent was the minister cooperative with the MEG Board in receiving discipline and participating in the process for restoration to ministry/leadership?

A year after the event, what seems to be the outcome? What have been the identifiable effects on the local congregation? What have been the effects on the individual involved and his/her ministry?

What did you learn from this situation? What did you do right? What went well?

Has a debriefing report been filed with the area bishop?

If you had to handle this situation again, what would you do differently?

³⁷ Reproduced from the 2016 *MEG Manual*

APPENDIX K: MEG REPORT TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

To the _____ Annual Conference

Mr./Ms. Chairperson, the Board of Ministerial Education and Guidance recommends:

1. That the following persons be **received by transfer**

Name:	CMC/Deacon/Elder	Conf./Denomination
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

2. That the following persons be **received as Conference Ministerial Candidates**

_____	_____
_____	_____

3. That the following person be **continued as Conference Ministerial Candidates**

Name:	Year:	Name:	Year:
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

4. That the following persons be **discontinued as Conference Ministerial Candidates**

_____	_____
_____	_____

5. That the following persons be received as members of the conference and **ordained Elder**

_____	_____
_____	_____

6. That the following persons be given a **Certificate of Standing**

Name:	CMC/Deacon/Elder	Conf./Denomination
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

7. That the following persons be **located**

_____	_____
_____	_____

8. That the following persons **continue to be located**

_____	_____
_____	_____

9. The Board of Ministerial Education and Guidance reviewed and affirmed the character and discipleship of the located deacons and located elders (with the exception of . . .)

10. The Board of Ministerial Education and Guidance has considered the character, discipleship, and performance of all ordained ministers and affirms the integrity and Christian discipleship of the ministerial members of the conference (with the exception of . . .)

APPENDIX L: RESTORATION PROCESS

Visit legal.fmcusa.org/resources/restoration-manual for information on this topic.

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The Center for 
Pastoral Formation
Free Methodist Church USA