

**State of the Work Report
Board of Bishops to the
Board of Administration, Free Methodist Church
October 24, 2002**

Jesus declared, "I will build my church" (Matt 16:18). Scripture is clear that He is Lord of the church. His church is the hope of the world.

We are disciples of Jesus Christ, members of His church, and commissioned to be vitally engaged in this life giving, life transforming enterprise. It is an incredible privilege and responsibility to be a part of His work, here and around the world.

Our world is in desperate need of God and the good news of Christ. We live in a world shaken by 9/11, sniper terror, executive greed and corruption, stock market declines, culture of death, famine and hunger, global war on terror, and increased religious persecution. This is no surprise to us, for most leaders in our world have rejected the living God. Today, servants of God are sharing in Christ's sufferings; following in the steps of John the Baptist who was beheaded and Stephen who was stoned, and many other heroes of the faith.

How do we fit in this picture? Since its inception, the central purpose of the Free Methodist church has not changed. Our passion is to spread scriptural holiness across these lands and reform society. However, the pace in fulfilling this God-given vision in the United States is unsatisfactory. Leaders across the church are concerned about how best to recapture the passion of the founding leaders of the church.

In 2003 we will meet together in Seattle, Washington for the 34th North American General Conference, the first of the new millennium. Our theme *Into the Neighborhood* points us to the life of Jesus, our supreme example, who "...became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood"(John 1:14, *The Message*).

We are deeply passionate about our vision, that every Free Methodist Church be a healthy biblical community of holy people, multiplying disciples, leaders, groups and churches. This is a radical call to follow in the steps of Jesus, to be His presence in our neighborhoods. It is a call to lay aside the debilitating comforts of middle class church life and be thrust into the harvest. It is a call to move beyond the safety of our comfort zones and engage the multi-cultural societies of America. It is a call to become global Christians in a worldwide missions endeavor.

For this vision to become a reality, it will require Spirit-filled leadership in every church. We celebrate the fact that there are Free Methodist churches in every region of the country where this vision is being fulfilled. We celebrate the fact that there are conferences where many pastors and lay leaders have caught this vision. But we pray earnestly that this would be the reality of a growing number of Free Methodist Churches.

The following is a list of major initiatives/accomplishments that we have worked on together during this quadrennium:

- Launched smaller national leadership board - Board of Administration
- Developed Free Methodist vision statement
- Prepared *Working Together in the Twenty-first Century* documents

Restructured World Ministries Center
Created Free Methodist Networks
Refocused Free Methodist Communications toward Web-based resourcing
Produced *Living Holiness* and *Open Arms* videos
Celebrated award winning *Light and Life* magazine
Implemented Apollos Model ministry track
Developed reformatted *Book of Discipline* proposal for General Conference
Started United Ministries for Christ (Home Ministries) Equal Participation Plan
Reviewed leadership development models - *Aligning Structures With Our Mission*
Provided 116 church planting grants for new churches
Prayerfully prepared for the 2003 General Conference and Regional Sitzings
Developed covenant between the Free Methodist Church of North America and the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions
Updated Superintendent and Ministerial Education and Guidance Board manuals
Approved Role of the Bishop resolution for General Conference
Prepared diaconate proposal through the Study Commission on Doctrine
Engaged pastoral team in eight "Set Free" Bishops' Schools For Renewal
Celebrated an increase of 4033 in worship attendance and 76 in adult membership in the first three years (1999-2001) of the quadrennium.

We pray for the day when all Free Methodist lay leaders, pastors, superintendents and bishops are in community, learning together, encouraging one another, living in loving accountability, and dreaming together about life and ministry. It will require that we seek God in becoming a healthy biblical community of holy people that will lead to multiplying disciples, leaders, groups and churches.

We believe that the role of the bishops is to provide Spirit-filled (apostle-like; Titus 1:5) leadership within the context of a learning community that is focused on multiplying godly competent leaders. We believe that the church says "amen" to bishops who provide Spirit-filled leadership. We believe that the church says "amen" to bishops who multiply godly competent leaders. However, the unresolved question remains – how do we create learning communities through which bishops can more effectively fulfill their apostle-like calling?

The heart of our concern is that the leadership team of the Free Methodist Church is not involved systemically in being a healthy biblical community of holy people that multiplies disciples, leaders, groups and churches. We believe that the major hindrance in fulfilling the Free Methodist vision is the lack of clear focus on leadership development through learning communities.

If the primary responsibility of a leader is to communicate and live out the vision of the church, and if the primary way for this to be done is through a strong relational community of leadership, how can we best align our structures to accomplish the mission? The Board of Bishops is seeking counsel and direction in this, as we do not want structures to hinder the fulfillment of the vision.

Therefore, the question that we bring to you is, "How can we together deeply address this obstacle, so that the dreams we hold dear and pray for will be realized?"

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