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CHAPTER IV

OFFICIAL BODIES OF THE CHURCH

PREAMBLE: Connectional Nature and Mission of the Free Methodist Church

¶ **A/400.** The Free Methodist Church of North America is a body of earnest Christians committed to the will of God as revealed in the Bible, Methodist in doctrine and practice, who consider themselves to be spiritually members of the body of Christ in the world, the visible and universal church of Jesus Christ.

The membership of the Free Methodist Church of North America is organized into annual conferences, and these into local congregations. These along with the several institutions, auxiliaries, and agencies are united by means of a common constitutionally structured organization and are governed under the authority of the *Book of Discipline* by duly appointed leaders. We thus share forms of worship, fellowship, and a common mission.

Each local congregation accepts members on condition of agreement with a covenant commonly approved and accepted by all local congregations of the church.

Each holds its real estate and all of its property and assets in trust for the Free Methodist Church of North America.

Each participates in the formulation of policy and the approval of programs and procedures of the church by duly elected ministerial and lay representation at conference and general levels.

The Free Methodist Church of North America therefore is a connectional church, a body of Christians whose local congregations are united by a constitution democratically established and ratified which provides a common character and purpose for all. Consequently, all local congregations shall clearly identify themselves with the Free Methodist Church.

The Free Methodist Church admits to no geographic, social, racial, or cultural limitations on Christ's command to preach the gospel of redemption and to share His message of wholeness. We are called, within our power and resources, to introduce all people to Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). This includes the inner city, the countryside, the villages, and the marketplaces around the world.

Mission begins in worship. Therefore we encourage congregations to establish worship centers where through prayers, music, meditation,

and the preaching of God's Word true worship might take place.

True worship of God demands service to one another within the church and to those outside the church with their varied needs. This service we define as the mission of the church which includes Christian education, evangelism, world missions, and social services.

Christian education is a means of teaching the Word of God so that both young and old can understand Christian doctrine and life. To this end we conduct home Bible studies, Sunday schools, weekday activities, and other programs. We establish day-care centers, elementary and secondary schools, and institutions of higher education, including seminaries, colleges and universities. The Free Methodist Publishing House produces and markets books, magazines, and other literature.

Evangelism is the work of witnessing and bringing people to faith in Christ. To help our members bear such witness, we provide opportunities for training and experience. We promote evangelism through study, seminars and workshops, college and university degree programs, use of lay witnesses, home Bible studies, and outreach ministries. Radio broadcasts, television programs, audio and video tapes, and all other means of personal and mass communication are used.

World missions involves sending the gospel message to areas of need around the world. This is done through a missionary endeavor that involves both career missionaries and short-term volunteer workers. Evangelism in the mission context is carried on through churches, schools, hospitals, clinics, bookstores, and other appropriate means. The goal of our world mission is to minister to the needs of the whole person.

Social service is the activity of the church in caring for human need as an expression of the love of God. At the level of the local church this may range from day-care centers to senior citizen activities. Free Methodists, individually or through the several agencies, cooperate in the support of retirement homes, hospitals, and city missions. They also provide care for unwed mothers and unwanted or orphaned children.

Many of these ministries converge in camping programs in all sections of North America. Entire families are united in family camps, youth and children have specialized camping programs, and many other groups are brought together for instruction, fellowship, and service.

As real property is needed for the ministry of the church it is held in the name of the Free Methodist Church of North America and those other auxiliary, affiliated, and subsidiary corporations, organizations, and conference and local church bodies.

A. FORMATION OF NEW CHURCHES

PREAMBLE

¶ A/401. The mission of the Free Methodist Church is to make known to people everywhere God's call to wholeness through forgiveness and holiness in Jesus Christ, and to invite into membership and equip for ministry all who respond in faith. The biblical Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) commands believers to make disciples in every place and among all peoples. The fulfillment of this mission requires larger and more effective local churches as well as more and varied local churches.

Reaching unreached people is the motive for the planting of new churches. Each church should be eager and open to win all people to Christ and incorporate them into membership. Yet within each population group there are persons who, because of geographic distance or language or cultural differences, can more readily be reached by new churches than by existing ones. Creative strategies and multiple styles of ministry are required.

Most new churches will come into being as local churches form new groups nearby or use their facilities for new kinds of ministry. Others will come about as individuals or teams are commissioned at the local, conference, or general level to enter new areas. In still other cases, already existing groups may discover the benefit of affiliating with the Free Methodist Church and sharing in its mission. In each instance, the ultimate goal is not only to reach more people and see them mature in Christ, but also to reproduce new local churches.

New Free Methodist churches shall be known as "church planting projects," "fellowships," or "affiliated churches" in preparation for society status. These terms will be used in reporting appointments and for official denominational records. However, the term "Free Methodist Church" may be used in public reference by groups in any of these categories. All local congregations shall clearly identify themselves with the Free Methodist Church. The following guidelines provide consistency in policy while allowing latitude in strategy for multiplying local churches.

1. CHURCH PLANTING PROJECTS

1. A Church Planting Project is the first phase in the formation of most new churches.

- a. Authority to Form: Each church planting project must have a sponsoring agency, which may be a local society or confer-

- ence board or committee, or the Department of Evangelism and Church Growth. The project comes into existence when the sponsoring agency announces its decision.
- b. Accountability and Responsibility: The church planting pastor or lay project leader is accountable to the sponsoring agency which is responsible for providing assistance and support in the form of consultation, personnel, materials, and/or finances.
 - c. Membership: A church planting pastor or lay project leader is responsible for preparing persons to become members of a new Free Methodist fellowship or society with assistance as needed from the sponsoring agency. Free Methodist members participating in the project retain membership in their home church.
 - d. Financial Matters: Full self-support should be attained as early as possible. The church planting project may hold or disburse its own funds only if authorized by the sponsoring agency, which retains auditing responsibility.
 - e. Local Organization: A church planting pastor or lay project leader may appoint a ministry committee to provide counsel and direction.
 - f. Duration: Church planting projects are encouraged to move to fellowship or society status as soon as possible. Only under special circumstances approved by the sponsoring agency should a church planting project continue more than two years if it has not progressed to the fellowship status.
 - g. Conference relationship: A lay project leader shall have an honorary seat in the conference and may be named in the appointments at the discretion of the ministerial appointments committee.

2. FELLOWSHIP STATUS

2. Fellowship status is the second phase in the formation of most new churches. The conference board of administration or board of evangelism shall serve as the fellowship's sponsoring agency.

- a. Authority to form: A conference superintendent, with the concurrence of the sponsoring agency, may recognize a group as a fellowship when: (1) enough prospective members have been adequately prepared for membership; (2) these prospective members give public joint assent to the adoption of the *Book of Discipline* and individually answer the questions for full membership; (3) a document of agreement

containing the denominational mission statement, the official name of the group, and adequate statements of mutual responsibility and accountability between the fellowship and the conference, has been signed by these prospective members, the superintendent, and representatives of the sponsoring agency.

- b. **Accountability and responsibility:** The pastor or lay project leader and the fellowship shall be accountable to the conference superintendent and the sponsoring agency. The fellowship shall be guided toward becoming a Free Methodist society. A written report of progress and needs for further guidance shall be submitted to the superintendent and sponsoring agency each quarter.
- c. **Membership:** A fellowship may receive members in all relationships and shall report them in the same manner as societies.
- d. **Financial Matters:** (1) A fellowship shall hold and disburse its own funds but the sponsoring agency shall retain authority to audit. (2) Any real property acquired by a fellowship prior to recognition as a society shall be in the name of the conference or the Free Methodist Church of North America, rather than in the name of the fellowship. (3) In the case of dissolution of a fellowship, the accumulated assets become the property of the sponsoring agency. (4) A fellowship is encouraged to give a tithe of church income to conference and denominational ministries as the first step towards full participation in these financial responsibilities.
- e. **Local Organization:** Members of the fellowship shall elect a local board of administration of no fewer than three members, including the secretary, treasurer, and honorary delegate. The pastor in charge may nominate officers or members at-large other than the delegate. The local board of administration may form other boards and committees as needed.
- f. **Duration:** A fellowship shall remain in this relationship no longer than three years unless the sponsoring agency grants an extension. In the event of the dissolution of a fellowship, letters of transfer shall be issued to its members in good standing.
- g. **Conference Relationship:** A fellowship shall be represented in the annual conference by an honorary delegate who shall have a voice but no vote.

3. AFFILIATE CONGREGATIONS

3. Congregations established outside of Free Methodist sponsorship and wishing to become part of the denomination may enter as affiliate congregations.

- a. Authority to recognize: A conference superintendent, with the concurrence of the conference administrative committee, may receive a congregation to affiliate relationship when: (1) the members of the congregation have received adequate orientation to the doctrine, organization, and mission of the Free Methodist Church; (2) a document of affiliation has been signed by the governing board of the congregation, the superintendent, and representatives of the conference, affirming the Articles of Religion and the mission statement of the Free Methodist Church and describing mutual responsibilities; and (3) the members have given public joint assent to the document of affiliation and questions for church membership.
- b. Accountability and responsibility: The pastor and board of the affiliate church shall meet periodically (at least twice a year) with the conference superintendent or designated liaison to review and strengthen the connectional relationship and shall participate in conference fellowship, mentoring, and reporting procedures. The pastor and board shall consult with the ministerial appointments committee of the conference regarding any proposed changes in pastoral leadership during affiliate status.
- c. Membership: An affiliate congregation may receive members in all relationships and report them in the same manner as societies.
- d. Financial Matters: (1) An affiliate congregation is encouraged to contribute generously to conference and denominational ministries as the first step towards full participation in these responsibilities. (2) Staff members are eligible but not required to participate in the denominational pension program during affiliate status if an alternate retirement plan is already in effect. (3) An affiliate congregation which owns real property need not incorporate the trust clause of Paragraph A/856 into its deed until recognition as a society occurs. Denominational assistance for capital improvement shall be in the form of loans repayable if the church chooses not to become a Free Methodist society.

- e. Local Organization: The governing board of an affiliate congregation shall be guided by the *Book of Discipline* and the mission of the Free Methodist Church in its decisions and the development of new ministries but may retain its existing bylaws until recognition as a society occurs.
- f. Duration: The normal duration of this relationship shall not exceed three years from the adoption of the document of affiliation. At the end of this period the congregation would become a society, terminate the affiliate relationship, or request the conference to grant an extension of time for clarification and development of denominational relationships.
- g. Conference Relationship: An affiliated congregation shall be represented in the annual conference by an honorary delegate who shall have a voice but no vote.

4. SOCIETIES

- 4. A society is the term for a fully organized local Free Methodist church.
 - a. Authority to Form: A conference superintendent, in consultation with the conference board of administration, may authorize a fellowship or affiliated church to become a Free Methodist society, when: (1) it has developed a mission statement that is in harmony with the denomination; (2) it has sufficient members, maturity, and financial stability to function in this relationship; (3) it has fulfilled the provisions of Section 2:a:2, 3.
 - b. Financial Matters: (1) An affiliated church must insert the trust clause of Paragraph A/856 into any of its property deeds or articles of incorporation before being recognized as a society. (2) new societies must acknowledge the trust clause requirements in the written document of agreement. (3) The conference may provide a phased plan to bring new societies into full participation in all conference and denominational financial responsibilities as soon as possible.
 - c. Conference relationships: Only recognized societies shall be entitled to voting representation in the annual conference, but members of Free Methodist fellowships or affiliated churches shall be counted in conference and denominational totals for all other purposes.

B. LOCAL CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

¶ **A/402.** 1. A local church is composed of two classes of members*: adult and youth. The steps to membership are found in the sections of the constitution entitled Membership and Covenant (Pars. A/150-160) and Christian Community (Pars. A/350-367).

A business meeting of the members is called a society meeting, and is conducted at least annually. The purpose and agenda for this meeting are found in Paragraph A/402.1 and 402.2.

In instances where two societies are served by one pastor, a combined annual business meeting is provided to elect a delegate to annual conference, and for such other business as the combined societies need to conduct. If the annual conference so desires, a delegate to annual conference may be elected from each society.

New societies should view the organization outlined as a goal to be reached as the church grows and the ministries expand. Some offices/functions may be omitted or combined in such instances.

2. Selecting Leaders.

a. The following boards and committees give substance and direction to the church's goals, bringing together committed Christians who share in ministry—i.e. missions, education, evangelism, or stewardship. They draw up plans or programs that bring to focus the energies of the whole body. Therefore, for the health of the local church, it is crucial that the local board of administration and committee/board chairs be persons of spiritual depth, vital in faith, faithful in church attendance, and in agreement with the doctrine, conduct and mission of the Free Methodist Church.

b. The Scriptures provide guidance for persons in leadership. See Exodus 18:21, Acts 7:3, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, and Titus 1:5-9. Nominating committees and societies should consult these guidelines when considering persons for delegate to annual conference, leadership positions, teaching assignments and public ministry roles. The lifestyle of such leaders shall be in harmony with the Scriptures above and Chapters I and III of the *Book of Discipline*.

1. SOCIETY MEETING

¶ **A/402.1.** 1. The society meeting shall be composed of the full members of the society. Youth members (under sixteen years of age) are ineligible to vote (see Par. A/364).

* An option for preparatory membership is provided. (See Par. A/353, Sec. 2.)

2. The pastor shall be chair of the meeting without vote. The secretary of the local board of administration shall be the secretary of the society. The minutes of the society meetings shall be kept in the record book of the local board of administration.

3. The meeting shall be announced at least ten days before it is held. Absentee voting is not permitted.

Prior to the annual election process, the pastor shall present to the society the scriptural qualifications for lay leadership positions such as those listed in Matthew 20:26-28, John 15:12-17, Acts 6:1-7, and Ephesians 4:1-17.

4. Annual Conference Delegates.

a. The society shall, from its number, elect by ballot delegates to the annual conference according to the provisions in Paragraph A/277. The election of delegate(s) and reserve delegate(s) shall be by separate ballot and shall each require a majority vote of those present and voting. Adult members, with the exception of conference ministerial candidates, are eligible to be a delegate. However, a delegate who is received as a conference ministerial candidate during the current session shall not be disqualified to serve as a delegate.

b. Delegates serve as liaison between the society and its appointed personnel, as well as between the conference and the society. Their primary tasks include: representing the local church at annual conference; participating in conference activities as requested; representing the church to the superintendent; preserving unity within the body by promoting peace and harmony between the members.

c. Delegates are to conform to the conditions outlined for leaders in Par. A/402, Sec. 2:b.

d. Lay delegates are to support the pastor and staff in the planning and promotion of Great Commission strategies.

5. Nominating Committee.

a. At the annual meeting, the society shall elect by ballot from its adult membership a standing nominating committee of not fewer than three and not more than nine persons, plus the senior pastor. The society shall consider persons for this committee who are spiritually mature and who understand and actively pursue the mission of the church.

The society shall determine the size of the nominating committee, the duration and rotation of terms, and any term limits. Nominations to the nominating committee may be received in advance. If so, a form for nominations shall be

provided at least one month prior to the election. The local board of administration shall process these nominations and provide a ballot including all available persons. Nominations may be received from the floor if the society has so determined in advance by a standing rule. The nominating committee may not present nominations for the next nominating committee.

- b. The objective of the nomination process is to identify persons of spiritual maturity, giftedness and fruitfulness in ministry, and to provide appropriate roles for each to participate in the overall mission of the church.
- c. Duties:

The nominating committee shall recommend to the society persons to serve in the leadership roles of standing committees or boards. (This may include two-thirds of the pastor's cabinet [see Par. A/404.3.Sec.1]; treasurer of the society; director of Christian education and the age-level directors; directors or chairs of the board of stewards, trustees, evangelism and church growth, missions, finance and stewardship; and other leadership positions as determined by the society.) Ministry teams of these boards and committees may be nominated by the respective directors or by the nominating committee as determined by the society.

Delegates to annual conference may be nominated by the nominating committee if the society so chooses, presenting at least two nominations for each delegate position for election by ballot (Par. 402.1,Sec.4).

The report of the nominating committee shall be made available to the society at least ten (10) days prior to the election.

6. The society meeting shall elect adult members from the local church to serve in various capacities on the local board of administration, in addition to those named by virtue of office. (See Par. A/402.3, sec. 1).

7. The society meeting shall determine the number of stewards and shall elect the board of stewards. (See Par. A/404.5).

8. Trustees shall be elected as specified in the charter or bylaws or by civil law. (See Par. A/850 and A/851.)

9. The society meeting shall elect the treasurer of the society who shall be an adult member of the Free Methodist Church, who shall keep a record of all moneys raised on the pastoral charge and of the manner in which they are expended, and shall give a full report of it at the annual society meeting. An auditor shall be selected.

10. The society meeting shall elect other personnel to serve the church: a statistical auditor from the membership who shall verify the statistical reports to the annual conference, and the accuracy of the permanent record book of the society; a director of Christian education; a director of children's ministries; a director of youth ministries; a director of adult ministries; a Sunday school promoter; a Five Plus Five director; a missions coordinator; and at least two members at large of the board of missions (see Pars. A/404.1, B/496, sec. 4). When necessary, it may elect a committee to try members in accordance with Paragraph A/745.

11. The society meeting shall elect a pastor's cabinet composed of at least three, but no more than nine lay members, including the delegates to annual conference. The pastor may nominate as many as one-third of the cabinet members. (See Par. A/404.3.)

12. The society shall determine the propriety of incorporating (see Par. A/855).

13. The annual society meeting shall hear reports from the pastor on the state of the church, and from the trustees, the stewards, and various officers and directors.

14. The pastor may call a society meeting. If absent or refusing to do so, a majority of the local board of administration may call a society meeting whenever in their judgment the interests of the church require.

15. *Robert's Rules of Order* in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure in the sessions of the society meetings.

¶ A/402.2. *Suggested Order of Business*

1. Devotions.
2. Seat the secretary (secretary of the local board of administration).
3. Calling of the roll.
4. Election of tellers.
5. Reception of reports from: pastor (state of the church), stewards, trustees, treasurer, ministry leaders.
6. a. Election of a treasurer.
b. Selection of an auditor of the treasurer's accounts.
7. Election of a statistical auditor.
8. Election by ballot of delegates to the annual conference.
9. Election by ballot of reserve delegates to the annual conference.
10. Election by ballot of pastor's cabinet.
11. Decide the number of stewards; elect.
12. Election by ballot of trustees (see Par. A/851).
13. Election of local board of administration personnel.
14. Election by ballot of director of Christian education. The pastor may nominate.

15. Election of directors of children's ministries, youth ministries, adult ministries, and Sunday school promoter.
16. Election of Christian education personnel (if so decided) or authorize election by the board of Christian education.
17. Election of a missions coordinator.
18. Election of a Dime-a-Day director.
19. Election of members-at-large to the board of missions.
20. Election of trial committee (if necessary).
21. Election of a church nominating committee.
22. Decision regarding incorporation (if necessary) (see Par. A/855).
23. Miscellaneous business.
24. Approval of minutes.
25. Adjournment.

2. LOCAL BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION

¶ A/402.3.

1. a. The local board of administration shall be composed of the senior pastor and ministry leaders in the church as determined by the society. It is recommended that there shall be no less than seven, nor more than fifteen members. At least one delegate and one trustee shall be included. It is also recommended that no member, with the exception of the pastor, serve for more than six consecutive years.
- b. In consultation with the conference superintendent, the local church may choose other structures and titles to appropriately reflect operational values and desired outcomes.
- c. Board members shall be representative members of the local church, faithful in worship attendance, involved in ministry, and should also be supportive financially at least to the level of the tithe.
- d. Whenever practicable, the board shall meet once a month. Only full (adult) members of the local church may have a seat on the local board of administration, except that members of an annual conference may serve on the board if the society elects them.
2. a. The pastor shall be chair of the board, except as provided for in Paragraph A/580, Sections 3-4, and when absent a chair shall be elected.
- b. The pastor is a member *ex officio* of all boards and committees.
3. The local board of administration shall work in partnership with the senior pastor to provide vision, general oversight, planning, and coordination of the ministries of the church. The purpose shall be to

stimulate and ensure the furtherance of the congregation's mission and the spiritual growth and development of the entire body. The board shall provide spiritual leadership for the society. It shall seek to be guided by and strive to model the scriptural admonitions found in Matthew 28:19-20; Matthew 22:37-39; Ephesians 4:11-16; Matthew 20:25-28; John 17:20-21; that we may be presented to Christ in accordance with Ephesians 1:22-23; John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 14:33; Galatians 5:22-23; James 3:17; and Hebrews 12:14.

4. The local board of administration shall elect a secretary, an adult member of the Free Methodist Church, who shall also serve as the secretary of the society. The secretary shall keep, in a suitable book provided for that purpose, faithful minutes of the proceedings of the local board of administration and of the society meetings, and shall record all marriages and baptisms.

5. The treasurer of the society shall keep a record of all monies raised and of the manner in which they are expended. The treasurer shall be responsible for furnishing, in writing, a detailed monthly financial statement, and a full report to the annual society meeting.

To safeguard the treasurer, it is recommended that the local board of administration elect tellers who shall count each offering and provide the necessary documentation for the annual audit. The treasurer shall retain all such forms which shall be available for the audit.

It is also recommended that a financial secretary be elected if the size of the congregation and amount of funds handled make it advisable. Duties of the financial secretary shall be defined by the local board of administration.

Upon the joint request of the pastor and the finance committee, the financial books shall be made available for examination.

6. It is recommended that the local board of administration elect from the members of the church a budget or finance committee of which the pastor and the treasurer shall be members, to prepare for the consideration of the board an estimate of the amount needed for the support of the pastoral staff and for the other expenses of the pastoral charge.

7. The members of the finance committee shall see that each member of the society is solicited for the support of the local work and urged to give regularly (weekly, monthly, or quarterly) according to his means. (See Par. A/804 re raising of funds.)

8. The local board of administration shall provide a permanent book in which the pastor shall enter the following information: a complete and up-to-date account of all baptisms, weddings, and funerals; a list of the names and addresses of all members, with time and method of reception, date of birth and baptism, completion of pastoral instruction

classes of each, and time and reason for termination of membership. Each year the senior pastor will oversee the completion of the Local Church Annual Report.

9. The local board of administration shall organize itself to provide oversight for the ministries of the church according to need. It shall give attention to providing leadership for evangelism and church growth, world missions, Christian education, and the spiritual health of the congregation.

10. The local board of administration shall provide for a membership care committee consisting of the pastor(s) of the church and up to five additional members of the church who shall be chosen on the basis of demonstrated Christian maturity, and with representation of both women and men.

Where a separate membership care committee is not feasible, these duties may be assigned to an existing committee which meets the above requirements, such as the pastor's cabinet.

(See Par. A/404.4 for the duties of the membership care committee.)

11. The local board of administration serves as the agency for licensing of local ministerial candidates according to the following guidelines. (See Par. A/520, B/477, 477.1.)

- a. Completion of a course of study designed by the Ministerial Credentialing Service.
- b. Interview and licensing by the local board of administration.
- c. Appearance before the congregation to answer questions.
- d. Presentation of certificate by pastor.
- e. Reporting of name to conference board of ministerial education and guidance and Ministerial Credentialing Services.
- f. Responsible to and guided by the local board of administration and pastor/pastor's cabinet.
- g. Renewal of license annually by the local board of administration (up to four renewals). (See Par. A/520, Sec. 4.)
- h. Recommendation to conference board of ministerial education and guidance for acceptance as conference ministerial candidate.

12. The local board of administration serves as the agency for licensing of lay ministers. (See Pars. A/600-603.)

- a. Recommendation to candidate by pastor/pastor's cabinet of appropriate curriculum of two courses as recommended by the Ministerial Credentialing Services.
- b. Upon completion of two courses, recommendation by pastor/pastor's cabinet to local board of administration that candidate answer questions before congregation.

- c. License granted by the local board of administration.
 - d. Review annually by pastor's cabinet with renewal granted by the local board of administration. Two courses required for seven years, one course per year thereafter.
13. *Robert's Rules of Order* in the latest edition shall be the standard of parliamentary procedure in the sessions of the local board of administration.

¶ **A/402.4.** *Suggested order of business.*

- 1. Devotions.
- 2. Election of a secretary.
- 3. Calling of the roll.
- 4. Reading of the minutes of the previous meeting.
- 5. Election of a committee on social ministry.
- 6. Election of a church calendar committee. (The pastor's cabinet may serve. See Par. A/404.4, Sec. 2:h.)
- 7. Evaluation of pastoral leadership and church effectiveness (every three years — see Par. A/403).
- 8. Inquire:
 - a. Are there any sick?
 - b. What is the status of membership?
 - (1) Have any been received as youth members?
 - (2) Have any been received as preparatory members?
 - (3) Are converts and youth members receiving instruction in Christian living and church membership?
 - (4) Are there any youth members whose terms of training have expired?
 - (5) Have any been received into adult membership?
 - (6) Have any been received into associate membership? (See Par. A/365.)
 - (7) Have any died?
 - (8) Have any been otherwise removed?
 - c. Are there any violating our rules of church membership who will not be reprovved?
 - d. Are there any persons to be recommended as local ministerial candidates?
 - e. Are there any persons to be recommended to be licensed as conference ministerial candidates? (See Pars. A/520, B/477.1.)
 - f. Are there any local ministerial candidate's licenses to be renewed?
 - g. Are there any lay minister's licenses to be granted? to be renewed?

- h. When, where, and how should we begin a church planting project?
- i. Have any been married or baptized?
- j. Report of the board of Christian education.
- k. Treasurer's report:
 - (1) Amount raised as ordered by the conference.
 - (2) Amount raised for pastoral support.
 - (3) Amount raised for United Ministries for Christ.
 - (4) Report of other money received and disbursed.
 - (5) Balance in the treasury.
- l. Are there any claims to be presented?
- m. Is there any unfinished business, or are there any committees to report?
- n. Is there any new business, or are there any committees to be appointed?
- o. Reports of department heads:
 - (1) The president of the Women's Ministries International.
 - (2) The president of the Men's Ministries International.
 - (3) The board of stewards.
 - (4) The board of trustees.
- p. Are there any vacancies in the board of trustees?
- q. Is the title to the church property secure?
- r. Are the legal documents for this pastoral charge deposited for safekeeping; and if so, where? Are the official records in safekeeping?
- s. Is the church property insured?
- t. Are the advices and requirements regarding the cultivation of vocal music found in Paragraph A/378 being observed?
- u. Annually at a fall meeting (October, if possible) the pastor, with the aid of the local board of Christian education, shall report in writing the following information concerning members of the congregation, particularly young people who are in college and other educational institutions at home and away from home, and also those in the armed services. It is expected that these reports shall include names and current addresses of those away in school and elsewhere, including names of schools being attended if of collegiate level.

The report is expected to be divided according to answers to the following questions:

- (1) What young people of our church are members of the senior class in the local high school?

- (2) What young people are members of the second year in a local junior college?
 - (3) What people, younger or older, are now away from home in theological seminaries? Give the name of the seminary in each case.
 - (4) What individuals are enrolled in other colleges, universities, or graduate schools, or schools of nursing? Give name of the school in each case.
 - (5) What individuals are now in the armed services, and what are their present addresses?
 - (6) Has the list of seniors in the local high school or second year students in the local junior college been sent to the admission officer of the area Free Methodist college/university?
 - (7) What is being done to extend and maintain the church's ministry to students away from home/church in attendance at college and graduate institutions?
 - (8) What is being done to extend and maintain the church's ministry to those individuals in the armed services?
9. Adoption of the annual budget
 10. Reading the minutes.
 11. Adjournment.

3. THE EVALUATION OF MINISTRY EFFECTIVENESS

¶ **A/403.** 1. Preface. The evaluation of ministry effectiveness is intended to provide input 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 board of ministerial education and guidance as they carry out their work.

The board of ministerial education and guidance functions not only to certify pastors for work in the conference but also to identify areas of pastoral ministry which need improvement and make provision for avenues to bring improvement to pass. Information from the evaluations facilitates this work.

The ministerial appointments committee makes its decisions after reflection on information and opinions from the delegate(s), recommendations from the superintendent, a confidential report from the pastor, and the results from the evaluation.

We encourage all who participate in the evaluation to do so with Christian grace, prayer and fasting, as the Lord may lead.

2. The contents of Paragraph A/403, section 1, shall be printed on

materials used or read aloud.

3. The Evaluation of Ministry Effectiveness.
 - a. A pastoral evaluation will be conducted annually by the superintendent to assist the pastor in setting goals and objectives for his/her ministry. The results of each such evaluation shall be submitted in appropriate form by the superintendent to the board of ministerial education and guidance 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.
 - b. Each church shall undergo an evaluation of its ministry effectiveness every three years with the society participating. The superintendent or designee, with the pastor, will facilitate the evaluation. The results will be communicated to the church, and shared with the board of ministerial education and guidance.
 - c. During the local church ministry effectiveness evaluation, opportunity to assess the effectiveness of conference ministries shall be provided.
 - d. All evaluation tools will be developed by the board of ministerial education and guidance in consultation with the area bishop.

¶ **A/404.** All structures, ministries, and personnel of the Church shall:

1. Reflect these non-negotiable fundamentals of the Free Methodist Church:
 - a. We may not live in violation of the Scriptures.
 - b. We may not live in violation of the Articles of Religion, the Constitution, the Membership Covenant, or the Mission of the Free Methodist Church.
 - c. Our pastors may not live in violation of their ordination vows.
 - d. Our leaders may not lead the church in ways which detract or divert from our mission.
2. Reflect these operational values:
 - a. We are a connectional church. We are strengthened most by our relationships based on truthfulness and grace.
 - b. We believe our mission drives everything we do.
 - c. We proclaim a grace that is free. Jesus said the crowning work of authentic ministry is this: when the poor have the gospel

- brought to them. Hence, the destitute and disenfranchised of the world deserve our particular care.
- d. We strive to make the message of the gospel relevant to our culture by remaining faithful to God while showing love and sensitivity to the world.
 - e. We accept all who come to us, seeing the most desperate sinner with the potential to become a whole and devoted follower of Jesus.
 - f. We see smaller groups and cells within the larger Body of Christ as the best environment for the birth, mentoring, encouragement, and care of new believers.
 - g. We view our local churches as mission outposts. Our pastors are appointed not just to a local congregation and building, but to the evangelization of whole communities, towns, or cities.
 - h. We see ourselves as an apostolic movement. We are a “sent” people, charged with the task of reaching new territories and new populations of people with the gospel.
 - i. We are Wesleyan in our doctrine and in our practice. We value the guidance of the scriptures and the consensus of the Church throughout her history.
 - j. We are to be a holy people. Our conduct and our teaching are to reflect the holiness and love of God. We seek nothing less than the healing of mind, body, and soul of all who come under our care.
3. Produce these expected outcomes:
 - a. Every church a worshipping community
 - b. Every church an enfolding congregation producing disciplined, growing, holy people
 - c. Every church a reproducing congregation
 - d. Every church regularly reaching the lost for Christ
 - e. Every church engaged in our world missionary movement
 - f. Every church seeking justice and showing mercy to the poor and disenfranchised
 - g. Every church organizing to best accomplish its purpose and mission
 - h. Every church characterized by extraordinary intercessory prayer

We recognize the diversity in the Free Methodist Church, therefore we recognize the need of diversity in board and ministry structures to produce our expected outcomes. Ministry settings vary due to size, goals, and culture. The local church is free to structure the boards listed below

in such a manner as to maintain our values while accomplishing the expected outcomes.

4. BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

¶ A/404.1. 1. The local board of Christian education shall be composed of the director of Christian education, director of children's ministries, director of youth ministries, director of adult ministries, Sunday school promoter, and as many assistants as each age-level director may need.

The executive committee shall consist of the director of Christian education, director of children's ministries, director of youth ministries, director of adult ministries, and the Sunday school promoter. They shall all be full members of the Free Methodist Church. The pastor shall be an ex-officio member.

Smaller churches may have a board of Christian education of fewer than five members, but shall work toward the basic age-level structure as ministries are needed and persons are available for each position.

2. The board of Christian education shall submit an organizational plan and list of officers needed for the new year to the annual society meeting. (The organizational plan will take into consideration the size of the church and its ministry needs.) The board may submit nominations for the new board of Christian education to the church nominating committee.

3. Upon authorization by the society the newly-elected board of Christian education shall name all staff personnel for: the Sunday school (including officers, departmental superintendents, and teachers); Christian Life Club; young teen and Free Methodist Youth programs; the variety of adult programs such as those emphasizing family life or for senior citizens; and other programs, such as vacation Bible school, junior choir, and children's church. As an alternative, if a society chooses to elect such personnel, the newly-elected board shall present its nominations to the society.

Leaders and teachers in Christian education should be persons who:

- a. have a vital Christian experience;
- b. are faithful in church attendance and fellowship;
- c. are diligent in prayer; and,
- d. are in agreement with the doctrinal position of the Free Methodist Church;

4. The responsibilities of the local board of Christian education shall include the following:

- a. to provide for administration of all Christian education programs;

- b. to coordinate all Christian education activities;
- c. to promote the growth of the church through Christian education programs and ministries;
- d. to implement denominational curricula for all Christian education endeavors;
- e. to make sure training is provided for Christian education workers, including certification and workers' conferences;
- f. to encourage adherence to denominational doctrine and standards by Christian education workers;
- g. to project, plan, and evaluate total Christian education programs;
- h. to take care that the local church is supplied with library materials; and
- i. to review all Christian education financial programs.

5. BOARD OF MISSIONS

¶ **A/404.2.** 1. A local board of missions shall be composed of the pastor, missions coordinator, representatives of the Women's Ministries International and Men's Ministries International, local Five Plus Five director, director of Christian education, directors of youth and children's ministries, with two or more members elected at large where practicable.

2. The local board of missions shall develop a year-round program of missions education and activities in cooperation with the Department of World Missions.

3. The missions coordinator shall serve as chair of the local board of missions unless the board elects its own chair.

4. The responsibilities of the local board of missions shall include the following:

- a. alert the church to missions prayer needs through such resources as Missions Hotline and *Free Methodist World Missions People*;
- b. promote the formation of missions prayer cells;
- c. inform the church concerning opportunities for missionary service through VISA and career appointment;
- d. forward to the personnel department of Free Methodist World Missions, NA the names and addresses of young people in the local church sensing a call to missionary service;
- e. coordinate all church missions activities and programs for the year; and,
- f. utilize projects and other methods for fund-raising.

6. BOARD OF EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH

¶ **A/404.3.** 1. A board of evangelism and church growth shall be elected by the society to function throughout the year. In smaller churches, the local board of administration may serve as the local board of evangelism.

2. The duties shall be to:
 - a. cooperate with the conference board of evangelism and church growth programs;
 - b. study established patterns of church growth;
 - c. seek practical means with which to apply these principles to the local church;
 - d. prepare growth goals and objectives with time lines to be presented to the local board of administration and the society for approval at the beginning of each conference year, and file the same with the conference board of evangelism;
 - e. submit the above goals and objectives for a quarterly evaluation by the local board of administration which shall report annually to the society, the conference superintendent, and the conference board of evangelism;
 - f. develop strategies to sponsor a church planting project in another part of the city or in an adjacent community. To adopt a church planting project in another area, or share the church facilities to start an ethnic Free Methodist church; and,
 - g. motivate the people of the church to implement these principles.

7. PASTOR'S CABINET

¶ **A/404.4.** 1. Each society shall elect a pastor's cabinet. It shall be composed of not fewer than three nor more than nine lay members, including the delegates to annual conference. The pastor may nominate one-third of the cabinet and shall serve as chair. A lay vice-chair may be chosen to serve in the event of the pastor's absence or to consider congregational complaints when necessary. No meeting shall be held without the pastor's knowledge and consent.

2. The cabinet is to assist the pastor in making his ministry more effective in the following ways:
 - a. serve as a prayer cabinet;
 - b. be available for counsel;
 - c. keep the congregation informed concerning the nature and function of the pastoral office;
 - d. keep the pastor advised concerning conditions within the

- congregation as they affect relations between pastor and people.
- e. serve as a planning committee;
 - f. serve as a personnel committee, offering counsel on staff employment, reviewing compensation, and making recommendations relative to pastoral and staff compensation to the appropriate committee or board;
 - g. assist in selecting suitable supply ministers when the pastor is to be absent, groups for special services, and special speakers, unless otherwise provided for by the local board of administration.
 - h. serve as the church calendar committee;
 - i. serve as the membership care committee when so designated by the local board of administration;
 - j. assist the pastor in counseling and guidance of local ministerial candidates (see Par. A/520, Sec. 1);
 - k. act as consultant to the pastor in recommending appropriate curriculum of two courses to lay minister candidates (see Par. A/600.1(2:b));
 - l. act as consultant to the pastor in recommendation of persons to be licensed as lay ministers upon completion of the two courses (see Par. A/600.1); and,
 - m. review lay ministers annually and recommend renewal to the local board of administration (see Par. A/601, Sec. 3.).

8. MEMBERSHIP CARE COMMITTEE

¶ A/404.5. 1. The local church shall have a membership care committee. It shall consist of the pastor(s) of the church and up to five additional members of the church who shall be chosen on the basis of demonstrated Christian maturity, and with representation of both women and men.

2. When a separate membership care committee is not feasible, these duties may be assigned to an existing committee which meets the above requirements, such as the pastor's cabinet.

3. If cases arise for which the membership care committee can find no disciplinary direction, it shall refer the matter to the conference superintendent who may confer with the area bishop (see Par. A/356, Sec. 3).

4. Duties:

- a. assist the pastor(s) in identifying and recruiting members;
- b. review the membership rolls at least annually;
- c. counsel with members whose conduct and relationship to

- the church may be cause for concern (e.g., the threatened breakup of a marriage — see Par. A/341);
- d. make recommendations to the local board of administration regarding the membership status of those who have been counseled;
 - e. provide continuing ministry to former or inactive members (see Par. A/356, Sec. 4); and,
 - f. perform the duties of discipline prescribed in Paragraph A/740, Section 3-4.

9. BOARD OF STEWARDS

¶ **A/404.6.** 1. Stewards shall be persons of recognized piety who subscribe to the *Book of Discipline*, support their local church, and have the ability to transact temporal business.

2. The number of stewards shall be not fewer than three, and at least two-thirds of the members shall be adult members of the church.

3. The stewards shall be elected by ballot at the regular annual society meeting.

4. They shall have the following privileges and responsibilities:

- a. assisting the society in social ministries by:
 - (1) soliciting help for its needy (and others, within its means);
 - (2) comforting the sick and sorrowing;
 - (3) assisting the aged;
 - (4) initiating the establishment of children's day care centers and schools where practicable;
 - (5) seeking support and encouragement for youth preparing for kingdom service;
 - (6) assisting in the promotion of accredited social institutions as listed in Paragraph B/463, Section 5.
- b. preparing the elements for the Lord's Supper;
- c. working with approved community agencies to minister to human need, keeping in mind always that all of these services must work toward the ultimate objective, salvation through Jesus Christ; and,
- d. performing such other duties as may be assigned by the society.