

CHAPTER V

THE MINISTRY

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CHAPTER V

THE MINISTRY

A. THE ORDAINED MINISTRY

PURPOSE

¶ A/500. A minister is a person called of God by the Holy Spirit and approved by the church to preach the gospel of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and to lead the church in fulfilling the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

PREAMBLE

¶ A/501. 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.

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.

There are four stages to becoming a fully ordained Free Methodist minister. (1) The person sensing the call of God and the church to ministry is first licensed as a local ministerial candidate. The call is tested by service in the local church where initial training begins. (2) Step two involves acceptance by the annual conference as a ministerial candidate. During this period the candidate prepares for the third step, (3) full conference membership. (4) Ordination to elder's orders completes the ordination process.

A person called of 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 the following qualities and skills:

1. SPIRITUAL QUALIFICATIONS

¶ **A/502.** The candidate ...

1. Is committed to Jesus Christ as Lord.
2. Evidences integrity through holiness of heart and life.
3. Displays the fruit of the Holy Spirit.
4. Receives and gives forgiveness.
5. Possesses healthy self-esteem and maintains a positive attitude.
6. Demonstrates faith, creativity and initiative.
7. Respects people regardless of race, gender or economic status.
8. Models a teachable spirit.

2. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

¶ **A/503.** The candidate ...

1. Is called to ministry.
2. Practices spiritual disciplines.
3. Is gifted for leadership.
4. Models a balanced life and a healthy self-discipline.
5. Maintains freedom from addictions.
6. Engages in life-long learning.
7. Submits biblically to authority.
8. Seeks professional and personal accountability.
9. Has the support of his/her spouse, if married.

3. PASTORAL CARE

¶ **A/504.** The candidate ...

1. Loves his/her family as Christ loves the church.
2. Responds appropriately and warmly to people.
3. Embodies a passion for making disciples.

4. Ensures appropriate care for the people of God.
5. Builds up people and inspires hope.
6. Demonstrates interpersonal skills.
7. Resolves conflict effectively.

4. COMMUNICATION

¶ A/505. The candidate ...

1. Handles the Word of God correctly.
2. Calls people to faith in Christ.
3. Understands the culture, community and congregation.
4. Utilizes effective means of communication.
5. Affirms and articulates Wesleyan theology.
6. Prepares thoroughly for public presentation.
7. Persuades people to make godly, life-changing decisions.
8. Challenges in love the status quo.
9. Facilitates an environment of holy worship.

5. LEADERSHIP

¶ A/506. The candidate ...

1. Leads out of personal and corporate prayer.
2. Articulates a vision from God.
3. Sets strategic goals to accomplish the vision.
4. Instills congregational ownership of vision and goals.
5. Mobilizes resources to fulfill the vision.
6. Practices sound principles in accomplishing change.
7. Identifies, attracts and equips leaders.
8. Fosters a positive atmosphere.
9. Participates in the denomination's mission.
10. Promotes involvement in world evangelization.

¶ A/510. These categories and lists of qualities for ministers are intended to assist the entire church in its work for God. Ministers should examine themselves in light of these; conference leaders should publicly review these on an annual basis; boards of ministerial education and guidance should employ these qualities and skills while interviewing, helping and correcting ministers; and conferences should consider them when designing evaluation and reporting instruments for pastors.

¶ A/516. Adequate arrangements shall be made for services to be held during the absence of the pastor at the time of annual conference and/or camp meeting. Local ministerial candidates or lay ministers should be employed for such services if possible.

B. EXAMINATION OF LOCAL MINISTERIAL CANDIDATES

¶ A/520. 1. A local ministerial candidate is a member of the Free Methodist Church who is seriously considering a call to full-time Christian ministry. Before being granted a license the local ministerial candidate shall have been a member of the church long enough to have given evidence of possessing those qualities and gifts normally expected of a Christian minister. Spirituality and good conduct and attitudes are the qualities desired. A local ministerial candidate shall be amenable to instruction, supervision, and related discipline to assure growth in grace, knowledge, and usefulness to the church. (See also Pars. A/402.3, Sec. 12, A/404.3, Sec. 2;j, B/477, and B/477.1.)

2. Licensing as a local ministerial candidate at the local level is contingent upon:

a. completion of a course of study designed by the Department of Higher Education and the Ministry;

b. interview with and licensing by the church local board of administration upon satisfactory answers to the following questions:

(1) When and how did you come to know Christ as Savior and Lord?

(2) What is your understanding of the doctrine of entire sanctification?

(3) Have you experienced the fullness of the Holy Spirit in your life?

(4) Are you open to the call of God to full-time ministry?

(5) What preparations and plans are you making in order to follow God's will for your life?

(6) In what ways do you plan to witness and minister as a local ministerial candidate?

c. appearance before the local congregation and giving satisfactory answers to the following questions:

(1) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and do you offer yourself in service to Him as a local ministerial candidate in the ____ Free Methodist Church?

Answer: I do.

(2) Recognizing that being a local ministerial candidate in this congregation is an important step in confirming the call of God on your life, do you pledge to diligently seek the Lord's will for your life through prayer and study?

Answer: I do.

(3) Will you seek and accept the guidance of your pastor and the local board of administration in order to fulfill these goals?

Answer: I will.

(The pastor will present a certificate to the local ministerial candidate.)

d. The names of all local ministerial candidates shall be reported to the annual conference board of ministerial education and guidance as well as the Department of Higher Education and the Ministry.

3. Upon being licensed, local ministerial candidates shall maintain their membership in a local church.

4. The local ministerial candidate's license is subject to annual review and renewal by the local board of administration. The local ministerial candidate who is not in college or seminary will follow the course of study for lay ministers provided for in Paragraph A/601. After four renewals, if the local ministerial candidate has not become a conference ministerial candidate or is not in college or seminary with that objective in mind, the license will be discontinued. The person shall then be advised to serve in another relationship, e.g., as a licensed lay minister. The local board of administration recommends to the conference board of ministerial education and guidance that the candidate be accepted as a conference ministerial candidate.

¶ A/521. A local ministerial candidate appointed as a supply shall hold membership in the church served.

¶ A/522. A local ministerial candidate appointed by a ministerial appointments committee to have charge of a society may solemnize marriages in that place if civil law permits. Such local ministerial candidates also have the right to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

C. MINISTERS AND ANNUAL CONFERENCES

1. RECEPTION AS CONFERENCE MINISTERIAL CANDIDATE

¶ A/530. 1. Qualifications for reception as a conference ministerial candidate in an annual conference:

- a. must be a licensed local ministerial candidate in good standing;
- b. must be recommended by the board of ministerial education and guidance of the receiving conference after satisfactory interview in accordance with Paragraph A/530, section 3 (see B/477.2 (6));
- c. must have met preliminary educational requirements as outlined in Paragraph B/477.2 and have filed with the Ministerial Credentialing Services a transcript of all post-secondary credits earned and also a Personal Data Sheet properly completed.

2. No candidate who has been involved in a divorce, annulment or dissolution of marriage shall be admitted to the conference as a conference ministerial candidate or in full membership until approved by the Board of Bishops. This shall also apply to a candidate whose spouse has been thus divorced. Divorce prior to conversion shall not in itself bar a candidate from consideration for conference membership.

3. The board of ministerial education and guidance shall examine persons for the relationship of conference ministerial candidate by considering the following:

- a. Is the candidate holy and loving in all personal relationships?
- b. Has the candidate gifts as well as graces for the ministry?
- c. Does the candidate have good judgment, adequate discernment of the things of God, and a proper understanding of salvation by faith?
- d. Is the candidate able to speak effectively?
- e. Does the candidate present the gospel with doctrinal integrity?
- f. Are people convinced of sin and converted to God by the candidate's preaching and witness?

4. A conference ministerial candidate shall be interviewed annually, allowing four years to complete the course of study required for admission into the conference in full membership (see Par. B/477.3). If the course of study is not completed in that time, status as a conference ministerial candidate may be continued only upon recommendation of the board of ministerial education and guidance.

5. At an appropriate time conference ministerial candidate(s) shall

be called before the annual conference, or the administrative committee if so authorized by the annual conference, and the chair shall say:

The leaders and members of this annual conference, having observed your Christian life and conduct, feel you are endowed with the gifts of ministerial leadership. The board of ministerial education and guidance has carefully inquired into your qualifications and has presented you as a candidate for membership. We offer our words of encouragement and congratulations. We know you take seriously this first step on the road to ordination. We expect you to give yourself diligently in prayer and study in preparation for effective ministry. That you may fix your eyes more clearly upon your goal we ask you the following questions:

a. Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and offer yourself in service to Him as a conference ministerial candidate in the _____ Annual Conference of the Free Methodist Church?

Answer: I do.

b. Recognizing that being a conference ministerial candidate in this annual conference is an important step toward full membership and ordination, do you pledge to equip yourself spiritually, morally, and intellectually for the Christian ministry?

Answer: I do.

c. Will you seek and accept the guidance of your superintendent and the board of ministerial education and guidance to fulfill these goals?

Answer: I will.

The president of the conference shall present a certificate to the newly received conference ministerial candidate(s).

2. RECEPTION INTO FULL MEMBERSHIP

¶ **A/531.** When a conference ministerial candidate is under appointment to a church as pastor-in-charge, he/she is considered "clergy" (to maintain a lay/clergy balance) when serving on committees and boards. In all other matters he/she is considered a "lay person."

¶ **A/532.** 1. A minister may be received into full membership and be reported as having a seat in the conference after having been employed in pastoral work four successive years subsequent to reception as a conference ministerial candidate and after satisfactorily completing the required course of study (Par. B/477.3) and giving satisfactory answers to the following questions:

a. Have you faith in Christ?

- b. Have you present assurance that your sins are forgiven?
 - c. Do you believe that purity of heart and life and empowerment for service, through the fullness of the Spirit, is a privilege and responsibility to be experienced by every Christian?
 - d. Do you now possess that cleansing of heart and empowerment for service which accompany the fullness of the Holy Spirit? (If the candidate should answer "no," then ask:
 Will you through study, counsel, and prayer seek this experience until you obtain it?
 Alternate: Will you make this your purpose?)
 - e. Are you resolved to devote yourself to God and the work to which He calls you?
 - f. Do you partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper when it is offered?
 - g. Since you have studied our *Book of Discipline*, will you abide by its instructions?
 - h. Will you endeavor to effectively communicate the message God lays upon your heart?
 - i. Will you see that the children and youth are properly instructed and cared for?
 - j. Will you visit, ministering to those within and without the church?
 - k. Will you recommend fasting and prayer, both by teaching and example?
 - l. Will you promote the Free Methodist Church and its ministries in building the kingdom of God?
2. For restrictions upon the admission of divorced persons, see Section 2 of the preceding paragraph.

3. ORDINATION CREDENTIALS

¶ **A/533.** 1. 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, shall be remitted by the president of the conference for retention and permanent filing by the Ministerial Credentialing Services.

2. 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.

3. 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 separated, the conference, by official action, shall declare them null and void.

4. In the event of the loss of ordination credentials, a certified duplicate copy shall be made available through the Board of Bishops office.

5. After a period of three years, an ordained person not participating 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 Paragraph A/423).

4. TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

¶ A/534. 1. The licenses of conference ministerial candidates and credentials of deacons and elders may be transferred from one annual conference to another. Transfers shall be by means of a certificate of standing from the board of ministerial education and guidance or the annual conference. This certificate is valid until the next session of the annual conference to which the certificate is given.

2. Only an annual conference or its board of ministerial education and guidance 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.

3. A minister who unites with another denomination without having requested or received from our church proper credentials of withdrawal may, upon satisfactory evidence of that fact, be declared withdrawn by a majority vote of the conference.

4. The founding of an unauthorized 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.

5. A minister who is serving a conference and who plans employment elsewhere the succeeding year shall notify the superintendent prior to the sixty-day period immediately preceding the session of the annual conference, or, failing to give such notice prior to the specified date, shall apply to the board of ministerial education and guidance for permission to withdraw from the service of the conference at the close of the current conference year.

5. RECEPTION FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

¶ **A/535.** 1. Ministers from other evangelical churches who desire to unite with the Free Methodist Church may be received according to our procedures, provided that they:

- a. satisfy an annual conference of holding ministerial orders;
- b. give satisfactory answers to the questions which we propose to:
 - (1) lay persons for membership;
 - (2) ministers for admission to annual conference membership;
- c. indicate agreement with our doctrine, discipline, government, and usages;
- d. submit full academic credentials to the Ministerial Credentialing Services;
- e. complete courses in Free Methodist History and Polity and in Arminian-Wesleyan theology.
- f. be certified by the Ministerial Credentialing Services, and by the board of ministerial education and guidance; and
- g. give evidence of appropriate gifts, graces, and usefulness.

2. In determining the level of ordination to be recognized, equivalency is of most importance. No person may attain ordination status more easily by transfer from another denomination than through following the requirements of the *Book of Discipline* for all Free Methodist ministers. The candidates must qualify in full, both academically and in itinerant service.

3. Candidates recognized as deacons or elders shall be given an appropriate certificate in lieu of ordination credentials.

4. We do not recognize the credentials of ministers from other denominations if they have remarried and have a divorced spouse living, or if their spouse has a divorced spouse living, unless at the request of the board of ministerial education and guidance, the Board of Bishops has reviewed and approved admission into the conference.

6. TERMINATION OF CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP

¶ **A/536.**

1. Conference membership ceases when:
 - a. a conference honors the request of a minister to return to lay membership status in a local church and receives the minister's credentials;
 - b. a minister voluntarily withdraws from the conference and

denomination, having surrendered credentials (Par. A/713, Sec. 3d);

- c. a conference allows an accused minister to surrender credentials and return to lay membership in a local church (Par. A/713, Sec. 3c);
- d. a conference allows an accused minister to surrender credentials and withdraw from the conference and denomination under charges or complaints (Par. A/713, Sec. 3e);
- e. a minister joins another denomination;
- f. a minister is expelled.

2. Conference relationship changes when a minister is located, either voluntarily or by unilateral action of the conference. In such instances their membership and voting rights are transferred to the church where they are located while they remain accountable to the conference for their doctrinal integrity and character. (See Pars. A/421-422.)

3. Ministers who leave the church after complaints have been lodged against them and who regain membership by any means, shall not be allowed to exercise any of the functions of the ministerial office until they have fulfilled the requirements for restoration according to Paragraph A/722.

7. SELECTION, APPOINTMENT, AND CONTINUANCE

OF PASTORAL STAFF ASSISTANTS

¶ A/537. The following guidelines apply to part-time or full-time paid local church pastoral staff, ordained or lay, such as associate/assistant pastors, ministers of visitation and outreach, ministers/directors of music, ministers/directors of Christian education, and ministers/directors of youth. These provisions do not apply to short-term appointments of less than four months or to unpaid positions.

1. Selection/Appointment.

When a local church determines that additional pastoral staff is needed, the senior pastor shall consult the conference superintendent before any local action is taken. The superintendent shall represent the board of ministerial education and guidance and the ministerial appointments committee in the initial stages of selecting a suitable person for the proposed position.

The process of selecting a staff member shall involve the senior pastor, the local church, the board of ministerial education and guidance, and the ministerial appointments committee.

- a. The senior pastor shall have the privilege of nominating pastoral staff. They shall be in harmony with the doctrine of

the Church, agreeable with the pastor's approach to ministry, and willing to work under leadership.

- b. The local church shall select a personnel committee which may be the pastor's cabinet, and must include the senior pastor. This committee shall establish a job description which delineates the responsibilities of the staff member. The candidate shall be screened by the committee using conference applications and reference forms, recommend salary and benefits, and present their report to the local church. If the local church accepts a recommendation of the pastor and personnel committee, it shall then forward the recommendation to the board of ministerial education and guidance for approval.
- c. The board of ministerial education and guidance shall review the application and recommendation from the local church.
- d. If the board of ministerial education and guidance approves the recommendation and the prospective staff member is (or anticipates being) in conference relationship, the recommendation shall be referred to the ministerial appointments committee, which shall have final jurisdiction regarding appointment.

2. Supervision.

The pastoral staff assistant shall work under the supervision of the senior pastor, in accordance with the job description. The pastor and assistant(s) shall meet regularly (preferably weekly) for prayer and planning. They shall meet at least once yearly with the personnel committee to review the relationship of the assistant to the senior pastor and to the church.

In case of a problem between the pastor and the assistant, the following procedure is recommended:

- a. The pastor and the assistant shall first seek to resolve the problem themselves.
- b. If they cannot resolve the problem, the matter shall be referred to the personnel committee for counsel and assistance.
- c. If, after a reasonable period of time, the problem is still unresolved, the pastor or the assistant shall request a formal hearing with the personnel committee. The committee shall listen to both the pastor and the assistant and make recommendations for resolution.
- d. If this procedure fails at the local church level, the pastor or the assistant or the personnel committee shall consult the conference superintendent who may convene the board of

ministerial education and guidance or the ministerial appointments committee to take whatever steps are necessary to solve the problem.

3. Tenure.

Appointment of pastoral staff assistants shall be on a yearly basis, ending with the annual conference. An assistant who desires a change shall notify the senior pastor who shall notify the personnel committee.

The assistant shall also notify the conference superintendent and, if in conference relationship, the ministerial appointments committee.

If for whatever reason the senior pastor finds it impossible to work effectively with the assistant, the conference superintendent shall be notified. The senior pastor shall then communicate this information to the assistant, the personnel committee of the church and, if the assistant is in conference relationship, the ministerial appointments committee. The personnel committee or the ministerial appointments committee, as appropriate, may then take action. This shall not occur prior to the annual conference without due cause and process.

If the ministerial appointments committee wishes to appoint the assistant (when that person is in conference relationship) to another church, the conference superintendent shall first consult the senior pastor, then the assistant, the delegate(s) and the personnel committee of the church where the assistant serves.

If the senior pastor is to be moved at the time of the annual conference, the incoming pastor shall be given the privilege of deciding whether to retain the existing assistant(s) or to select a new assistant(s). When such a move is to take place, the ministerial appointments committee shall communicate this information to the assistant and the personnel committee of the church.

D. DEACONS AND ELDERS

¶ A/550. Traveling Deacons.

1. A minister who has been employed in the regular itinerant work for two successive years after reception as a conference ministerial candidate and who has satisfactorily completed the course of study may be constituted a traveling deacon by a majority vote of the annual conference and the laying on of hands of the president. On mission fields, the conference shall have authority to elect to the deacon's office sooner if it is judged expedient.

2. The deacon has the authority to baptize, to officiate in marriage ceremonies, to administer the Lord's Supper, and, when appointed to a charge, to perform all the other responsibilities of a traveling minister.

¶ A/551. Traveling Elders.

1. A traveling deacon shall exercise that office two years before being eligible to the office of elder, except in the case of missions, when the conference shall have authority to elect to the elder's office sooner if it is judged expedient. A traveling deacon who has satisfactorily completed the course of study for traveling ministers (see Par. B/477.4) shall be constituted a traveling elder by a majority vote of the conference and by the laying on of the hands of the president and of some of the elders present.

2. In time of war the Board of Bishops shall have authority to elect to elder's orders an ordained deacon who has completed only a part of the two-year time requirement of Paragraph B/477.4, if approved as a candidate for the chaplaincy in the armed services of the United States and has been recommended by the annual conference.

3. 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.

The elder shall administer baptism and the Lord's Supper, solemnize marriages, and lead in divine worship. When appointed to a charge, an elder shall perform the responsibilities of a traveling minister.

¶ A/553. A ministerial member of a conference who divorces or is divorced by the spouse may not remarry while the former spouse lives until the Board of Bishops reviews the case and determines that the minister has scriptural grounds for remarriage. A minister who marries contrary to these guidelines shall not be reappointed by the annual conference. This provision shall apply to a minister whose spouse has been divorced from a mate who still lives.

No person may be appointed to serve as a supply pastor who does not meet the qualifications of a minister outlined in Paragraphs A/530, Section 2, and A/553.

¶ A/554. 1. In the case of ethnic ministries, where circumstances warrant, upon recommendation of the board of ministerial education and guidance, and upon approval of the area bishop, candidates may be ordained having earned less than the normally required itinerant credits.

2. An ordained deacon may be allowed to serve as acting superintendent or as assistant to the conference superintendent for ethnic districts until such time as a qualified elder is available for the position.

E. EVANGELISTS

¶ A/560. Evangelists are a class called of God to promote revivals and to spread the gospel of Christ abroad in the land, but not necessarily called to pastoral charges or to government in the church.

1. General evangelists devoting full time to their ministry are approved by the Board of Administration. Conference evangelists are those limited by circumstances to a part-time ministry.

2. All evangelists are amenable to the annual conference of which they are a member.

3. No evangelist shall appoint or hold meetings where they will interfere with the regular work of any society, without the consent of the pastor and the superintendent.

F. CHAPLAINS

¶ A/565. The Free Methodist Church of North America provides ministry to persons in special situations beyond the local church, such as in the military, prisons, institutions, and law enforcement agencies, through ordained ministers who are chaplains.

¶ A/566. Ecclesiastical chaplain endorsement procedures and guidelines of the Free Methodist Church of North America are established and approved by the Board of Administration. Endorsement procedures are printed in a *Chaplain Guidelines Manual*.

All ordained ministers wishing to serve as Free Methodist Chaplains in the military, Veterans Administration or civilian institutions must be endorsed by the Free Methodist Church Chaplain Endorsing Agent and approved by the Board of Bishops. Endorsement procedures are approved by the Board of Bishops and printed in the *Chaplain Guidelines Manual*.

¶ A/567. The Free Methodist Church of North America hereby recognizes the association of chaplains, whose name is The Free Methodist Chaplains Association of North America, together with its constitution and duly elected officers.

G. RETIRED MINISTERS

¶ A/570. Ministers may be retired because of failing health, or upon reaching age sixty-five; otherwise they shall be retired at the time of the annual conference following their seventieth birthday.

The question of disability shall be determined by the annual conference, on the recommendation of the ministerial appointments committee.

H. SUPERINTENDENTS

¶ A/580. It shall be the duty of conference superintendents:

1. To look after the spiritual and temporal interests of the churches within their assigned areas; to take charge of societies without pastors; and to have general oversight of the work in their areas;

2. To see that the permanent record book of each society is kept up-to-date and that all other parts of the *Book of Discipline* are enforced.;

3. To visit each church as they deem to be in the best interest of the work. They may hold a local board of administration, a society, or an annual meeting in connection with the visits.

4. To visit a pastoral charge when requested to do so by the local board of administration in an emergency, with power to call a local board of administration, a society, or an annual meeting and preside over it. The requesting pastoral charge shall pay the traveling expenses.

5. To convene and preside over area conventions, workshops, and rallies in cooperation with the interests and needs of the varied organizations of the conference as is deemed necessary and advisable by the conference board of administration;

6. To labor as an evangelist in the assigned area when directed to do so by the annual conference;

7. To promote and oversee the development of specific strategies and to mobilize personnel and financial resources for church planting;

8. To maintain close contact with the conference ministers for the purpose of encouragement and counsel by meeting periodically with them, being a pastor to pastors. The superintendent may assign a mutually acceptable experienced pastor as mentor to each senior pastor with less than four years pastoral experience.

9. To recommend appointment, reception, and change of ministers in the assigned area to the ministerial appointments committee in the interim between the annual reading of the appointments;

10. To suspend a conference appointee according to Paragraph A/713, Sections 2, 3;

11. To see that deeds of lands upon which it is proposed to build churches or parsonages are properly made out and recorded, or that good and sufficient bonds or contracts are given before the buildings are begun;

12. To divide pastoral charges in the interval of the annual conferences, if in their judgment the interests of the work require it and the

pastor and local board of administration consent. They may not appoint a pastor to serve two pastoral charges at once, but may unite an unsupplied one with another with the consent of the local board of administration of the former.

13. To give the bishop all the necessary information of the state of the conference and cooperate in setting goals and framing plans;

14. To be the liaison between the pastor and the general church;

15. To notify the superintendent of another conference before giving serious consideration to the employment of a minister from that conference, and, when possible, to observe the same sixty-day notification rule that applies to ministers in Paragraph A/533, Section 4.

¶ A/581. 1. Superintendents must be elected from among the ordained elders of the denomination upon due nominating process, viz. the annual conference shall designate the board of ministerial education and guidance or a special committee of not less than six plus the area bishop as chair to nominate the superintendent. The incumbent superintendent shall not serve on the committee.

Should the nominating process fail, the superintendent may, by decision of the conference, be elected in open conference without debate or petition.

In overseas conferences the special committee may elect its own chair or the conference may elect a superintendent by open ballot without debate or petition.

2. Superintendents shall be elected by a majority vote for three-year terms, except for special arrangements approved by the area bishop for a shorter term.

3. The area bishop shall assist the annual conference in determining the qualifications desired in a superintendent. A prospective superintendent shall meet the following criteria:

- a. must have demonstrated productive leadership within the past five years of ministry;
- b. must have a favorable result from a job-related professional evaluation;
- c. must articulate a vision for the conference for review and approval by the area bishop and the superintendency nominating committee;
- d. must commit to spending a total of four to ten weeks in leadership training programs on a sabbatical-accountability model during the first two years in a superintendency, as approved by the Board of Bishops and the conference administrative committee;

- e. must commit to attend and participate in training events provided by the church for superintendents.
- 4. Full conferences in the United States are expected to demonstrate fiscal viability by providing a workable budget, including a base remuneration for the superintendent which is at least equivalent to the level of a general departmental director.
 - a. Where such is not attainable, the area bishop shall assist the conference administrative committee in preparing a leadership plan which shall be presented to the Board of Bishops and upon its approval implemented.
 - b. A conference may propose to have a stationed superintendent and/or stationed assistant(s) to the superintendent, in which event the ministerial appointments committee will nominate. Such provision shall not countervene the provisions of Section 4(a) above.
- 5. When a superintendent is elected and accepts office in another conference, the superintendent's membership shall be transferred to that conference.
- 6. Recall shall be by a two-thirds ballot vote by any succeeding annual conference.
- 7. If a vacancy should occur in the office of the superintendent between conferences, the area bishop shall call an adjourned sitting of the annual conference, authorizing the conference secretary to notify the members of the conference, the delegates, or the reserve delegates, of the time and place of such sitting at least ten days prior to the sitting, for the purpose of filling the vacancy and for any other items of business.

¶ A/583. The superintendent shall be supported by the conference to which elected with each pastoral charge contributing its proportion as agreed upon by the annual conference. A stationed superintendent shall be supported by the pastoral charge to which appointed. The conference shall assist when necessary. A conference shall provide for the superintendent's office and travel expenses, whether stationed or traveling.

I. BISHOPS

¶ A/590. 1. The General Conference shall elect by ballot two or more traveling elders as bishops to serve as the pastoral overseers of various areas of the denomination who shall constitute the Board of Bishops. These are to be persons who exhibit exemplary character and leadership qualities, and who embody deep commitment to the mission, doctrine

and theology of the Free Methodist Church. They shall remain in office for the years of the interim between General Conferences and, unless the General Conference decides upon a lesser number of bishops, until others shall be elected in their places. (See also Par. A/436, Sec. 4.)

2. In preparation for the election of bishops, each annual conference's newly-elected General Conference delegation may submit a maximum of two nominees. Due attention shall be given to the nomination of persons having qualifications equal to or exceeding those for conference superintendents (see Par. A/581, Section 3, 1999 *Book of Discipline*), as well as to ethnic, gender, cultural and geographical considerations. A one-page biographical sketch and rationale for each nominee shall be submitted to the General Conference Secretary no later than sixty (60) days prior to the opening of General Conference. The General Conference Secretary shall compile the nominee information in standardized format and distribute, by paper or electronic means, to all delegates no less than thirty (30) days prior to the opening of General Conference. The first ballot for election of bishops shall consist of the names of these nominees and the incumbent bishops.

3. In the event of a vacancy in the Board of Bishops during the interim between sessions of the General Conference, the preceding General Conference shall fill the vacancy with an election held by paper or electronic ballot. Existing rules for the election of bishops by the General Conference shall apply.

4. It shall be the duty of the Board of Bishops:

- a. to organize with a chair and a secretary;
- b. to meet at least four times a year;
- c. to exchange experiences and to counsel and formulate plans for the work of the church;
- d. to group the conferences, except the full conferences of mission origin, into areas, equal in number to the number of bishops;
- e. to assign themselves to the several areas, including the British Isles, giving consideration to making such assignments for the period of the interim between the General Conferences, and to arrange the conference schedules so that, as far as practicable, no substitute other than a bishop will preside at any one conference for two successive years;
- f. to administer the full conferences of mission origin of the North America General Conference. The bishop of the area, in consultation with the conferences and the area directors of world missions, shall designate the presiding officer for the conference; and

- g. to give concerted leadership in the articulation of policy, the planning of strategy, the ordering of priorities, and the evaluation of programs of the general ministries of the church through the Board of Administration.

¶ A/591. It shall be the duty of the bishops:

1. To visit each conference in their respective areas during the year, and, as far as possible, call the pastors and conference leaders together to counsel and advise them in the promotion of the spiritual and temporal interests of the church in accordance with the plan of the Board of Bishops;

2. To form, and be chair of, area cabinets which may meet annually. The cabinet shall be composed of the superintendent and one layperson from each conference, to be elected by the annual conference. Each conference shall care for the travel expenses of its respective members.

3. In the case of a conference of less than six hundred members, or of a conference with membership falling below ten ministers in full membership and/or six hundred members, or any other conference showing continuous loss, the Board of Bishops shall have authority to initiate and recommend corrective measures to the general Board of Administration and those conferences affected.

4. To travel throughout the church at large. To oversee the spiritual and temporal interests of the church, and to labor to promote its purity, peace, and prosperity. The bishops are requested to reside in the area where they serve.

5. To encourage the establishment of new societies;

6. To assist superintendents in personal and professional development through periodic training, giving special training for newly elected superintendents;

7. To suspend conference appointees according to Paragraph A/713, Sections 2, 3;

8. To serve as chair of the ministerial appointments committees of their assigned areas (see Par. A/419);

9. To transfer a minister from one conference to another with the consent of the minister and of the conference to which transferred; provided, that no minister shall be transferred to another conference without a certificate of good standing and general acceptability, given by the board of ministerial education and guidance or the annual conference;

10. To cite a conference appointee to show cause according to Paragraphs A/703 and A/720;

11.
 - a. To assist the area fellowships in the development of national leadership and in achieving the level indicated in the disciplinary standards for new general conferences;
 - b. To form new conferences in the interim between general conferences, as the needs of the work demand, subject to the approval of the General Conference; provided that no new conference shall be formed without the consent of the conferences whose territory is affected, nor without the consent of two-thirds of the members of the Board of Administration; and that no new conference shall be organized with less than ten ministers in full membership and six hundred lay members within its bounds, with exceptions to be approved by the Board of Administration upon recommendation of the Board of Bishops. In the event an annual conference no longer meets these minimum standards, the area cabinet shall make a study of the situation, and submit recommendations for change to the Board of Administration.
 - c. The Board of Administration may prepare proposals to merge two or more conferences or otherwise revise existing conference boundaries and recommend such proposals to the conferences involved and to the area bishop. Changes will be made upon the majority vote of the annual conferences concerned and with the consent of a majority of the Board of Administration. In the event that the proposal is rejected, a written rationale for the rejection shall be submitted to the Board of Administration by the conferences. The Board of Administration shall have authority to revise the proposal if it deems it wise and resubmit it to the conferences. The Board of Administration may send representatives to the conferences to make a full explanation.
 - d. Conferences considering merger or the revision of their boundaries (except as provided in Par. A/427) may initiate discussions with their concerned neighbors keeping their area bishop informed. The bishop shall inform the Board of Administration which may convey its thinking to the conferences through the area bishop if it so desires. Approval requires a majority vote of the annual conferences involved, voting separately, and a majority vote of the Board of Administration.
 - e. Nothing in (b) preceding shall prevent the organization of annual conferences of mission origin out of provisional con-

ferences, the areas of which may extend over the boundaries of other conferences, when such other conferences have approved and all other requirements for annual conference status have been met. For an overseas provisional annual conference to become an annual conference, there must be no less than five national elders and four hundred adult lay members.

12. To preside at the sessions of the General Conference and of the annual conferences, and at the trial of appeals taken from annual conferences, and to decide all questions of law therein, subject to an appeal to the General Conference.

A bishop's decision upon a point of law arising in annual conference proceedings shall be the rule until reversed by the General Conference. When bishops are requested by annual conferences of which they are president to rule upon a point of law not arising in conference proceedings, the question shall be presented in writing, together with a full written explanation of the circumstances out of which the question has arisen and, if there be any, statements by the opposing parties in the dispute; all this information shall later be placed in the hands of the General Conference when the bishop's decision is referred to it. The bishop immediately upon ruling shall appeal to the other bishops for their opinions; and the ruling shall become binding upon them only after they have been notified that at least two of them have concurred in writing and until reversed by the General Conference.

13. To set policies for the credentialing and continuing education of ministers as supervised by the of Ministerial Credentialing Services (Par. B/476, Sec. 1:a);

14. To receive from one whom they have appointed to hold an annual conference a comprehensive written report of all the administrative proceedings which arise in that conference;

15. To ordain ministers who qualify according to the *Book of Discipline*. A credential of ordination shall be presented to each minister ordained, and a duplicate copy shall be remitted to the Ministerial Credentialing Services. The authority to ordain rests only with bishops or their deputies.

¶ A/592. The bishops shall be amenable to the General Conference for the discharge of their official duties. They shall give a state of the work report annually to the Board of Administration. They shall be responsible to the annual conference to which they belong for their Christian conduct.

- ¶ A/593. 1. Bishops' retirement shall be as follows:
- a. at the time of the General Conference following the sixty-eighth birthday;
 - b. following the sixty-second birthday if the bishop so chooses;
 - c. at any time because of failing health. Any question of disability shall be determined by the Board of Administration.
2. When bishops, or former bishops, retire they shall be given the title of bishop emeritus provided they have served the church as bishop for a minimum of six years.

