

CHAPTER VI

LAY MINISTERS AND CHRISTIAN LAY LEADERS

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A. LICENSED LAY MINISTERS

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, effectively used lay ministers in enlarging and edifying the body of Christ. Persons who accept the challenge to consecrate their resources, time, and gifts in active church ministry are encouraged to become licensed lay ministers.

¶ **A/600.** All believers are called of God to serve actively in the ministries of the church. In order to extend the ministry of the local church, lay ministers are called of God and selected by the pastor in consultation with the local church. Lay ministers are members in good standing in the Free Methodist Church who do not plan to become fully ordained clergy. They are persons of good reputation, full of wisdom and the Spirit, who acknowledge their spiritual gifts as given by God and confirmed by the pastor and the local church. They are willing to dedicate themselves to the development of those gifts under the guidance of the pastor for use in the local congregation. These gifts may be used in such areas as worship, administration, evangelism, nurture, social action, Christian education, visitation, counseling, and other ministries deemed appropriate by the pastor.

¶ **A/600.1.** 1. Characteristics

The following characteristics must be evident in the individual being considered for a lay minister's license:

- a. is a person who knows God — in His pardoning and loving grace, desires to seek Him in all things, and demonstrates this desire in manner of life;
- b. is a member in good standing of the Free Methodist Church in that society;
- c. has sound understanding and right judgment in the things of God, proper conception of salvation by faith, and effective utterance;
- d. has evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, with others being converted through their deeds and words; and

- e. demonstrates a willingness to work with the pastor in extending the ministry of the local church.
2. Initial Curriculum
- a. The completion of an initial curriculum of two courses is required of candidates for lay minister's license. These courses shall be pursued in a class or, when necessary, through individual study. In the latter instance, an acceptable, original, 200-word essay summarizing each course must be submitted to the local pastor. Upon completion of the required curriculum, validation shall be made by the pastor to the local board of administration for recommendation for a one-year lay minister's license. Upon the approval of the pastor, courses taken in previous years may be counted.
 - b. The Courses in the Initial Curriculum:
The initial curriculum shall include (1) one in Bible study or practical resources and (2) one in doctrine and Christian living. The initial course in doctrine and Christian living shall be a course in evangelism. The pastor in consultation with the pastor's cabinet shall recommend the appropriate courses to be taken by the candidate.

3. Credentials

Following the selection of the lay minister candidate by the pastor in consultation with the pastor's cabinet, upon completion of the required curriculum, and on recommendation of the local board of administration, the candidate shall respond to the following questions before the congregation:

- a. Do you know God in His forgiving grace?
- b. Do you believe yourself called of God to assist your pastor by exercising your spiritual gifts and graces?
- c. Do you desire nothing but the will of God?
- d. Do you believe in the doctrine of entire sanctification?
- e. Is it your intention to make special use of the designation of lay minister to fulfill the Great Commission?
- f. Are you able and willing to be involved in evangelism and discipleship as occasion arises?
- g. Will you assist your pastor in extending the ministry of the church under his consultation and direction?

Upon giving satisfactory answers to the above questions, the local board of administration shall issue the license of lay minister to the candidate.

The names of the lay ministers shall be listed in the records of the annual conference in the *Yearbook*.

¶ **A/601.** Renewal of Lay Minister's License

1. Lay minister's licenses shall be renewed annually. Two additional specified courses must be completed for each of the first seven renewals. If, at the close of any year, a licensed lay minister has not properly completed both of the required courses, consideration for renewal of a license is to be postponed until both are completed. The pastor shall keep accurate record of the courses completed that shall accompany a letter of membership in case of a transfer.

2. For the first seven subsequent years renewal courses shall be taken in the areas of (1) Bible study, (2) doctrine and Christian living, and (3) practical resources. A course shall be taken from two of the areas during any given year with all three areas covered every two years. After the first seven renewals, renewal shall require the completion of one additional course per year.

3. Each lay minister shall be reviewed annually by the pastor's cabinet with the renewal being granted by the local board of administration. During this renewal process, the following should be considered:

- a. Attention shall be given to a review of the lay minister's performance in areas of assisting the pastor, general spiritual and moral conduct, and doctrinal and ecclesiastical integrity.
- b. Satisfactory evidence shall be provided indicating completion of studies required for renewal.
- c. The local board of administration may revoke a lay minister's license for violation of its conditions.

¶ **A/602.** Each of the courses listed in Paragraph A/600.1, Section 2, and the curriculum requirements for the seven subsequent renewals may be substituted by a college, seminary, or Bible college course, provided such course is within one of the categories listed in Paragraph A/601, Section 2, and that all three categories are represented. Such replacement courses may be approved by Ministerial Credentialing Services.

¶ **A/603.** Annual conferences with non-English speaking constituencies shall be authorized through their conference boards of ministerial education and guidance to establish educational and other requirements for such constituents for the licensing of lay ministers in accordance with their culture and the needs of the annual conference concerned, in consultation with the area bishop and the coordinator of ministerial credentialing services. Final approval rests with the Board of Administration. Evidence of continuing study and progress shall be apparent before renewals of such licenses are granted.

¶ **A/605.** 1. Located deacons and elders (persons holding ordination but not itinerating) shall have their names listed in the records of the annual conference and shall be accountable to the board of ministerial education and guidance with respect to their character, conduct, and doctrine. They shall be located to a particular society by the ministerial appointments committee, and shall function in ministry under the direction of that society (see Par. A/422).

2. A located deacon or elder may be transferred to an itinerating ministry within the conference upon the recommendation of the board of ministerial education and guidance, having given satisfactory answers to the questions of Paragraph A/532 of the *Book of Discipline* and having received the approving vote of the annual conference.

3. Located deacons or elders who relocate into the boundaries of another conference shall approach the board of ministerial education and guidance of that conference requesting that their membership be received. If and when a transfer is effected, it shall then be the responsibility of the ministerial appointments committee of said conference to locate the local deacon or elder.

4. Located deacons and elders shall function as exemplary members of the society where they are located. Neglect of duty, including persistent refusal to participate in the life of the Free Methodist Church when such participation is possible, shall subject them to the discipline of the conference board of ministerial education and guidance. This discipline may include the request for surrender of ordination credentials. However, no located deacon or located elder shall be deprived of ordination credentials without due process.

5. Under section 1 above, located deacons and elders shall be approved annually by the board of ministerial education and guidance, upon recommendation by the pastor and local board of administration of the church where they are located.

¶ **A/606.** Schedules shall be arranged to give licensed lay ministers active, regular, and systematic duties.

¶ **A/607.** A lay minister considering the call of God to become an ordained minister shall be encouraged to become a local ministerial candidate (formerly local preacher) as outlined in the *Book of Discipline*, Paragraph B/477ff.

¶ **A/608.** A licensed lay minister may be given charge of a society by the superintendent and/or ministerial appointments committee, in consultation with the pastor to whom the lay minister is accountable. In such

a case, the lay minister will be under the supervision of the superintendent or a designee. The lay minister then has the right to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper and may solemnize marriages in that place if civil law permits.

¶ **A/609.** 1. A lay minister may be granted a license as a conference lay minister by the conference board of ministerial education and guidance for special service within the conference.

2. Recommendation for such licensing is made by the pastor or conference superintendent to the board of ministerial education and guidance who shall screen and interview the applicant (similar to Par.600.1, Sec.3) and grant the license.

3. Annual renewal of the license shall be subject to continuing renewal as a lay minister by the local board of administration, recommendation by the pastor to the board of ministerial education and guidance, who shall review and grant the renewal.

4. A conference lay minister is not a member of the annual conference unless appointed to the pastoral staff of a local church, in which case the membership is honorary.

5. If appointed as a senior pastor of a church, a conference lay minister has the right to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and may solemnize marriages in that place if civil law permits.

6. The names of conference lay ministers shall be listed in the license section of the records of the annual conference in the *Yearbook*.

B. CRUSADE TEAMS

¶ **A/610.** 1. Superintendents, evangelists appointed by the general or annual conferences, general church executives, and pastors may organize teams of young people for evangelistic or charitable work.

2. The rules and regulations of crusade teams shall be subject to the approval of the conferences involved.

C. CHRISTIAN GROWTH GROUP (CLASS) LEADERS

¶ **A/620.** 1. Christian growth group (class) leaders shall be elected in the last quarter of the conference year. The pastor may nominate, and the group shall elect the leader by ballot. Any member of the society, whether or not the nominee of the pastor, shall be eligible to election as leader.

2. Each leader should carefully inquire individually how the members of the group prosper; not only as to keeping the outward rules, but their growth in the knowledge and love of God.

3. The leaders should consult with those who have the charge of their societies.

4. Let the pastor see that improper leaders are changed by a new election.

5. The leaders should frequently meet one another's groups.

¶ **A/621.** Course of Reading for Christian Growth Group (Class) Leaders

The following course of reading for Christian growth group (class) leaders is recommended by the General Conference in the belief that it will meet a general need throughout the church, and that the few inexpensive volumes therein named will not only edify all group leaders who will carefully read them, but will also increase their efficiency in dealing with those under their care in this responsible office.

Book of Discipline of the Free Methodist Church.

Christian Perfection — John Wesley.

The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life — Hannah W. Smith.

"By My Spirit" — Jonathan Goforth.

Good News Is For Sharing — Leighton Ford.

From Age to Age A Living Witness — Leslie R. Marston

The Holy Spirit in the Christian Life — W. C. Mavis

Christian Holiness in Scripture, History, and Life — George A. Turner

Discipline and Discovery (workbook edition) — Albert Edward Day.

Additional reading:

Expanded Ministry to Adults — C.E. Ministries Series