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**¶815 MINISTERIAL CANDIDATES**

… Ministerial candidates maintain their standing in the conference by an annual recommendation of the MEGaP committee.

Ministerial candidates must be appointed by the conference in order to track toward being ordained or commissioned minister. Once appointed, they may solemnize marriages and administer the sacraments. If a ministerial candidate’s appointment is discontinued, the ministerial candidate credential is automatically withdrawn and the tracking process becomes ‘inactive’. If another appointment request is sent to the Bishop, MEGaP will vote on both the reinstatement of the ministerial candidate credential and the appointment request. If both are approved, the ministerial candidate can resume the tracking process.

A ministerial candidate may be appointed as a church planter upon recommendation to MEGaP from the director of church planting.

# **¶816  SEPARATION, DIVORCE AND THE MINISTRY**

A person who has been divorced or is married to a spouse previously divorced, shall not be admitted to ministerial candidacy, nor to the conference, nor by transfer, nor allowed to be under any type of appointment unless cleared by the MEGaP committee. (See ¶430.2.2.8.). Divorce shall not in itself bar a person from consideration for conference membership, or for an appointment.  
  
When there is marital stress and conflict in a ministerial marriage, ministers are urged to initiate early intervention and to take proactive steps, in consultation with conference leadership, to access resources to receive professional help for healing the relationship.  If the conflict escalates to the point where it is no longer advisable or healthy for the couple to continue to live together and separation becomes necessary, the minister must immediately apply to the official board for a paid leave of absence so that he/she can focus on regaining marital health.

If the leave of absence is granted and the ministerial couple has not reconciled as the end of the leave of absence approaches, the bishop or designate will meet separately with the pastor and the board to assess the advisability of the pastor returning to serve at the church while separated. If it is agreed that the pastor can continue, the pastor will need to agree to an ongoing month-to-month probationary relationship with the local church, the terms of which (e.g. performance/ accountability expectations), will be laid out in writing. If the separation eventually results in a divorce, the following guidance is to be followed.

A minister, who is divorced, must provide MEGaP with a statement of the circumstances of the divorce and be cleared by MEGaP before being considered for an appointment (See 430.2.8.).

He/she also may not remarry unless MEGaP has cleared them.  If a minister’s fiancé(e) has been divorced., his/her fiancé(e)’s divorce must be cleared by MEGaP prior to marrying. A minister who marries contrary to these guidelines shall be subject to discipline and shall not be re-appointed by the conference until cleared by MEGaP.

If the divorce of a minister (or his/her new spouse) is not cleared, he/she is not in good standing with the conference and shall withdraw from and return his/her credentials to the conference.  He/she can be approved for lay membership in a local church.

## ¶852 SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS

## CHURCH PLANTERS

Ministers who are planting churches may be granted special appointments to the setting (neighbourhood, village, town) where they are working to establish a church plant.

## ¶853 SPECIAL RELATIONSHIPS

LOCATED

Located ministers are ordained persons who are not available to be appointed and so are located with their membership at a local church. Once located, they are eligible to vote and to hold office at the local church, and no longer eligible to vote at conference. They shall be accountable for their service to the local church, but, with respect to their doctrine, character and conduct, they shall be accountable to the MEGaP committee.

# **¶860 OFFICE OF BISHOP**

The bishop is elected to serve the church as an overseer. This ordained minister functions as a teacher and defender of the faith, a general shepherd, a pastor to the pastors, and an administrator who by good example and faithful application of *The Manual* assures the order of the church. The bishop is to inspire the church by preaching and being an example of one who carries out Christ’s great commission.

As the national pastoral leader and chief executive officer of The Free Methodist Church in Canada, the bishop’s ministry of leadership encompasses spiritual, governance, administrative and representative dimensions. Overseeing a broad range of persons, teams and activities, the primary responsibilities of the bishop include the development of the spiritual vitality, the administrative effectiveness and the strategic direction of the national church. As chair of the general conference and chief executive officer of The Free Methodist Church in Canada and national leadership team, the bishop guides in the creation of vision and mission for the church today and in the future, leading to the growth and development of the church in Canada.The board of administration is responsible to ensure that a more detailed job description is kept current.

## ¶Process for the Election of a Bishop

A bishop will normally indicate to the board of administration no later than six months in advance of a general conference if he/she does not intend to stand for re-election.

When a bishop declines to stand for re-election or when it otherwise becomes necessary to elect a, the following process will be followed:

1. A bishop’s search committee of no less than four persons will be elected by the board of administration.
2. The search committee will survey all lay/ministerial delegates of the general conference for “suggestions” of Free Methodist ordained ministers to be considered.
3. The search committee will process the suggestions and from a short list, identify not more than three candidates to nominate for election.
4. The nomination(s) will be submitted to the general conference for election. To be elected an ordained minister must receive at least a majority vote.
5. The election shall be completed prior to the meeting of the general conference by a deadline set by the board of administration.
6. The board of administration shall ensure that there is a method to confidentially receive and record votes from the lay/ministerial delegates of the general conference.
7. The results of the election will be reported to lay/pastoral delegates of the general conference.
8. The incumbent bishop will provide orientation to the bishop-elect in the months prior to the meeting of the general conference.
9. The bishop-elect will normally be consecrated when the general conference meets or, if necessary, at another time arranged by the board of administration. He/she will not be employed by the general conference until he/she has been consecrated.
10. The bishop-elect assumes office at the conclusion of his/her consecration.

If the bishop’s office is vacated within six months prior to a general conference, it shall be left vacant for the ensuing general conference to fill.

Bishops shall be amenable to the conference for their character and for the discharge of the duties. They shall report at least annually to the board of administration on the state of the work.

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.

The salary of a bishop shall be raised in the CORE budget. Themanagement committee (with input from the personnel committee) has authority to establish the salary of the bishop. Upon retirement the bishop shall receive a pension in accordance with the Ministers Pension Plan of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

# **¶879 LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING TEMPLATE**

A Letter of Understanding Template is available on the FMCiC website at: <http://fmcic.ca/chapter-8-forms/>

**¶880 TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT**

A Termination of Employment Template is available on the FMCiC website at: <http://fmcic.ca/chapter-8-forms/>