

CHAPTER 5

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CHAPTER 5: CHURCH IN FORMATION, MISSION DISTRICT, ANNUAL CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

¶ 500 INTRODUCTION

In the spirit of the Great Commission, Free Methodists desire to do their part to see healthy churches established in every nation on earth. Every national expression of the Free Methodist Church begins with believers who have come to Christ joining together to form a local church. The Lord Jesus desires to see the multiplication of communities of believers. In time, these local churches need to be linked together in order to bring their combined efforts to bear on the work of establishing a presence in the nation.

The following paragraphs describe administrative structures and procedures for each stage of development. As the Lord Jesus builds his church and the leadership demands on the structures become larger than can be healthily supported, the church will move toward the next stage of development.

¶ 505 CHURCH IN FORMATION

The formation of a core of believers is the first level for forming a national presence for the Free Methodist Church. It usually involves researching options as to where and how to begin. This initial phase of the development of a national presence involves the following activities:

- 1. Organization**
 - a) Membership instruction
 - b) Training of ministerial personnel – 3 courses
 - Introduction to Free Methodism
 - Introduction to Christian Doctrine
 - Inductive Bible Study Class
 - c) Reception of members
 - d) Designation by missionary of pastor/leader for the country

- 2. Development**
 - a) Formation of a lightly structured Administrative Committee
 - b) Development of a financial structure, budget (national and external support)
 - c) Initial steps toward a constitution, legal status and being incorporated
 - d) Discipleship and leadership training of laity and ministerial candidates
 - e) Strategic Plan for expansion developed for:
 - Church growth leading to organized local churches (12 adult members minimum)
 - Church planting/expansion

¶ 510 THE MISSION DISTRICT

When, in the judgment of the bishop and the director of global ministries, a church in formation reaches the following minimum developmental markers, it may be organized as a mission district.

1. Board of Administration formed and functioning
2. At least two organized churches
3. At least one ordained minister

4. A national budget established
5. Progress on the Constitution and legal incorporation process
6. Strategic Plan for expansion further developed for:
 - a. Discipleship and the leadership training program for laity and ministerial candidates
 - b. Church growth leading to organized local churches (12 adult members)
 - c. Church planting/expansion goals
 - d. Viable financial program developed (national and external support)
7. Property purchases and construction of facilities have begun.

¶511 MEMBERS AND OFFICERS OF THE MISSION DISTRICT

1. The membership of the mission district of The Free Methodist Church in <<insert name of country>> shall consist of the bishop (or his designate) who shall chair the annual meeting, the superintendent, the pastor(s) and a lay delegate(s) elected by each of the churches. Each church is entitled to send one delegate for every pastor. Members of the board of administration who are neither pastors nor lay delegates shall also be members until their terms are completed.
2. Two-thirds of the total members seated (ministerial and lay delegates) shall constitute a quorum.
3. The mission district shall meet annually on <<day/month>> unless otherwise arranged by the board of administration.
4. Until a provisional annual conference is formed, the mission district is the only legislative body in the church. It shall have full power to make rules and regulations subject to the limitations and restrictions of *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada*.
5. The mission district shall have general organizational and supervisory powers over all activities of the church in <<insert name of country>>. It shall be the only law-making body. Parliamentary Procedure (Robert's Rules of Order) shall be used.
6. It shall define the responsibilities of the superintendent and elect a superintendent from among its ordained ministers.
7. It shall elect a board of administration, determine its powers, determine the number of its officers and define the qualifications of its members. The term of a board member shall be three years. Board members (with the exception of the superintendent and zone leaders) shall be limited to two terms. To ensure continuity of its leadership, the terms of the members of the board shall be staggered.
8. The officers of the mission district are as follows: The bishop is the president. The superintendent is the first vice president.

¶512 BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION

1. MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the board of administration shall be constituted as follows – the superintendent, two ordained ministers and two lay people. The bishop shall receive notification of all board of administration meetings and minutes and shall be entitled to be present and participate fully without vote in all meetings.

2. AUTHORITY AND FUNCTIONS

- 2.1 The board shall have general organizational, promotional and supervisory powers over all

- activities of the Free Methodist Church. The board members who are trustees of the Trust (by virtue of their offices) have supervisory powers over all property of the Trust (movable and immovable) and over its bank accounts. (See ¶518.)
- 2.2 It shall meet quarterly, the times and locations to be determined by the board. A majority of the members elected shall constitute a quorum.
 - 2.3 The Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Bishop shall constitute the trustees of the Trust known as Free Methodist Church.
 - 2.4 The board, in consultation with the presiding bishop, shall have the power to accept resignations, remove any of its members “for cause” and fill any vacancies however created in the interim between the Mission District meetings. If a board member is also a trustee of the Trust by virtue of his or his/her office and he/she is removed from the board, he/she is also automatically removed as a trustee of the Trust.
- Likewise, a board member automatically becomes a trustee of the Trust, if he/she is elected to one of the following positions on the board: Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer. The presiding bishop, by virtue of his/her office is automatically a trustee of the Trust.
- 2.5 If the office of superintendent becomes vacant for any reason, a new superintendent shall be elected at a special sitting of the mission district except for vacancies occurring in the last three months preceding a mission district meeting.
 - 2.6 The board shall have the responsibility to determine the number of staff members to be employed by the mission district, to define the general duties and responsibilities of these positions, to hire such staff members and, if necessary, remove them for cause.
 - 2.7 The board shall have general oversight of the financial resources of the Corporation of The Free Methodist Church in <<insert name of country>>, prepare annual budgets for approval by the mission district and act as administrators of the Ministers’ Pension Plan. It shall annually publish a financial statement outlining the assets, liabilities, and financial standing of the corporation of The Free Methodist Church in <<insert name of country>>. The financial statement, together with supporting documents, shall be subject to a financial review by an external reviewer who shall submit his/her report to the mission district and to the Free Methodist Church in Canada.
 - 2.8 If a church does not have the personnel and financial resources needed to carry out an effective ministry plan, or is unable to elect an official board, the board will direct the zonal leader of that church to enter into discussions about taking steps to close the church.
 - 2.9 The board shall also have the authority to declare the property of a closed church or any national church property as surplus property. It shall sell or otherwise dispose of such property in accordance with the laws of <<insert name of country>>. The proceeds of such sale shall be used as directed by the board (in consultation with the FMCiC), provided they are first applied to clearing any remaining debts related to the property.
 - 2.10 The board shall be involved in the discipline of lay and ministerial members and congregations as provided for in chapter nine of this Manual. If a minister is suspended, he/she must return movable property to the Free Methodist Church and vacate immovable premises according to the conditions of the Property Waiver Agreement he/she signed.

3. OFFICERS OF THE BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION

The officers of the Board of Administration are the superintendent (chair), vice-chair, secretary, and treasurer. When employees of the mission district participate in meetings of the board of administration, they do so without a vote.

¶513 MINISTERIAL EDUCATION GUIDANCE AND PLACEMENT (MEGAP) COMMITTEE

1. MEMBERSHIP

The mission district shall elect a national MEGaP committee composed of the following: the superintendent, an ordained minister and a lay person from each zone. The bishop and the superintendent shall receive notification of all MEGaP meetings and minutes. The superintendent shall serve as chair in the absence of the bishop.

2. AUTHORITY AND FUNCTIONS

- 2.1 The committee shall assist the superintendent in the recruiting, interviewing, screening and evaluation of ministerial candidates in each zone.

Candidates for ministerial candidacy shall be screened at the time of the teaching of the “Heart of Free Methodism” course.

Ministerial candidates applying for ordination shall be interviewed a team composed of the superintendent, zone leader and two lay people from the zone. This committee shall make ordination recommendations to the board of administration which shall have authority to approve candidates for ordination.

When a candidate is being interviewed, his/her pastor shall participate in the interview if possible. If a pastor is the candidate, his/her board chair shall participate in the interview if possible.

It shall be available to counsel ministers in personal growth and professional advancement.

- 2.2 The committee shall consider the character and performance of each minister and report to each session of the mission district.

- 2.3 The committee shall appoint ministers to their various ministries, in consultation with the bishop, superintendent and pastoral leadership task forces. The process for changes of appointments is described in the “Transitions Handbook for Churches.” The MEGaP committee shall have the authority to make changes in appointments without the request of the local society when this is deemed to be in the best interest of the local church or pastor.

- 2.4 A minister may be appointed to a church without being given charge of that church. In such cases, the church shall be listed “under the superintendent” who shall assume responsibility for its administration.

Any minister who refuses to serve when appointed shall not be appointed by another conference without the approval of the MEGaP committee.

The MEGaP committee may grant a leave of absence to any ordained minister. If not restored to active ministry after a two-year leave of absence, the minister's membership shall be located to a local church (see ¶845). Located ministers may be restored to active ministry by the MEGaP committee. Leave of Absence appointments shall designate the reason for a leave of absence (e.g. illness, education, secular work, personal reasons).

Located Ministers have the place of their membership determined by the MEGaP committee. In the process, the minister and official board of the church involved shall be consulted.

The MEGaP committee shall rule on divorce cases related to persons preparing for or involved in ordained ministry. (See ¶816) The superintendent shall appoint a Divorce Review Committee of four MEGaP members to assist with the preparation of recommendations related to divorce cases.

¶514 NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The mission district shall elect a nominating committee (normally a minister and a layperson from different churches in each zone) who are not members of another standing board/committee of the mission district elected to a three year term. The superintendent shall be an ex officio member of the committee. The committee shall elect its chair, vice chair and secretary.

¶514.1 Election of the Nominating Committee

The Zone Leaders will consult in advance with local pastors regarding gifted and credible candidates. The Zone Leaders and superintendent will then present a slate of nominees to the nominating committee from the zones.

In the District Meeting, an opportunity will be given for nominations from the floor (after the nominations from the superintendent and Zone Leaders are presented) provided that the nominator has the permission of the person being nominated.

To ensure continuity, nominating committee members' terms will be staggered.

¶ 515 ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

The superintendent 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 superintendent 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 <<insert name of country>>, the superintendent'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 superintendent include the development of spiritual vitality, effective administration and the strategic direction of the national church. The superintendent 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 <<insert name of country>>. The following serves as a general job description:

THE SUPERINTENDENT:

- a) is an ordained minister elected by the mission district. His/her term shall be for three years. He/she may be re-elected. There is no limit to the number of terms.

- b) Each term of office shall be until the closing of the annual meeting of the mission district at which his/her successor is elected.
- c) is directly responsible to the bishop, mission district and it's BOA.
- d) is *primarily* responsible to:
 - Oversee and assist with the work of the BOA and the Zone Leaders;
 - Be the national vision caster through strategic planning, policy development, public ministry and use of media;
 - Represent the denomination at (inter)denominational events;
 - Oversee the MEGaP committee – the recruiting, interviewing, screening and evaluation of ministerial candidates of the mission district, the recommendation of candidates for ordination, the professional development of ministry personnel and, when necessary the discipline of pastors.
 - Fulfill other responsibilities assigned by *The Manual* or the BOA.
 - Assist in a local church situation when requested by the church or a zonal overseer.
 - May only be removed from office by disciplinary action or by a majority non-confidence vote of the mission district.

¶516 ROLE OF THE ZONE LEADER

Zone leaders are mature pastors who willingly and sacrificially work as team members with the Superintendent to oversee the ministry of the Free Methodist Church in Sri Lanka.

- They are elected to a three-year term by their zone caucus during the meeting of the Mission District.
- They may be re-elected; there is no term limit.
- They are trained and resourced by the superintendent and bishop.

They are responsible to cultivate an environment to see The Free Methodist Church in Sri Lanka's common vision being fulfilled:

- They build relationships among the pastors in the zone through pastors meetings.
- They work with the pastors and lay people to plan zone rallies to build relationships among the churches.
- They promote and actively encourage people to participate in:
 - the annual Elders Meeting
 - the annual Family Camp and Mission District meetings
- They support the work of the Communication Representative in their zone to receive and pass on communication to the zone and from the zone.
- They support the work of the Ministerial Education Guidance and Placement Committee by arranging interviews for candidates for the ministry from their zone. They serve on the zone interview team with the superintendent and two lay people.
- They are the relational contact point for the superintendent. They regularly report to him on the health of the pastors and local churches and advise him of pastors and churches who need his attention.
- Under the leadership of the superintendent, they build relationships with churches that want to affiliate with the Free Methodist Church in Sri Lanka and give coaching during the process of affiliation.

¶517 FUNDING

Each church in The Free Methodist Church in <<insert name of country>> shall contribute XX% of its general operating income to fund the operations of the Mission District.

For this purpose (only) the local church general operating income is defined to include all donations to the local society, MINUS funds raised for:

- a) Programs in support of church planting
- b) Special short-term fund raising programs for local church projects
- c) Funds raised for special ministry programs outside of the local church (funds transferred to other Christian organizations).
- d) Bequests

¶518 MOVABLE AND IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

1. All movable and immovable property of the mission district is owned and managed by the Trust known as the Free Methodist Church. The trustees of the Trust are the following members of the board of administration: chair, vice chair, secretary, treasurer. The presiding bishop is also a trustee.
2. The Trust shall have the legal authority to act on behalf of the mission district in all matters pertaining to administration and management of the properties (movable and immovable) and the bank accounts of the mission district.
3. By a majority vote of its members, the trustees of the Trust (with the knowledge of the presiding bishop) have the authority:
 - 3.1 To approve, remove and replace signatories for its bank account.
 - 3.2 To take action (with or without notice according to the circumstances) to retrieve the Trust's movable property.
 - 3.3 To approve who may occupy the properties of the Trust and to evict those previously approved to occupy its properties and to remove the movable property of an occupant(s) from the Trust's immovable property.
4. The Trust shall have the power to mortgage, lease, sell or otherwise encumber the real property of the mission district. Financial actions by the board of administration in excess of XXXX shall require the consent of the mission district.

¶520 PROVISIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCES

The Board of Administration of the FMCiC upon the recommendation of the bishop and the director of global ministries, may approve the formation of a provisional annual conference from a mission district, when it has adopted *The Manual of the FMCiC* in principle, has filed the appropriate governmental registration and documents (constitution adapted to local culture and circumstances) and has reached the following minimum developmental markers:

1. 5 organized churches
2. 5 ordained ministers
3. 300 adult members
4. A Manual is being drafted
5. A functioning Board of Administration, MEGaP Committee and Nominating Committee
6. A Strategic Plan and track record that demonstrates the existence of the following:
 - a) Discipleship and the leadership training programs for laity and ministerial candidates
 - b) Church growth leading to healthy organized local churches as evidenced by their ability:
 - to care for the people/members
 - to support their pastors
 - c) Church planting/expansion goals

- d) Financial structures – a viable budget (national and external support)
 - a clear strategy for becoming auto-sufficient in finances, stewardship
- e) Missions goals
- 7. Property purchases and construction of facilities

¶530 ANNUAL CONFERENCES

When a provisional annual conference has fulfilled the following requirements and has reached the stage where it has a *Manual* that has been approved by the Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church in Canada and has demonstrated that it is able to operate satisfactorily under *its Manual*, it shall approved as an annual conference.

It has:

1. 10 organized churches
2. 10 ordained ministers
3. 600 adult members
4. A *Manual* approved by the Free Methodist Church in Canada
5. A functioning Board of Administration, MEGaP Committee Nominating Committee
6. A Strategic Plan and track record that demonstrates the healthy existence of the following:
 - a) Discipleship and the leadership training programs for laity and ministerial candidates
 - b) Church growth leading to healthy organized local churches as evidenced by their ability:
 - to care for the people/members
 - to support their pastors
 - c) Church planting/expansion goals
 - divided into districts for greater growth and use of human resources
 - d) Financial structures – viable budget
 - an established track record in pastoral support
 - auto-sufficiency in finances, stewardship
 - e) Missions
7. Property purchase and construction of facilities

¶ 540 PROVISIONAL GENERAL CONFERENCE

Requirements for forming a provisional General conference are found in ¶221 and those for a general conference in ¶222.

To prepare for a new provisional general conference, the Bishop of the Free Methodist Church in Canada shall form a provisional general conference task force of the superintendents, lay representatives from the participating annual conferences and the global missions director to prepare a provisional general conference proposal. It shall be presented to the participating annual conferences for adoption in principle

The Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church in Canada shall elect an ordained minister(s) who is a national citizen of the country of the provisional general conference as a suffragan bishop(s) from the nominee(s) presented by the annual conferences of that country. The suffragan bishop(s) oversees his/her provisional general conference under the supervision and counsel of the Bishop of the Free Methodist Church in Canada.

The size and composition of the provisional general conference and its Board of Administration shall be recommended by the provisional general conference task force and be approved by the Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church in Canada.