

The Free Methodist Church – USA

2019 Book of Discipline

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock
of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.
Be shepherds of the church of God, which
he bought with his own blood”
(Acts 20:28).

2019 BOOK OF DISCIPLINE



free methodist
church, USA

of heart” as the ultimate marriage killer – because either it causes destructive behavior or refuses the grace that can heal and reconcile. And, third, He refuses to support the common assumption that in some cases one partner has a right (i.e., enjoys freedom) simply to walk away. Whatever the particulars, Jesus offered grace that heals and empowers people to live according to God’s plan – to move from their sin to a life that pleases God.

E. **Care after Divorce, Singleness and Remarriage**

When a marriage fails, the church seeks to restore people from the trauma of their divorce by inviting its members into a process of restoration (see paragraphs 7110-7130). Godly counsel that promotes full equality will help people understand what happened in their marriage; specifically, where they may have contributed to the failure and how they have been wounded by it. Sinful relational patterns will be exposed, forsaken, and replaced with Spirit-directed and Christ-centered patterns. The damage to children, the larger families, and their witness to Christ will also be acknowledged and where possible restitution will be made.

Persons who have suffered the trauma of divorce must exercise extreme caution when considering remarriage. Unless they have experienced healing and restoration from their failure in marriage, they will likely fail again. In some cases, wisdom will insist upon remaining single and free to live in devotion only to Christ.

One who has been divorced shall not by that fact alone be denied the privileges and responsibilities of a future marriage in the Lord. The grace that brings correction, conviction, repentance, faith, healing, and restoration can make all things new, even for a Christian whose sin may have broken a marriage. When grace restores the brother or sister who has failed, the plan God has for human well-being reopens, even the possibility of remarriage.

F. **Refusal of Counsel**

When a member divorces a spouse or remarries without seeking the counsel or following the guidance of the pastor or the Membership Care Committee, the committee shall review the case and recommend appropriate action to the local Board of Administration. Corrective action shall include removal from leadership, and may include suspension, or expulsion from membership.

Exceptional cases may arise for which the pastor or the Membership Care Committee can find no explicit direction in this *Book of Discipline*. In such cases, the pastor, after consultation with the Membership Care Committee, shall confer with a superintendent.

E. Pastors are encouraged to preach on the subject of practical charity, receiving offerings and providing opportunities for financial support. These offerings are to be used for the relief of the poor in that society or sent to an accredited human service ministry.

Educational Institutions

¶4800+ Educational institutions are responsible for promoting and helping to maintain adequate opportunity for college and graduate training of the people of the Free Methodist Church.

Denominational Institutions

¶4810+ The Free Methodist Church – USA recognizes as Denominational Institutions those colleges and universities whose commitments are consistent with the history, theology, mission and character of the Free Methodist Church.

A. Leadership Commitments

1. The president shall be a member of the Free Methodist Church who actively seeks to create a Free Methodist presence in the life and leadership of the institution.
2. The chief academic officer shall be a member of the Free Methodist Church, or one who is in both conviction and spirit committed to Wesleyan theology and perspectives.

B. Mission Commitments

1. The Free Methodist educational institutions shall have articles of incorporation, bylaws or other appropriate governance documents which:
 - a. identify the college or university as a private institution of evangelical higher education affiliated with the Free Methodist Church - USA;
 - b. define the relationship of the institution to the churches and conferences of the Free Methodist Church – USA; and,
 - c. specify Free Methodist Church - USA representation in the governing board.
2. The Free Methodist educational institutions shall have a Wesleyan statement of faith consistent with Free Methodist Church - USA doctrine which boards of trustees and executive leaders agree shall guide the policies of the institution.
3. The Free Methodist educational institutions shall have a mission statement which includes an institutional priority to serve as an educational resource for the advancement of

Christianity through the Church.

4. The Free Methodist educational institutions shall have a statement of lifestyle expectations for the campus community, which is consistent with the principles and practices of the *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church - USA.
- C. Connectional Commitments
1. All trustees shall be committed Christians of whom no less than twenty-five percent shall be members of the Free Methodist Church.
 2. No less than ten percent of faculty shall be members of the Free Methodist Church.
 3. The school, division or department of religion shall have a majority of full-time faculty who are members of the Free Methodist Church or sister Wesleyan denominations with all members affirming Wesleyan theology and the Articles of Religion of the Free Methodist Church as its educational focus.
 4. The Religion Department chair shall be Free Methodist or thoroughly Wesleyan.
 5. The institutions shall offer courses in Free Methodist history, government, mission and theology.
 6. The relationship to and presence of bishops and denominational leaders shall be defined.
 7. The institutions shall have an intentional plan for Free Methodists to speak at chapel, colloquia and events.
 8. The institutions shall participate in the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions.

D. Recognition Process

Based upon an application to the Free Methodist Church - USA Board of Administration in the year prior to General Conference, an institution of higher education which meets these leadership, mission and connectional commitments may be endorsed as a Denominational Institution. Denominational institutions shall be recognized at each General Conference.

Affiliated Institutions

¶4820+

- A. Other institutions of higher education may apply to the Board of Administration for endorsement as affiliated institutions. The minimal expectations for this relationship shall be that:
1. the institution shall have Free Methodist representation on the Board of Trustees, administration and faculty; and

2. provision shall be made for instruction in Free Methodist curricula of concern: i.e. Free Methodist history, doctrine, polity, mission and vision.
 3. All instruction shall be in harmony with and conformity to the teachings of the Scriptures and the Free Methodist Articles of Religion.
 4. The task of nurturing a Free Methodist presence on the campus, by welcoming Free Methodist clergy, educators, leaders and innovators to speak at chapel, colloquia and special events shall be assigned.
- B. Based upon an application to the Free Methodist Church - USA's Board of Administration in the year prior to General Conference, an institution of higher education, which meets these criteria may be endorsed as an Affiliated Institution.

Associate Institutions

¶4830+

- A. Other institutions (see Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions Constitution and Bylaws) may apply to the annual meeting of the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions (see ¶4850) for endorsement as Associate Institutions. The minimum expectations for this relationship shall be:
1. The institution shall have Free Methodist representation on the Board of Trustees.
 2. The institution's instruction shall be in harmony with and conformity to the teachings of the Scriptures and the Free Methodist Articles of Religion.
 3. The institution's mission shall connect to and support the mission of the Free Methodist Church - USA.

- B. Based upon a letter of request, with substantiating documents regarding how it meets these criteria, the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions, at its annual meeting may endorse such an institution as an Associate Institution.

Educational Funds

- ¶4840+ All educational endowment funds, including the permanent endowment fund, designated to educational institutions (including John Wesley Seminary Foundation) and such as may be raised or otherwise received for the Educational Endowment Fund, shall be held for investment as directed by the Board of Administration. The income shall be distributed annually to the Free Methodist denominational schools in the United States as directed by the Board of Administration. When funds are available for operating budgets or capital projects, the Board of Administration shall determine the appropriation for each

school according to the numeric enrollment of full-time Free Methodist students in those institutions.

The Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions ¶14850+

- A. The denomination sponsors an association for denominational institutions of higher education: to advance their common mission as Free Methodist schools, to explore cooperative programs, and to define and maintain the quality of their relationship with the denomination.
- B. Denominational institutions shall be represented by the president and the chairperson of the Board of Trustees, each having one vote.
- C. Affiliated institutions shall be represented by the president and a Free Methodist member of the Board of Trustees. Each Affiliated Institution shall have one vote.
- D. Associate institutions shall participate as honorary members, having voice without vote.

John Wesley Seminary Corporation ¶14860+

- A. The John Wesley Seminary Corporation, doing business as John Wesley Seminary Foundation, offers scholarship aid for the post-college training of persons for the pastoral ministry and other types of Christian service within the Free Methodist Church - USA. This corporation shall be incorporated to secure the rights and privileges belonging to such educational foundations.
- B. The Board of Administration shall constitute the membership of the John Wesley Seminary Corporation.
- C. John Wesley Seminary Corporation shall be supported by the General Church Budget and special project funds, as approved by the Board of Administration.

Auxiliary Organizations

Men's Ministries Internationals

¶14900+ Men's Ministries International of the Free Methodist Church is recognized as an auxiliary of the Free Methodist Church – USA, and is governed by its own constitution and bylaws.

Women's Ministries International

¶14910+ Women's Ministries International of the Free Methodist Church is an incorporated ministry governed by the Board of Administration.

In the following chapter, paragraph numbers and section letters with a plus sign + beside them indicate those items which may be changed by the Board of Administration. All others may be changed only by the General Conference.

Chapter 9

Appendices¹

Articles of Incorporation of the Free Methodist Church of North America

¶19000 Under the Laws of California² Office of the Secretary of State

Know All Men By These Presents:

That we, the undersigned, a majority of whom are citizens and residents of the State of California, have this day voluntarily associated ourselves together for the purpose of forming a corporation under Title XII, Article I of the Civil Code of the State of California.

And We Hereby Certify:

1. That the name of the corporation shall be The Free Methodist Church of North America³
- 2.+ That the purposes for which it is formed are religious, and charitable, and especially:

To conduct religious services; to cultivate social intercourse among its members and assist in improving and ameliorating the moral and social conditions of humanity; to purchase, own,

¹ The 1999 *Book of Discipline* Appendices included several forms (Application for Permission to Sell or Mortgage Church Property, Declaration of Trust, Suggested Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws and several ministerial and lay licenses, etc.) that may now be found in the Pastors and Church Leaders Manual. The historical documents on the Free Methodist Church including the historical Constitution of the Free Methodist Church of North America, General Rules, and The Ministry, may be found in previous editions of the Free Methodist Church of North America *Book of Discipline* and on the website: fmcusa.org.

² Editor's Historical Note (1943). Originally the church was incorporated under the laws of the state of New York, April 30, 1873, as "The Free Methodist General Conference of North America." The General Conference of 1916 authorized the board of trustees of the General Conference to incorporate in the state of Illinois. Pursuant to this order, a charter was granted by the state of Illinois, December 2, 1915, under the title "The Board of Trustees of the Free Methodist Church of North America." This incorporation was approved by the General Conference of 1919 and was duly authorized to assume all the duties and exercise the prerogatives of the original incorporation. The General Conference of 1931 ordered a consolidation of the several boards into a Board of Administration. The General Conference of 1935 authorized the Board of Administration to form a new incorporation. Pursuant to this order, a corporation known as "The Free Methodist Church of North America" was formed in 1937, whose articles of incorporation are set forth above.

³ Although the Church's corporate name is The Free Methodist Church of North America, by action of the Board of Administration (April 2011) the Church now does business as The Free Methodist Church – USA.

sell, mortgage, and lease real estate and other property as may be necessary for the purposes of this corporation; to receive donations, to receive, manage, take, and hold real and personal property by gift, grant, devise, or bequest, and to sell or dispose of the same; and to do every thing necessary, suitable, or proper for the accomplishment of any of the purposes herein enumerated, or which shall at any time appear conducive or expedient for the protection or benefit of this corporation.

To take and hold by donation, gift, grant, devise, or otherwise any property, real, personal, or mixed, in any state in the United States, or in any other country in behalf of and for the benefit of The Free Methodist Church of North America or any of its subsidiary interests, and the same to manage, grant and convey, lease or otherwise dispose of, and to execute such trust or trusts as may be confided to said corporation, the whole to be under the supervision of and amenable to the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America.

To carry on a general publishing and printing business including that of stationers, printers, lithographers, stereotypers, electrotypers, photographic printers, photolithographers, engravers, diesinkers, book printers, account book manufacturers, dealers in parchments, dealers in stamps, advertising agents, designers, draftsmen, ink manufacturers, booksellers, publishers, paper manufacturers, and dealers in the materials used in the manufacture of paper, and dealers in or manufacturers of any other articles or things of a character similar or analogous to the foregoing, or any of them, or connected therewith for the furtherance of the general objectives of this corporation.

To receive property by devise or bequest, subject to the laws regulating the transfer of property by will, and to otherwise acquire and hold all property, real or personal, including shares of stock, bonds, and securities of other corporations.

To act as trustee under any trust incidental to the principal objects of the corporation or for the benefit of any of its members, or members of their families, and to receive, hold and administer and expend funds and property subject to such trusts.

To convey, exchange, lease, mortgage and encumber, transfer upon trust, or otherwise dispose of all property, real or personal.

To borrow money, contract debts, and issue bonds, notes, and debentures, and to secure the same.

To do all other acts necessary or expedient for the administration of the affairs and attainment of the purposes of the corporation including the conduct of any business for profit, providing said profits are used for the objects of said corporation and not distributed to the members thereof.

3.+ That the principal office for the transaction of business of said corporation is to be located in the County of Los Angeles, State of California.

4.+ That the term for which said corporation is to exist is perpetual.

5.+ That it is a corporation which does not contemplate pecuniary gain or profit to the members thereof, and therefore there shall be no capital stock.

6.+ That this corporation shall be successor to and take the property of the following corporations which are hereafter to be dissolved:

The Board of Trustees of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation.

The Board of Conference Claimants of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation.

The Board of Education of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation.

The Board of Church Extension of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation.⁴

This corporation shall also become the successor of the Free Methodist Publishing House, an Illinois Corporation, and the General Missionary Board of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation, whenever the same shall be dissolved and ordered this corporation by an order of the Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church of North America.

⁴ Editor's Note (1943). On October 28, 1943, the Board of Administration of the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America in session at Winona Lake, Indiana, took the following action: That the respective officers of the Board of Trustees of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation, the Board of Conference Claimants of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation, the Board of Church Extension of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation; the Board of Education of the Free Methodist Church of North America, an Illinois Corporation, take any necessary steps or execute any necessary papers for the dissolution of these corporations and to transfer any and all of the assets of said corporations to the Free Methodist Church of North America, a California Corporation, their successor.

7. That said corporation shall be subject to the rules, regulations, and *Book of Discipline* of The Free Methodist Church of North America as from time to time adopted by the General Conference of The Free Methodist Church of North America insofar as the same do not contravene or conflict with the laws of the State of California or the several states of the United States.

The *Book of Discipline*, rules and regulations of The Free Methodist Church as from time to time adopted by the General Conference of The Free Methodist Church of North America shall at all times be a part of the bylaws of this corporation.

8. That the names and addresses of the persons who are to act in the capacity of directors until the selection of their successors, and who shall be known as trustees, are:

<i>Names</i>	<i>Addresses</i>
Claude A. Watson	Los Angeles, California
B.E. Iler	Santa Monica, California
A.G. Ball	Los Angeles, California

That the number of trustees may be changed by a bylaw duly adopted or amended by the members, authority for which is hereby expressly conferred.

In Witness Whereof, for the purpose of forming this corporation under the laws of the State of California, we, the undersigned, constituting the incorporators of this corporation including the persons named herein above as the first directors of this corporation, have executed these Articles of Incorporation this fifteenth day of January, 1937.

Claude A. Watson, B.E. Iler, A.G. Ball