

# Is God calling you into the ministry?

Perhaps you've been wondering for a while if the ministry is for you.

Perhaps you have a strong sense that the ministry is what God is calling you to give your life to.

Perhaps you've never considered it, but someone just gave you this booklet and asked you to pray and think about it!

No matter what your current situation, read on. This booklet will explain to you first steps in the discernment process.<sup>1</sup>

A few words about ministry before we launch into the discernment process:

All Christians are called to love God, love & serve others, and use their gifts within the church and the world. The stirring you may be feeling may be God's invitation to you to dive in to your local church or your community and make a difference. That's wonderful! God needs His people on His mission in every aspect of life.

Some Christians are called to specifically lead the church (or portions of the church). These people must have (or develop) the gifts and graces for this task, and it's this group that should consider the ordained ministry.

This booklet is meant to help you figure out which category you might be in during this season of your life.

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<sup>1</sup> This particular booklet is being used in the New South Conference of the Free Methodist Church (with special thanks to the Genesis Conference, FMC.) Some of it is specific to our system, but much of it will be helpful to anyone considering a call to ministry.

What is a “call” to ministry?

You may have heard the term “a call to ministry.” Some people think that this means a person has to hear a voice from God or see a sign in the sky. Other people think it simply means “ministry” was what you thought would give you a stable income. Some think it has to do with pedigree (my father was a pastor, therefore...). Others think it’s for people who were Bible majors in college.

The reality is that a “call to ministry” differs for many. You don’t have to have some kind of mystical experience with God to be “called.” (And some people who DO have a special experience with God, may be misreading what that experience is about).

Here’s some questions to pray and journal about. Do you have...

**1. A vibrant personal walk with Christ?**

\*Can you articulate your story of how you have come to follow Jesus? How He has transformed you?

\*What does following Jesus mean to you on a day-by-day basis? What is He currently teaching you from your Bible reading? How you are currently walking by faith?

\*Where are the places where your walk with Christ is not yet “vibrant” but you want it to be?

Take some time and journal your thoughts here:

***Is my personal relationship with God really important?***

**Yes.**

Ministry isn’t simply about preaching, or helping people, or casting vision, or creating plans. Ministry is about being an authentic model to those you lead of what it means to be a fully committed follower of Jesus.

A good question for a pastor to ask themselves is: Am I living the life that I’m hoping those I lead will live?

Do you have...

## 2. A passion for both God and His people?

Some of what you'll need to be an effective minister includes:

- a passion for people
- a passion for God and building His Kingdom
- a passion for studying and living God's Word (the Bible)
- strong people skills
- good communication skills
- an ability to lead others (understanding that there are many ways to lead).

Ponder each above areas. Where are you strong? Weak? Journal your thoughts here:

### ***Am I a leader?***

Sometimes people think they are leaders... when they're not. Other times someone thinks there is a no way they are a leader... but everyone around follows their lead!

How do you know you're a leader?  
*You influence others. People follow you.*

Have you recently organized a group of friends to go do something together? You're leading. Recently seen a need at church and organized a group to handle it? You're a leader. Brought about change in a group or organization? You're leading.

Want a quick way to figure out if you are a leader? Try to get something going. A bible study, an outreach event, a dinner to connect new people at church.  
See what happens.

What happens if you really feel called to ministry, but don't yet have experience or ability to lead?

Talk to your pastor or a mentor. Often leadership skills can be learned.

## BAD REASONS TO GO INTO MINISTRY...

I went to seminary...  
I have to use that  
degree for something!

My mom always  
wanted a pastor in  
the family.

Church is a safe place  
for me... I want to  
stay safe.

I love to study the  
Bible, and I want to  
do that all day.

**Do any of these  
reasons ring true to  
you?**

I like to be in charge. I have  
ideas that no one else will listen  
to. If I become a pastor I can  
make the church follow my  
ideas.

I love Jesus and want to  
serve Him! (That's great!  
All Christians should. But  
that's not a call to  
ministry.)

What have you learned as you've journaled and prayed? Has the desire to be in ministry grown? Have more questions come to mind? Or have you concluded that this isn't for you? If you think that perhaps ministry may be something God is leading you to, the following pages outline the first steps to take within the New South Conference of the Free Methodist Church towards ordained ministry.

### What is ordination?

It is a ritual of "the laying on of hands" (1 Timothy 4:14, 5:22, Timothy 1:6) where the church recognizes the call you have to ministry and formally sets you apart (ordains) you for that call. Ordination happens at a special service during our spring Annual Conference.

## Becoming a Local Ministerial Candidate (LMC)

As you explore whether or not you have a call to the ordained ministry, it's important to have a mentor to talk to along the way. In the Free Methodist denomination, the first step towards the ordained ministry is to become a Local Ministerial Candidate (LMC). And the first step to becoming an LMC is to meet with your pastor<sup>2</sup> to talk.

Talk to your pastor about (fill in date completed):

\_\_\_\_\_ Your sense of call. Perhaps go through your journal notes above. Why do you think God may be inviting you towards the ministry? Is it the ministry of an Elder within the FMC? (box to the right)

\_\_\_\_\_ What he or she sees as your personality, skills, and gifts, and what they think about your call.

\_\_\_\_\_ If they are in favor of you becoming a LMC<sup>3</sup>, put together a "formation plan" (next page) with them on what you need to do to grow or explore your call in the coming year. Then:

Talk to your local church board:

\_\_\_\_\_ Discuss with them your sense of call. Answer their questions, listen for feedback. (The Book of Discipline gives these questions in Paragraph 8700). If they approve you to become a LMC, then:

Sign up for the ordination candidacy process with both the FM denomination and the New South Conference (the Conference is the regional oversight body within the denomination. New South covers Kentucky, Tennessee and the Carolinas.

\_\_\_\_\_ <http://fmcusa.org/leadership/>

\_\_\_\_\_ Contact the New South Conference office: [newsouthconference@gmail.com](mailto:newsouthconference@gmail.com) to let us know you are an LMC. (Please note: after getting registered on [fmcusa.org](http://fmcusa.org), all other correspondence should go through the conference office.)

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<sup>2</sup> We assume that if someone is entering the ordination process with the Free Methodist Church, that they are currently a member of a local Free Methodist Church. If this is not the case, contact the Conference office to find out about options.

<sup>3</sup> There are rare cases when one pastor may not recognize a person's call, but another may. If your pastor does not believe you are called, but you still do, contact the Conference office to ask for a second opinion.

### Different ministry recognition within the Free Methodist Church:

**\*Elder:** When the Bishop ordains in the FMC, the ordinand becomes an Elder. An ordained Elder in the FMC is "itinerant," meaning that they are willing to move when God and the church calls. Ordained Elders are also members of the Conference and therefore involved & committed at a Conference level.

**\*Deacon:** Some people are clearly called to a specific ministry, in a specific place, for a specific time (for example, someone who is leading children's ministry, but has no plan to move and no desire for further involvement at a Conference level). Deacons are consecrated at the local church level. If this fits you, discuss becoming a Deacon with your pastor.

**\*Ministry lay leader:** Many people are highly committed to ministry, but in a non-pastor capacity. The FMC celebrates our lay (non-clergy) leadership as well as those ordained. Lay leaders have an opportunity to be involved at the Conference level, as all Conference committees are made up of 1/2 clergy and 1/2 laity.

Your time as an LMC is meant to be a time of exploration; of determining whether or not to pursue this call. Most people are LMCs from one to four years. Once certain that you want to move forward, you can begin the process of becoming a CMC (Conference Ministerial Candidate.)

**LMC FORMATION PLAN (fill in dated completed):**

\_\_\_\_\_ Take *Free Methodist History and Polity*. Possible ways and places include:

\*Both an online & correspondence course is offered through the denomination:

<http://fmcusa.org/leadership/courses/>

\*Periodically one of our churches will offer this course. Contact the Conference office.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read: *The Call* by Keith Drury. Discuss it with your pastor.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read: (what other book may be helpful at this point on your journey? Your pastor will have recommendations)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Gather a prayer team. Ask a group of people to be praying for you as you go through this journey.

\_\_\_\_\_ If you aren't yet leading something, ask the pastor where you might start. This could be a Bible study, an event, a class, or a new initiative.

\_\_\_\_\_ Other items that you and your pastor determine are growth areas to work on before becoming a Conference Ministerial Candidate:

\_\_\_\_\_ Meet regularly with your pastor to update them on your progress.

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Common LMC Questions:

***Can you be a pastor as an LMC?*** Yes. You can be hired onto a staff without being ordained. Or you can be "appointed" to be a lead pastor as an LMC (usually if you have ministry experience) and continue the ordination process while being a part-time or full-time pastor.

***What if I (or my spouse) is divorced?*** Free Methodist's have a process called "divorce clearance." We will ask questions about your divorce and interview you to insure that you have taken appropriate steps towards healing and healthy relationships. Divorce Clearance must be given before you become a Conference Ministerial Candidate (CMC).

***What if I think I'm called to ministry but my pastor doesn't?*** Take time to understand your pastor's concern. In rare cases, another pastor or the MEG board may disagree with your pastor's assessment. You are free to ask the MEG or another pastor for their thoughts,

understanding that the other pastor or the MEG will want to hear your pastor's thoughts as well.

***What if my pastor and my church believe I'm called to Elders ordination, but at my CMC interview, the MEG board disagrees?*** Again, listen to their concerns. Discuss them with your pastor. If the interview was simply a "bad day" you or your pastor may advocate for another interview.

***What if I'm at college (or somewhere else) and can't attend my local FMC?*** Talk to your pastor. Usually, it's possible to continue your formation plan from afar and check in periodically with your pastor via phone or video conference.

**NEXT STEP: Conference Ministerial Candidate (CMC):**

See the CMC brochure, available at the conference office.

**Head:**

Six theological / academic courses are required. All are offered by Asbury Theological Seminary, alternating online and on-campus options. Courses do not have to be taken at ATS, however, and there are other denominational options. Equivalency is necessary, however.

**Heart:**

You will journey as a CMC with a Conference Mentor in a group with other CMCs. You will create a formation plan similar to your LMC formation plan, with exercises and activities that will prepare you personally for ministry. Spiritual formation will also be a focus in these groups.

**Hands:**

Through conference and local church ministry, you will learn practical skills for leading a church and developing others.

The CMC process is one where we walk with you as you learn and discern whether or not ministry is your call. The process normally takes a minimum of 3 years. When completed, you become an ordained Elder in the Free Methodist Church.

## Local Ministerial Candidate Checklist

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Local F.M. Church: \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ Register with ministerial credentialing (<http://fmcusa.org/leadership/mcs-signup/>)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be an active member of a local Free Methodist Church
- \_\_\_\_\_ Talk to your pastor, then the church board about your call to ministry. Pastor & board affirm call. (With church board, respond to LMC questions from FMC Book of Discipline, par. 8700).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Determine LMC mentor (usually the lead pastor).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Assemble a prayer team to support you through this process.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Send Transcripts of any college credits/courses to the Conference office.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Divorce Clearance (when applicable). (If you or your spouse has been divorced, request the paperwork needed to begin the divorce clearance process.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Create LMC Formation Plan and meet monthly with mentor to discuss.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete FM History & Polity Course.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete a Spiritual gift test.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete Spiritual Autobiography (write out your spiritual journey. Share with your mentor)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete the Application for Ministry forms to the conference office (attached.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete and submit the Theological Questionnaire to the conference office (attached.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor/Mentor signs off on LMC checklist & *gives a reference the Conference*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Request MEG interview with conference office .
- \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewed and approved by Conference MEG
- \_\_\_\_\_ Received as CMC at Annual Conference (attendance is required)



Ordination Theological Questionnaire  
Free Methodist Church, USA

1. Explain your understanding of God. What adjectives would you use to describe Him? How would you describe yourself in relation to God?
2. Speak to us about the sufficiency and authority of Scripture.
3. Give an overview of your understanding of the salvation process – what John Wesley called the “order of salvation” from before faith to heaven.
4. What are the key differences between a Wesleyan and Reformed view of salvation? In your answer, help us to know that you understand and “own” a Wesleyan-Arminian perspective.
5. In your own words, describe a Wesleyan understanding of sin and salvation, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the meaning of entire sanctification. How do you evaluate or relate to these understandings?
6. How do the Scriptures understand the church (its nature, composition, and mission)?
7. What is your theology of worship? What are the essentials of the proper worship of God? How do matters of style and preference relate to the practice of worship?
8. Describe your devotional life (methods, resources, etc.). What have you done recently to keep your relationship with God alive and growing?
9. What is your understanding of the NT teaching on the gifts of the Spirit? What is your specific position on “speaking in tongues”?
10. How do you understand the role of the pastor? What are the pastoral essentials in caring for a congregation?
11. Of what significance is ordination? Reflect on its meaning for the church, its mission and its pastoral and lay leadership?
12. Our ordination ritual gives the Scriptures and their witness to Christ a central place in our church. Comment on your intentions relative to the Scriptures and their place or role in your future ministry.
13. What is your view of women in the ordained ministry? How do you interpret the most significant Pauline directives regarding women in the church? How do you respond to the passages that describe

women fully engaged in ministry with Paul and others? Please comment on Galatians 3:28 regarding there being neither “male nor female” as it applies to ministry.

14. What is the responsibility of a 21st Century and congregation to the Great Commandment and Great Commission? How do you envision leading a congregation in fulfilling the Great Commandment and Great Commission?

15. What is your view of pastoral “authority”? What is your understanding of how a pastor works with and relates to the lay leaders and the Board of Administration of the congregation to which you are assigned in bringing change in mission, vision or styles of worship? How do you relate to those in authority over you?

# *Application for Ministry Appointment*

## *Free Methodist Church-USA*

### *Note to the Applicant:*

The purpose of the questions in this document is to provide the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board with background information that will help them to get to know you. It will be used as a basis for mutual discussion and will become a part of your ministry portfolio available to other conferences in the event of transfer. In completing this form, please type or write legibly, using black ink.

Because there is great variety in age and experience of persons making application, this questionnaire is purposely broad in scope. Please use extra paper as needed to provide additional information you feel will give the fairest representation of yourself. Please be as accurate and candid as you can. Thank you.

### *Statement of Intent and Release of Information*

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby wish to be considered for ministry within the Free Methodist Church-USA (hereinafter “church”). After reviewing the current *Book of Discipline*, outlining the goals and responsibilities of ministers including organizational structure and doctrine, I freely submit myself to the guidance, counsel and disciplines of the annual conference board of ministerial education and guidance. I fully understand and agree that the decision of the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board regarding my suitability and readiness for ministry will involve questions and inquiries that are both personal and private. I hereby release the church and its annual conference, agents and representatives from any claims, causes, or actions, which may arise from this inquiry. Further, I grant permission to the annual conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board to contact any person listed by me as a reference or any other person not so listed to discuss my suitability and readiness. I also grant permission for the conference superintendent to make periodic copies of my transcript(s) for the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board as needed.

I covenant with God, my bishop, superintendent, and the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board, to rely upon the grace of God to maintain Christian character and conduct; to be diligent and faithful in pursuing my call, and in preparing for ministry within the Free Methodist Church-USA.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_





Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**YOUR EDUCATION**

	Name of School and Location	Dates of Attend. From To	Major Subject	Did you Graduate?	Degree Awarded	# of college credits received
<b>High School</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____		
	_____					
<b>College</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____					
<b>Seminary</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____					
<b>Other Schools</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____					

**Please attach certified copies of transcripts from college, seminary, etc.**

Extra-Curricular Activities: (List sports, band, orchestra, speaking, social, hobbies, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SPOUSAL SUPPORT OF YOUR MINISTRY**

Spouse's religious background: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's current church involvement: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What do you consider to be the appropriate relation between your marriage and your potential ministry?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**TO BE COMPLETED BY SPOUSE**

It will be more helpful for the candidate's spouse to answer the following:

How do you feel about your spouse's decision to pursue a ministry appointment? Please note any concerns you might have.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

This information is complete and accurate \_\_\_\_\_ (initial)

Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND**

Church regularly attended as a child \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate size of the congregation \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the scope and extent of your church participation (e.g. worship, small groups, outreach, para-church, other):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**YOUR INTEREST IN MINISTRY**

Why are you interested in applying for a ministry appointment within the Free Methodist Church?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

From your perspective, what is unique about the Free Methodist Church? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What experience(s) led you to seek a career in ministry? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Who are the people you have talked to about your ministry plans and how have they influenced you?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

To what type of ministry do you feel especially called? (Check three of the following to indicate your special calling.)

Music _____	Educator _____	Inner City Ministry _____	Suburban Ministry _____
Youth Ministry _____	Pastor _____	Rural Ministry _____	Chaplain _____
Church Planter _____	Evangelist _____	Camping _____	Missions _____
Church Administrator _____	Other _____		

What are your educational plans for reaching your goal in this type of ministry? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This information is complete and accurate \_\_\_\_\_ (initial)

Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL LIFE** (Use additional sheet to complete your answer.)

Describe your most significant religious experiences and why they were meaningful to you. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe a person you know (name not necessary) whom you consider to be an outstanding example of Christian life and why?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

As you see yourself list three (3) of your most important strengths and three (3) of your weaknesses.

Strengths

Weaknesses/Growth Areas

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 3. _____ |

**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

Give the most recent experience first. Be sure that the addresses are correct.

**Employed From/To** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name/Address of Employer**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Position** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Immediate Supervisor** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reason for leaving** \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been dismissed from any job? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This information is complete and accurate \_\_\_\_\_ (initial)



Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

If currently serving as a pastor, please complete the following:

Church Name/Address	Position	Dates Served	Attendance	Membership
			Begin/End	Begin/End
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

**MILITARY SERVICE RECORD**

Were you ever in the military service? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Branch	Service Dates	Rank	Special Training	Type of Discharge
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

**HEALTH INFORMATION**

Rate your physical health: Very Good \_\_\_\_\_ Good \_\_\_\_\_ Average \_\_\_\_\_ Poor \_\_\_\_\_

Rate your emotional health: Very Good \_\_\_\_\_ Good \_\_\_\_\_ Average \_\_\_\_\_ Poor \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever had a sexual experience that was frightening or traumatic? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**LEGAL HISTORY**

Please complete on the following page.

**I hereby certify that the information provided on this form is accurate.**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**LEGAL HISTORY AFFIDAVIT  
FREE METHODIST CHURCH - USA**

Please complete this form and have it notarized. Return completed form with your Ministry Application to your Superintendent.

Have you ever been:

1. Accused of sexual harassment? No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Explain \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Formally charged with sexual harassment? No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Explain \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. A defendant in a criminal proceeding? No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Explain \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Arrested, indicted, or convicted for any misdemeanor or felony? No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
If 'yes', please provide complete information listing the date of conviction, court, sentence (if any), and final disposition.

Felony / Misdemeanor \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Conviction \_\_\_\_\_

Court \_\_\_\_\_

Sentence \_\_\_\_\_

Final Disposition \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Under penalty of perjury, I certify that I have never been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor.

If this applies to you, please initial here: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
(print) (in presence of notary)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Notary \_\_\_\_\_

Notary Signature \_\_\_\_\_