

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?

Theological Proficiency Assessment: Situational Responses

The purpose of these questions is to provide an opportunity for you to articulate your understanding of some of the basic tenets of Wesleyan theology and their implications for ministry. Using Holy Scripture, Wesley’s sermons, and the teachings of the Free Methodist Church, please respond as fully and clearly as possible in 500-1000 words per item.

For each of the following categories, please select and respond to either 1 or 2. Include at least one 1 and at least one 2 in your final submission. In other words, please do not respond to only 1s or only 2s.

Category 1: The Nature of Scripture

1. The teaching of the historic church regarding the nature of Jesus Christ as the revealed/living Word is that he is fully God and fully human. The church has also taught that Scripture is the written Word, and, analogously, is also fully divine and fully human. Reflect on the nature of Scripture as fully divine and fully human. In your response, be sure to include your thoughts on at least the following items:

- the sufficiency of Scripture to reveal the way of salvation;
- the dangers of those understandings of the nature of Scripture that over-emphasize either the divine or human aspects; and,
- how this understanding of Scripture informs the practice of ministry.

2. You have just settled into your new pastoral appointment and receive an invitation to the monthly ecumenical clergy gathering that meets in your town. Thankful for the opportunity to meet other pastors, you decide to attend. Over lunch, a rather passionate discussion about the nature of Scripture ensues that reaches an awkward conclusion with the following exchange:

Susan: Well, the truth is that every religious tradition has its own scriptures or sacred texts to which they look for the teachings of their own faith. But all of them are essentially the same: they are all expressions of the basic human impulse to name and understand the divine. It doesn’t ultimately matter which sacred texts one follows; what matters is whether one’s interpretation and practices lead to the common good of all people.

Jim: Really?! Why would anyone ever want to come to your church, Susan? In our church, we believe that the Holy Bible, comprised of books of the Old and New Testaments, was dictated by God to human authors who wrote precisely what God told them to write. The Bible is fully inerrant and is the only true Scripture. The so-called sacred texts of other religions contain no truth and are only an instrument of Satan to deceive to keep people from coming to living faith in Christ.

Juan: Our church teaches that the Scriptures include the books of the Old and New Testaments, but also include additional sacred writings often called the Apocrypha. All of these are means through which we learn God’s truth. But, in addition to the Holy Scriptures, we firmly believe that God authoritatively guides the church through the passing on of Sacred Tradition.

At this point, your new colleagues turn to you and ask, so what does the Free Methodist Church teach about the nature of Holy Scripture?

Write a response in which you articulate to your new friends the helpfulness of an incarnational model that sees Scripture as both fully divine and fully human. In your response, be sure to include your thoughts on at least the following items:

- the sufficiency of Scripture to reveal the way of salvation;
- the dangers of those understandings of the nature of Scripture that over-emphasize either the divine or human aspects; and,
- how this understanding of Scripture informs your practice of ministry.

Category 2: The Way of Salvation

1. Sketch as clearly as possible your understanding of the key tenets of a Wesleyan theology of salvation. While your response may include more, it must include a discussion of prevenient grace, justifying grace, regeneration, and sanctifying grace. What is involved in each component? How does Wesleyan theology make a difference in your practice of ministry?

2. Your new ministry is going well and you are grateful to have several new people in your newcomers' class. During a session on the church's understanding of the biblical teaching about salvation, you ask the group to share any teaching they've had in the past or perspectives they may currently hold. Among the responses are the following:

Jamal: I was always taught that some people are chosen by God for salvation and some people are not. I think they called it the doctrine of election or predestination . . . or something like that. I have to admit that it never seemed very fair to me, but the people were genuinely loving and Christ-like, and truly had a beautiful sense of comfort from knowing in their hearts that they had been chosen by a sovereign God for eternal salvation.

Mary: I'm really not so sure about the whole idea of salvation. I mean, what is it salvation for or from? What I really get when I come to church is encouragement and support to be a good person. It's so good to hear stories about the real-life struggles of people in the Bible and, especially, the example of Jesus who just amazes me every time I learn more about him. He really shows us how to live a good life that truly pleases God and helps others.

Natalie: For me, salvation was firmly connected to being a part of the church. In fact, as a child I was consistently taught that being a part of the church was an act of faith and trust that would ultimately lead to an eternity with God. I'm not sure whether I still believe this, but it does trouble me that so many branches of Christianity really seem only to emphasize an individual relationship with a personal Jesus with or without the church as Christ's Body on the earth.

Jaden: It seems like all I ever heard was legalism. It was either about a particular set of beliefs one had to hold or about a holy life a person had to achieve. Either way, the message was clear: if you failed, you were surely doomed to an eternity in hell, a place of fire and everlasting torment. None of it seemed very loving to me, so I just walked away from it all.

Write a response in which you seek to articulate a Wesleyan understanding of the doctrine of salvation and how it might bring clarity to the broad range of perspectives in your newcomers' class. Be sure that your response includes a presentation on prevenient grace, justifying grace, regeneration, and sanctifying grace, and what is involved in each component.

Category 3: The Sacraments

1. Wesley understood the means of grace as those outward signs, words, or actions that are ordained by God to be the normal channels through which God conveys prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace. In your response, discuss the nature, role, and efficacy of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, including the place of infant baptism

and believer's baptism, the significance of the Lord's Supper, and the implications of a Free Methodist understanding of the sacraments for local church ministry and practice.

2. A young couple in your church asks you if they could schedule a time to meet with you to talk about baptizing their new baby. You are excited about the opportunity and schedule a time to visit them in their home the following week. During the meeting, they ask for your pastoral perspective on a dilemma in which they find themselves. Having come to a recommitment in their faith while attending your church, they both would like the baby to be baptized as an infant. Javier is far more comfortable with infant baptism due to his Roman Catholic background, but because of his newly recovered personal faith in Christ he doesn't want it to be merely perfunctory. Makayla would also prefer that the baby be baptized but has already begun to experience resistance from her father who insists that infant baptism is not valid because the baby cannot possibly have faith in Christ for herself. Further, Makayla's father argues that the whole notion of "sacraments" is a religious myth very much akin to magic. There are no sacraments, he says; rather, baptism and the Lord's Supper should be called ordinances because they are nothing more than human responses to God's grace. Because they were commanded by Christ, our obligation is simply to obey as a sign of our response. Javier and Makayla feel trapped: both families live in the area and will certainly be present on the Sunday of the baptism. They ask you to help them understand the church's theology of the sacraments in hopes that they will be able to respond to their family members on both sides.

Write out the main lines of your response to Javier and Makayla, noting the nature, role, and efficacy of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper in the Free Methodist Church. In your discussion, include the church's understanding of the place of infant baptism and believer's baptism, the significance of the Lord's Supper, as well as implications for local church practice.

Category 4: The Ministry

1. Discuss your understanding of the church's teaching regarding the general ministry of all believers by virtue of faith in Christ/baptism and the representative ministry of some believers by virtue of ordination. What are the similarities and differences of focus between these two aspects of the ministry of Christ's church? What are the particular roles and functions of each? Describe your sense of calling and what ordination means for the ministry to which you feel called. Your discussion should include your understanding of the place and function of ordained ministry in the Free Methodist Church and what it means to submit to the authority and guidance of the church with regard to pastoral appointments and ministerial service.

2. Tamika is a member of your congregation who is home from college on spring break. She tells you that she is really wrestling with a call to ministry and asks if you would be willing to give her some pastoral and vocational guidance to help her discern her calling. As a pre-med major, she was surprised when she began to feel an internal nudging toward ordained ministry. She now wonders whether her desire to be a medical doctor was in reality a calling to help people become spiritually whole. She asks you if you could clarify the differences between the general ministry of all believers by virtue of faith in Christ/baptism and the representative ministry of some believers by virtue of ordination.

Write a reply in which you articulate how you would respond to Tamika's struggle. Seek to help clarify her understanding of the nature of ministry, as well as what ordained ministry in the Free Methodist Church might mean for her, should the Lord lead in that direction.

Category 5: Human Equality

1. Articulate your understanding of the teaching of Scripture on the full equality of all humanity as created in the image of God, with particular attention to the roles of women in church, home, and society. In your discussion, include your thinking on how the teachings of Scripture and the Free Methodist Church reflect your own perspectives, as well as some of the implications there might be for your own practice of ministry.

2. After several pastoral conversations with Tamika and much soul searching on her own, she has come to a place of confidently affirming God's call upon her life to pursue ordained ministry. When she comes to tell you the news, you are able to sense both the clarity of her calling as well as a troubling overtone of concern in her voice. Asking her if everything is okay, she begins to explain that several of her friends and family members—people she deeply respects—have told her in no uncertain terms that Scripture is crystal clear in its teaching that only men can be ordained to Christian ministry. They tell her that they certainly believe in the equal rights of all people, but that even though men and women are equal in the eyes of God, they were never created to be equivalent in the area of roles and responsibilities. They argue that it is radical feminism that has caused some branches of the church to stray from a biblical view of manhood and womanhood.

Tamika's family and friends firmly believe Scripture teaches that men were created to be leaders in the church and in the home. Women, on the other hand, were intended to be supportive and to function in their God-given, complementary roles in relation to men as leaders. Moreover, as an African American woman, Tamika shares privately with you that she is deeply troubled by what appears to her to be yet another chapter in a long journey of feeling oppressed by people in power. She tearfully asks, "Is there really a place for a person like me in the Free Methodist Church?"

Write a response in which you seek to help Tamika understand the teaching of Scripture on the full equality of all humanity, with particular attention to the roles of women in church, home, and society. Be sure to include a direct response to Tamika's poignant question in which you are honest both about the warts and aspirations of the Free Methodist Church with regard to women in ministry.

Category 6: Human Sexuality

1. Please write on the use of grace and truth in ministry to those who identify as LGBTQ.

Questions to consider:

- How can we embody courageous love toward all others?
- How may we also walk faithfully with the scriptures which give guidance on sexuality and marriage and that were breathed out by the same God who breathed out the cosmos?

Write out a plan for the local church board and ministry leaders that navigates the turbulent waters of faith, sexuality and gender that is both theologically orthodox in understanding and grace-filled in practice.

2. You are leading a small group on the local University campus with students, a faculty member, and an administrative assistant of one of the departments. The topic of human sexuality and practice has come up with the following exchange:

Mike: I think that all the gender classifications are out of control. I mean, what someone does in their own home is up to them, but I shouldn't have to memorize new classifications that we all know are not in the Bible.

Janice: Jesus never explicitly mentioned homosexuality in the four gospels of the New Testament. He talked about fornication, adultery, lust, marriage, divorce, and other aspects of sexuality. But he never mentioned same-sex sexual relations. So why shouldn't we accommodate different sexual practices as long as they are monogamous? Love is love.

Steve: Is being gay a sin? I have an uncle who is, and he is always good to me. I was taught by my parents that he is a good man, but not living as God desires. My mom said our attractions and orientations don't make us sinful or holy—it's what we do with our attractions and orientations that counts in the eyes of God.

Jack: So gang, I have leanings both ways sexually... I like all experiences. Can I still come to this group? You have invited me to your church; can I still come? What if I want to join your church, pastor?

Write a response in which you articulate the orthodox theological understanding of scripture on the subject of sexual practice, gender designation, and marriage. Include what your response will be to Jackson in regard to welcome, inclusion/non-inclusion, and membership in the FMCUSA at your local church.

Please return your answers to the New South Conference Office newsouthconference@gmail.com