

Local Ministerial Candidate Handbook For Pastors and Local Ministerial Candidates

Introduction

The strategic priority of the Free Methodist Church is to multiply godly and competent pastoral and lay leaders for today and for each new generation. Primary responsibility rests with the pastor of each church to “identify, attract and equip leaders” (¶5310.B.5.g). This applies to lay leaders, consecrated deacons and ordained elders. All three roles are important in providing a healthy leadership team for the local church. Effective pastoral leaders and local churches make multiplying servant leaders a priority.

The *Book of Discipline* clearly states that the church must discern and cultivate those who have abilities and character qualities for pastoral leadership (see ¶5300). If the pastor assigned to oversee a congregation does not initiate and guide such discerning and cultivating, many whom God is calling into leadership will never fulfill their calling.

Therefore, pastors are called to regularly *guide* their congregations in prayer for the Lord of the harvest to raise up leaders (Matthew 9:37-38). They are called to *observe* not only youth and young adults, who may be called into ministry, but also mature members who are in other careers or professions. They are called to *encourage* those who, by the use of their spiritual gifts, give evidence of potential for spiritual oversight as consecrated deacons or ordained elders.

One of the first steps for those who sense a call into full-time ministry is for the pastor and the local board of administration to explore with these persons what it means to be a servant/shepherd leader of the body of Christ.

Local ministerial candidacy is the official relationship to the church provided for those who are exploring their sense of God’s call and giftedness. Some who begin as local ministerial candidates may never actually become a consecrated deacon or an ordained elder, but the process of review and prayer with a mentoring pastor will prove worthwhile.

Pastors are encouraged to review these materials so as to be able to more effectively fulfill this component of pastoral leadership.

Local Ministerial Candidate

A local ministerial candidate is a member of the Free Methodist Church who is seriously considering a call to the ordained ministry as an elder. Local ministerial candidate status provides the opportunity to explore the perceived call to ministry with the pastor in the context of the local church.

Prior to being approved to work toward a local ministerial candidate license, the person shall have been a member of the church long enough to have given evidence of possessing the developing qualities and gifts normally expected of a Christian minister: a heart for God and the mission of the church, leadership potential, good conduct and the ability to work with people.

The pastor shall enter into a mentoring relationship with the potential local ministerial candidate, establishing a learning contract. The pastor shall journey with the individual through licensing as a local ministerial candidate, and possibly even through licensing as a conference ministerial candidate. A local ministerial candidate shall be amendable to instruction, supervision and related discipline to assure growth in grace, knowledge and leadership skill (see ¶16500.C).

When applicable, the local ministerial candidate should gain clearance for a divorce, annulment or dissolution of marriage, via the prescribed process of review by the ministerial education and guidance board and the Board of Bishops. This also applies to a local ministerial candidate whose spouse has experienced divorce, annulment or dissolution of marriage.

The local ministerial candidate status is renewed annually (up to three times) by the local board of administration upon recommendation by the pastor. A local ministerial candidate, who after four years does not actively progress toward conference ministerial candidacy leading to elder's orders, shall choose to study for the diaconate or to serve in another lay capacity, thus discontinuing the local ministerial candidate license (¶16500.J).

Learning Contract

A learning contract will guide the journey of discovery regarding God's call between the pastor (or designee) and the local ministerial candidate. The pastor shall design a set of ministry experiences that will include:

1. Observing others doing ministry.
2. Guided preparation for similar ministry.
3. Ministering under supervision.
4. Debriefing, affirmation and critique with the pastor.
5. Evaluation regarding how this experience is helping the local ministerial candidate determine whether to pursue ordination as an elder or consecration as a deacon.
6. Equipping of others to serve as partners in ministry.

A. Four Basic Categories of Concern

The Learning Contract should be designed to help evaluate the following four foundational areas. This will also assist the local board of administration in its follow-up consideration of a recommendation to the ministerial education and guidance board should the local ministerial candidate want to be considered for becoming a conference ministerial candidate.

1. Proven character. The local ministerial candidate gives evidence of being Spirit-filled (look for the fruit – Galatians 5:22-23; John 15:16), is spiritually disciplined, and a person of integrity.
2. Ministry fruitfulness. The local ministerial candidate has aptitude in interpreting and communicating biblical truths in teaching or preaching, as well as promise in the developing of disciples, leaders and groups.
3. Healthy relationships. The local ministerial candidate exemplifies healthy family relationships, is accountable to her/his peers, authentic with all, and influences others toward Christ and maturity.
4. Commitment to serve in the Free Methodist Church. The local ministerial candidate submits to spiritual authority with a joyful heart, understands and accepts Wesleyan theology, owns the Free Methodist Church story, and is willing to lead others in accomplishing our vision and our mission.

B. Ministry Experiences

The learning contract should establish ministry experiences that help identify and develop some of the following skill sets. This, too, may assist the local ministerial candidate in making the decision about the call to ministry:

1. Multiplying: disciples, leaders, groups or ministry teams.
2. Leading: influencing people forward in the mission.
3. Preaching/teaching: communication that motivates, feeds, trains.
4. Administering: providing direction and paths on which to run, while building self-directed teams that do ministry.
5. Contextualizing: does ministry that is culturally effective.
6. Caring: meets the needs of hurting people.
7. Growing: tends the soul while in an accountable relationship or group.
8. Passion/gifting: in church planting.

Soul-Tending Questions

Use one or more of the following sets of questions in the mentoring/coaching sessions.

Set One, adapted from *Renovare*

1. In what ways did God make His presence known to you since our last meeting? What experiences of prayer, meditation and spiritual reading has God given you? What difficulties or frustrations did you encounter? What joys or delights?
2. What temptations did you face since our last meeting? How did you respond? Which spiritual disciplines did God use to lead you further into holiness of heart and life?
3. Have you sensed any influence or work of the Holy Spirit since our last meeting? What spiritual gifts did the Spirit enable you to exercise? What was the outcome? What fruit of the Spirit would you like to see increase in your life? Which disciplines might be useful in this effort?
4. What opportunities did God give you to serve others since our last meeting? How did you respond? Did you encounter injustice to or oppression of others? How were you able to work for justice and shalom?
5. In what ways did you encounter Christ in your reading of the Scripture since our last meeting? How has the Bible shaped the way you think and live? Did God provide an opportunity for you to share your faith with someone? How did you respond?

Set Two, from *Cultivating a Life For God* by Neil Cole

1. How have you experienced God in your life this week?
2. What is God teaching you?
3. How are you responding to His prompting?
4. Do you have a need to confess any sin?
5. How did you do with your reading this week?

Set Three, from *Cultivating a Life For God* by Neil Cole

1. How did you invest the proper quality/quantity of time in your most important relationships?
2. Can you give any illustrations where you listened to or expressed any gossip or slander since we last met?
3. Is there anyone you are finding difficult to forgive?
4. Did you practice undisciplined or addictive behavior?
5. Were you honorable in your financial dealings?
6. Were you sexually pure?
7. Did you spend time with the Lord this week, completing the Bible reading for the week?
8. Did you pray for your pre-Christian friends? Did you talk with someone about Christ?

Local Ministerial Candidate Assignments

The learning contract includes the following assignments to assist in the mentoring/discipling process between the pastor and the local ministerial candidate.

During or following each assignment, the pastor, serving as mentor and coach will meet with the local ministerial candidate to discuss insights, respond to questions, offer counsel and provide direction.

1. Read and Discuss at least one of the following books:

- a. *Working the Angles* by Eugene Peterson
- b. *Calling & Character* by William Willimon
- c. *The Call* by Os Guinness
- d. *The Disciple-Making Pastor* by Bill Hull (paperback), ISBN #0800757203
- e. *The Power of the Call* by Henry Blackaby and Henry Brandt
- f. *Wesleyan Leadership for Troubled Times* by David McKenna
- g. *Lead to Succeed* by Stan Toler
- h. *The Heart of a Great Pastor* by H.B. London Jr./Neil B. Wiseman
- i. *A Spiritual Formation Workbook* by James B. Smith and Lynda Graybeal

NOTE: Books available through our partners at The Wesleyan Publishing House (800-493-7539).

2. Read and Discuss

- a. *Working Together in the 21st Century*,
available from conference office or Ministerial Credentialing Services.
- b. *A Guide for Entry into the Ordained Ministry of the Free Methodist Church*,
available at: <http://fmcusa.org/leadership/ordination-process/>.
- c. *Is God Calling You to Ordained Ministry?*
available at: <http://fmcusa.org/pastoral/>.

3. Review and Discuss

- a. Latest version of the [Book of Discipline](#)
- b. Denominational Videos (3-4 from most recent years)
 - i. Report highlights from a current list of denominational videos,
available at: www.llcomm.org.
 - ii. Free Methodist World Missions: *The Work of His Hands, Theirs is the Kingdom, Message of Hope, One Child at a Time* (Child Care Ministries), *Embracing the Call, For His Glory, Witnesses of Truth*, etc.
available from Free Methodist World Missions (800-342-5531).
- c. Denominational Web site at www.fmcusa.org (review weekly): Become familiar with the resources available the website. Discuss the things discovered in these visits.

Local Ministerial Candidate Check List

Candidate's Name _____

Local Free Methodist Church _____

Annual Conference _____

Check each section when completed:

- 1. Member of local Free Methodist Church
- 2. Declared a call to ministry and discussed with the pastor
- 3. Responded to soul-tending questions
- 4. Established Learning Contract with pastor to include prayer and discussion:

The following four categories have been evaluated and approved through ministry experience:

- a. Proven Character
- b. Ministry Fruitfulness
- c. Healthy Relationships
- d. Commitment to serve in the Free Methodist Church

Read or Review and Discuss:

- e. At least one book from reading assignment
 - f. Pamphlet – *Working Together in the 21st Century*
 - g. [A Guide for Entry into the Ordained Ministry of the Free Methodist Church](#)
 - h. Pamphlet – [Is God Calling You to Ordained Ministry](#)
 - i. Reviewed latest version of the [Book of Discipline](#)
 - j. Viewed 3-4 or the most recent denominational videos at: lcomm.org
 - k. Reviewed weekly the denominational web site at: fmcusa.org
- 5. Divorce Clearance (when applicable)
 - 6. Shared spiritual journey with local board of administration
 - 7. Answered Questions 8700.A. before the board of administration
 - 8. Answered Questions 8700.B. before the local congregation
 - 9. Granted LMC license, date: _____
 - 10. Opened file with Ministerial Credentialing Services*
 - 11. Pastor reported local ministerial candidate to conference ministerial education and guidance board

Pastor/Mentor's Signature: _____

Date: _____

***Important Instructions:** Upon completion of this process, send the following to the Ministerial Credentialing Services office so that an ordination file can be established for the candidate.

1. Ministerial Credentialing Services Enrollment Form
2. Copy of completed Local Ministerial Candidate Check List
3. Original transcript(s) of post-secondary credits

Mailing Address: Free Methodist Church-USA, Ministerial Credentialing Services,
770 N. High School Road, Indianapolis, IN 46214

Fax: 317-244-1247

E-mail: Beth.Cullison@fmcusa.org



Free Methodist Church-USA (*Iglesia Metodista Libre*)
Ministerial Credentialing Services (*Servicio Ministerial de Credenciales*)
Enrollment Form (*Forma para enrolarse*)

Date (*Fecha*) _____

First Name (*Nombre*) _____

Middle Name (*Segundo Nombre*) _____

Last Name (family name) (*Apellido*) _____

Address (*Direccion*) _____

City, State, Zip (*Ciudad, Estad, Código Postal*) _____

Email _____

Phone (*Teléfono*) _____

Date of birth (*Fecha de Nacimiento*) _____ Male _____ Female _____ Married _____ Single _____
(mes/día/año) (Hombre) (Mujer) (Casado) (Soltero)

Have you or your spouse been divorced? No _____ Yes _____ Self _____ Spouse _____
(Tu esposa o tu han sido divorciados anteriormente?) (Sí) (el mismo) (cónyuge)

Ministerial Status (*Estatus Ministerial*)

Date granted LMC license _____ Date granted CMC _____ Other _____
(Fecha en la que te hiciste LMC) (Fecha en la que te hiciste CMC) (Otros)

Local church where you are a member _____ Conference _____
(Nombre de la Iglesia Local donde tú eres miembro) (Conferencia)

Education (*Nivel educativo*)

High School Graduate? Yes _____ No _____
(¿Graduado de Secundaria) (Sí)

College: 1 yr. _____ 2 yrs. _____ 3 yrs. _____ Graduate _____ Degree _____ Year granted _____
(Universidad:) (1 año) (2 Años) (3 Años) (Título Universitario Graduaste) (Terminaste)

Graduate degree(s): _____
(En que carrera:)

Name of school(s) attended: _____
(Nombre de la escuela que asististe:)

Are you currently in school? _____ Where? _____
(¿Estas actualmente asistiendo a la escuela) (¿Donde)

Please forward official transcripts of all postsecondary studies to the Ministerial Credentialing office for evaluation. (No photocopies please.)
(Por favor envíe cardex (transcripto) oficial de todos tus estudios pos secundario a la Oficina de Credenciales Ministeriales para una evaluación.) (No fotocopias.)

Have these been sent? (¿Los has enviado anteriormente) _____

For individuals with an ordination seeking transfer to the Free Methodist Church:

(Para individuos que están buscando la transferencia de ordenación a la Iglesia Metodista Libre:)

Denomination from which you are transferring your ordination: _____
(Denominación de donde estas siendo transferido:)

Please send a photocopy of ordination certificate to the MCS office. (Por favor envíe fotocopia del certificado de ordenación a la Oficina de MCS.)

Ministerial Credentialing Services (MCS) – Free Methodist Church-USA, 770 N. High School Road, Indianapolis, IN 46214
Phone: 1-800-342-5531 FAX: 317-244-1247 Email: beth.cullison@fmcusa.org

Local Ministerial Candidate License

This certifies that _____ is a Local Ministerial Candidate in the Free Methodist Church provided that _____ spirit and practice are such as become the gospel of Christ, and that _____ teachings correspond with the established doctrines of the Holy Scripture as held by the Free Methodist Church.

By order of the Board of Administration of the _____ Society in the _____ Conference.

This license is reviewed/approved annually.

Granted this _____ day of _____, _____

_____ Board Chair

_____ Board Secretary

Local Ministerial Candidates – (2011 Book of Discipline)

¶6500

- A. A local ministerial candidate is one who is seriously considering a call to full-time Christian ministry and who has completed the processes of licensing. Local ministerial candidate status provides the opportunity to explore the perceived call to ministry with the pastor in the context of the local church. Prior to being approved to work toward a local ministerial candidate license, the person shall have been a member of the church long enough to have given evidence of possessing the developing qualities and gifts normally expected of a Christian minister: a heart for God and the mission of the church, leadership potential, good conduct and the ability to work with people.
- B. Persons who do not show adequate potential of being an elder who can lead a congregation to fulfill the mission of the Church and our expected outcomes, should be counseled at an early time to consider the support and service role of a deacon.
- C. The pastor shall enter into a mentoring relationship with the potential local ministerial candidate, establishing a learning contract (see *Local Ministerial Candidate Handbook*). The pastor shall journey with the individual through licensing as local ministerial candidate, and possibly even through licensing as a conference ministerial candidate. A local ministerial candidate shall be amenable to instruction, supervision and related discipline to assure growth in grace, knowledge and leadership skill (see ¶6300.Q, ¶6320.B.10).
- D. Licensing as a local ministerial candidate is contingent upon:
 1. membership in the Free Methodist Church;
 2. exploring a call to ordained ministry in a mentoring relationship with pastor/designee (see *Local Ministerial Candidate Handbook*);
 3. an interview with and approval by the local Board of Administration upon satisfactory answers to the questions provided in ¶8700.A; and
 4. receiving a local ministerial candidate certificate before the congregation upon satisfactory answers to the questions provided in ¶8700.B.
- E. Following licensing, the new local ministerial candidate opens a file with Ministerial Credentialing Services (see *Local Ministerial Candidate Handbook*).
- F. The names of all local ministerial candidates shall be reported to the annual conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board.
- G. A local ministerial candidate shall maintain membership in the church that licensed him/her, unless appointed as a licensed pastor (see ¶6500.H).
- H. A local ministerial candidate appointed as a licensed pastor shall hold membership in the church served (see ¶5640).
- I. A local ministerial candidate's license is subject to annual review and renewal by the local Board of Administration.
- J. A local ministerial candidate, who after four years does not actively progress toward conference ministerial candidacy leading to elder's orders, shall choose to study for the diaconate or to serve in another lay capacity, thus discontinuing the local ministerial candidate license.
- K. A local ministerial candidate appointed by a ministerial appointments committee to have charge of a society may administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper and solemnize marriages in that place if civil law permits.
- L. Finally, the local Board of Administration recommends to the conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board that the candidate be accepted as a conference ministerial candidate.

The Pastoral Role

The pastor is both a leader and a partner in the ministry of the gospel. The New Testament makes it clear that pastors are called to lead, but also to tend and equip the church.

What are the biblical essentials assigned to this role? Tradition says that the elder ministers the Word of God (teaching truth and resisting heresy), provides the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper), and maintains order (guiding and discipline). But the biblical portrait is more complex, including:

Leading: providing direction through modeling and vision casting.

Hebrews 13:7, describes those in authority over the people of God as 'leaders,' as those who speak the Word of God, teaching what is in accord with sound doctrine (Titus 2:1); holding firmly to the "trustworthy message" (Titus 1:9).

These elders lead as a prophetic and visionary voice speaking the Word of God, expressing the nature and heart of God. Biblical leaders also lead as servants of the church without lording it over the people (1 Peter 5:3, Mark 10:42).

It is inherent in the very nature of sheep to graze and to wait for a leader. Without leadership, the people of God tend to meander and flounder, just like sheep.

When it comes to fulfilling the mission of the church (to make disciples of all people everywhere) and the vision of the church (to be a healthy biblical community of holy people, multiplying ...) sheep will not usually accomplish God's desired ends without visionary leadership.

The pastor "gets out front" and inspires the people of God to do what Christ wants: make disciples. Paul wrote: that the "elders ... (who) direct the affairs of the church, are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching" (1 Timothy 5:17).

Notice the direct connection in his mind between directing and preaching/teaching. Hebrews 13:17 admonishes followers to obey their leaders, submitting to their God-given authority.

Caring: providing nurture and healing to the wounded and broken.

The elder is called to manage or take care of God's church (1 Timothy 3:5).

- a. Sometimes this implies "straightening out what was left unfinished" (Titus 1:5).
- b. Sometimes this implies caring for and serving the flock (1 Peter 5:2) to bring healing, rest and hope.
- c. Sometimes this implies guarding the flock from wrong teaching by refuting those who oppose the message (Titus 1:9).
- d. Sometimes it implies correcting, rebuking or encouraging (2 Timothy 4:2).
- e. But the greatest motivational tool in the pastor's arsenal is authentic love (note John 21:15-17, where Jesus re-instated Peter).

Equipping: providing training for those who will do the ministry.

The pastor is not called to do the work of ministry alone, but to prepare, equip and train God's people to do the ministry. Therefore, a pastor must develop complementary, self-directed teams of workers.

Ephesians 4:11-16 calls each member to be equipped to serve, rising to maturity, to the full measure of perfection found in Christ. Each member is called to do her or his part.

In this regard, it is important for the pastor to focus on relationships and vision-casting more than methods, systems, programs and procedures. The pastor seeks to be effective, not just efficient. (1/2010)

Becoming a Conference Ministerial Candidate

- A. Be a licensed local ministerial candidate.
- B. Meet preliminary educational requirements (see ¶15340.B).
- C. Update transcripts of all post-secondary credits, Enrollment Form and a signed copy of your Local Ministerial Candidate Check List to Ministerial Credentialing Services. (See back of *Local Ministerial Candidate Handbook*.)
- D. Connect with the mentor assigned by the ministerial education and guidance board and begin the process of instruction, supervision and related discipline to assure growth in grace, knowledge and leadership skill development.
- E. When applicable, gain clearance for a divorce, annulment or dissolution of marriage, via the prescribed process of review by the ministerial education and guidance board and the Board of Bishops. This also applies to a local ministerial candidate whose spouse has experienced divorce, annulment or dissolution of marriage.
- F. Be recommended to the annual conference by the ministerial education and guidance board following a satisfactory interview that includes the following essential items:
 - i. the Four Basic Categories of Concern (See Local Ministerial Candidate Learning Contract
 - ii. the Four Critical Distinctives (See Ministerial Education and Guidance Manual)
 - iii. the primary responsibilities of an elder (see ¶15310).
 - iv. the questions/categories for local ministerial candidate interview (see ¶15340.D).
- G. Respond to conference ministerial candidate questions before the annual conference (see ¶18710).
- H. Be approved and received by the annual conference.

Notes on Conference Ministerial Candidate status:

1. The ministerial education and guidance board, allowing three years to complete the course of study and preparation for ordination as an elder, usually interviews conference ministerial candidates annually. For conference ministerial candidate status to continue beyond three years, the ministerial education and guidance board must recommend the same to annual conference.
2. The ministerial education and guidance board, during its annual review of a conference ministerial candidate, may consider making a written appeal (with full supporting documentation) to the Board of Bishops for a reduction of the three-year service requirement or for waiving some academic requirements. The basis for such an appeal may include:
 - a lifelong presence in the church and productive in service/ministry
 - effective experience on a church staff
 - effective experience in a para-church ministry
 - effective experience in a cross-cultural setting or mission field
 - unusual life or family circumstances
 - gifts, graces and maturity similar to those expected for candidates following the Apollos Model

Consecrated Deacon

Not all who express a sense of call are spiritually gifted to be elders. There is great diversity in ability, gifting and in the call of God. Elders are responsible for Word, sacrament and order and give oversight of the congregation in fulfilling the mission and expected outcomes of the church. Many elders serve as senior pastors. Others serve as associate pastors with ministry focused to a particular segment or aspect of church life and ministry. All work as a team to fulfill the vision and mission of the church.

Some who are called of God are called to serve as consecrated deacons. This New Testament office is best defined in terms of servant leadership, assisting the pastor in congregational ministries and service in the world. Deacons complement the work of the pastor (usually an ordained elder). They serve in a particular church and are not available for appointment elsewhere. Their gifts are most suited for a support role, though they may give leadership to a segment of the congregation. Some deacons serve as full-time paid staff, while others are part-time or unpaid. All are committed to fulfilling the mission and vision of the church.

Senior pastors and local boards of administration are encouraged to exercise great wisdom as they counsel those called of God toward ordination as an elder or consecration as a deacon. Pastors are encouraged, at the beginning of the mentoring process, to clarify the role of elder and of deacon for a potential local ministerial candidate. Those who sense a call and gifting as a deacon do not pursue local ministerial candidacy as described later in this *Handbook*. Rather, they begin preparation toward consecration as a deacon as defined in the *Deacon Handbook*. They continue as a member of the local church, and if elected, may serve as a lay delegate to the annual conference.

The training and materials for consecrated deacons are patterned after the concept of the Apollos Model for elders' ordination. This model utilizes on-the-job training and pastoral mentoring.