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**GENESIS CONFERENCE  
OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH—USA**

# **POLICY MANUAL**

# INTRODUCTION

## WELCOME TO THE GENESIS FAMILY!

Sometimes people will ask me: “Why be part of a denomination?” As someone who spent the first eleven years of ministry in an independent church (then happily joined a denomination!), that answer is fairly easy for me. There are many reasons...

\*The community (fellowship) that can be built among pastors and lay leadership is important. Friends who are outside of our immediate church can give us ideas, support, and feedback that is vital to our continuing growth. In Genesis, we have created Conference Community Groups (for pastors) for this purpose.

\*The accountability that comes with being part of our system is biblical and healthy. I’ve watched too many independent churches and organizations ignore issues with leadership that later did great damage to the church, as well as to individuals. Accountability comes through annual reports, annual “strategic conversations” with the pastor, participation in Conference Community Groups, and the availability of Listening Elders (other pastors you can call in times of temptation, trial or testing).

\*Resourcing pastors and churches. Training. Coaching. Mentoring. Keeping you up-to-date on changes in the law. Helping local treasurers get their financial systems current and correct. Training new pastors for the future. Processing loans, and helping with property issues. Pension program. Even the “pesky” stuff (like making sure your church incorporation is on file and your insurance is up to date) is meant to protect you.

\*You’re not alone. Both Genesis and the FMC are here to help in times of transition and crisis. People beyond the doors of your local church pray for you. When you need a new pastor, we are part of the process. Too small to host your own mission trip? Connect to one through the FMC where the details are taken care of. Need someone to speak when the pastor is on vacation or even on a sabbatical? We have a list of speakers.

\*You are part of something larger than yourself. In Genesis, you are part of each church that is planted, and each new pastor that is ordained. In the denomination, you are part of a global family of over one and a half million people. Want to partner with an organization around the globe? One phone call can connect you to people doing amazing things on the other side of the world.

The Genesis Conference is committed to providing community, accountability, and resourcing to our pastors, lay leaders, and churches so that we may be fruitful in going and making disciples AND to partnering with the local church to raise up a new generation of leaders.

Thankful to be partnering with you -  
Pam Braman  
Superintendent, Genesis Conference

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## TERMS TO KNOW

**FMCUSA:** Our denominational family, the Free Methodist Church in the United States of America. We are led by a Board of Bishops, currently comprised of three elected elders who oversee segments of the US, in addition to overseeing our international mission regions which are not yet independent. More info is available at: [fmcusa.org](http://fmcusa.org).

**The Book of Discipline:** This is the Free Methodist document or manual that outlines our doctrine and structure. It is updated every four years, in response to our "General Conference" (see below). Copies of the most recent Book of Discipline can be purchased from: <http://fmcusa.org/bookstore/>. Copies of past Disciplines are available for free download at: <https://historical.fmcusa.org/book-of-discipline/>.

**General Conference:** Every four years, elected representatives from all over the world gather to worship, pray, learn, and vote on essential legislative matters, including the election of bishops and changes (resolutions) for our Book of Discipline.

**Annual Conference:** Defined in two different ways...

1. Our annual regional meeting, typically held in the spring, where pastors and lay delegates (non-clergy leaders voted into this role by the congregation) meet for worship, prayer, training and voting.
2. Our regional Free Methodist body of churches. In Western and Central New York (plus a little of Pennsylvania), we are the "Genesis Annual Conference" (usually shortened to the Genesis Conference). The leader of a conference is the superintendent.

**BOA:** Board of Administration. Each local church has an elected BOA (although some will call it something else, such as "Leadership Team"). In addition, both the FMCUSA and Genesis each have their own BOA. The Genesis BOA handles conference finances, processing loans, dealing with property purchase and sale, conference policies, and more. The Genesis BOA is elected each year at Annual Conference, and is composed of half clergy (pastors) and half laity (non-clergy), plus the superintendent. The Conference Treasurer and Conference Secretary, both elected positions, sit on the BOA.

**MEG Board:** Ministerial Education and Guidance Board. The MEG Board oversees the ordination process and is responsible for interviewing and tracking both local and conference ministerial candidates (LMC's and CMC's). The members of this board are also elected each year at Annual Conference, consisting of half clergy and half laity. It also is the board which oversees pastoral health, any necessary disciplinary actions, and keeping pastoral credentials in good order (handling transfers and annual reports).

**MAC:** Ministerial Appointments Committee. The MAC is ultimately responsible for ensuring each church has a lead pastor and placing qualified individuals into those roles (called “appointments”). The MAC, which is comprised of the conference Superintendent and at least two other elected individuals (one clergy and and one lay) works collaboratively with pastors, delegates, church boards and field superintendents to find the best fit for everyone involved.

**Nominating Committee:** The committee which annually identifies candidates and determines nominations for the standing boards in the conference, in addition to recommending delegates for General Conference every four years.

## ORGANIZATION

### GENESIS CONFERENCE OFFICERS

**Conference Superintendent** (Paid) – ordained Elder, responsible for overall leadership of the conference, elected every four years.

**Conference Treasurer** (Historically non-paid) – lay or clergy person, responsible for oversight of conference finances and Finance Committee, elected annually.

**Conference Secretary** (Historically non-paid unless included as part of a staff position; see next section) – lay or clergy person, responsible for recording minutes for BOA and Annual Conference and maintaining related records, elected annually.

### GENESIS CONFERENCE TEAM (PAID & NON-PAID STAFF)

In order to fulfill the mission and vision of the Genesis Conference, the superintendent may structure the staff of the conference accordingly. Any proposed staffing shall be approved by the Genesis BOA. The superintendent shall provide job descriptions to the BOA. The superintendent shall approve appropriate working environments, including designating remote accommodations.

Potential staff may include but is not limited to: Director of Finance, Director of Operations, Assistant to the Superintendent, Associate Superintendent, MEG Coordinator, etc.

## BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION (BOA)

### RESPONSIBILITIES

Develops and approves Genesis annual budget to provide financial support and financial administration for all conference ministries and employees.

Develops and administers policies related to conference churches and ministries.

Serves as the Board of Trustees and oversees all legal issues related to the conference.

Appoints ad hoc task groups to complete specific objectives or make evaluations.

Prepares agenda for Genesis meetings and other related activities.

Serves as the governing body of the Genesis Annual Conference between sittings, with power to act, including for the sale or purchase of property.

Reviews and determines final outcome of all local church property sales, purchases, and major improvements. See "Church Property Changes" section for more details.

Develops and monitors standards for pastoral salary, housing, insurance, and related compensation and benefits issues.

Insures that an annual review of conference financial records occurs.

Works to give strategic planning attention to the objectives of the conference, aiming to align with the mission and vision of both the FMCUSA and Genesis.

### COMPOSITION

Nine members (with a minimum of four according to the 2023 Book of Discipline Par. 5200) elected by the Annual Conference to rotating three-year terms, plus the Superintendent or representative, giving due regard to lay/clergy balance.

At Annual Conference, the Nominating Committee will present nominations for each open BOA position, and will also present a nomination for Conference Secretary and Treasurer.

The Conference Secretary and Treasurer shall be ex-officio members with vote.

The Directors of Finance and Operations shall be ex-officio members with voice but without vote.

## **CONFERENCE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

Responsible for the oversight, policies, and strategy of Conference finances, including review of conference financials before each BOA meeting.

### **COMPOSITION**

Conference Treasurer, Director of Financial Services, Director of Operations, and at least two other BOA members.

Conference Treasurer serves as chairperson.

The composition of the Finance Committee is approved by the BOA.

## **MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE (MAC)**

### **PURPOSE**

In the Free Methodist Church, lead pastors are appointed by and answerable to the Ministerial Appointments Committee in their respective Annual Conference.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES — PER THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE, ¶15220.**

When a pastoral vacancy occurs, the Superintendent, MAC and Field Superintendent (when appropriate) work with the local church to identify and appoint a pastor who is a good match with the church for its next season of ministry.

Review appointments annually.

In conjunction with the Superintendent, work with churches and pastors who are in conflict.

### **COMPOSITION**

At least one lay person and one elder, elected by Annual Conference to rotating three year terms, serving along with the Bishop (chair) and Conference Superintendent (vice-chair and coordinator).

At Annual Conference, the Nominating Committee will present nominations for each open position on the MAC.

Elected MAC members will also serve on the current MEG Board.



## **MINISTERIAL EDUCATION & GUIDANCE (MEG) BOARD**

### **RESPONSIBILITIES — PER THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE, ¶15230**

Oversee the professional development of existing conference clergy.

Work with pastors and churches in problem resolution when referred by the Superintendent.

Monitor and pass on the character of appointed clergy and ministry staff in local churches as required by the Book of Discipline.

Oversee the development of those wishing to enter into itinerant ministry.

Review the applications of those seeking grants for seminary education, including the John Wesley Seminary Foundation grants through FMCUSA.

### **COMPOSITION**

Ideally, four elders and four lay people elected by Genesis to staggered, rotating three year terms.

At Annual Conference, the Nominating Committee will present nominations for each open position on the MEG Board.

MEG Board will automatically include seats for those who are elected to the MAC.

## **INTERVIEWING MINISTERIAL EDUCATION & GUIDANCE (I-MEG) BOARD**

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

In small groups, interview the CMC & LMC Candidates, according to a scripted list of interview questions, providing feedback and recommendations to the full I-MEG board for each candidate.

### **COMPOSITION**

I-MEG Board members are nominated and approved by the Conference BOA on an annual basis.

I-MEG Board members need to be available for full days of interviews on two or three Saturdays per year, as well as an annual training session.

Members must carry a high level of discernment and keep a high level of confidentiality.

## **NOMINATING COMMITTEE — FROM FMCUSA 2023 BOOK OF DISCIPLINE**

### **¶5080**

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Nominating Committee shall:

- Prepare for the annual conference a list of nominations for positions vacated by either resignations or expiration of terms; and,
- Review board and committee memberships in light of the standing rules of the annual conference.

#### **COMPOSITION**

Each annual conference will have a standing Nominating Committee approved by the annual conference of not less than six members, giving consideration to equal representation of ministerial and lay members. General considerations in the selection of the Society Nominating Committee shall also apply to the annual conference (see ¶16310).

Representation by districts/regions or other appropriate distinctions shall be determined in advance by the conference body.

Nominating Committee members may be elected to rotating terms as determined by the conference. The chair shall be elected by the Nominating Committee.

#### **TERM LIMITS FOR CONFERENCE LEVEL BOARDS AND COMMITTEES**

An individual elected by the Genesis Annual Conference to serve on a Conference level board/committee (namely: BOA, MEG, and Nominating Committee) are to serve a 3-year term; no more than two full consecutive terms; with at least a year of not serving on any conference boards/committees in order to be eligible as a candidate for a new 3-year term of service.

In the case when elected members of a Conference Board become employees of the Conference: Genesis employees may serve as ex-officio members of conference boards with the approval of the Superintendent and BOA Chair. However, Conference employees are not eligible for election to any position on conference boards. A person who becomes a conference employee while already elected to a conference board will end service in that elected position.

## **AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS**

The following are the requirements for an organization to be an affiliate organization of the Genesis Conference:

- An FM Elder serves on the Board of the organization
- A Child Safety plan is kept on file at the Conference Office
- Demonstrates a high degree of doctrinal and missional alignment with the FMCUSA and its current Book of Discipline.
- The BOA will approve or affirm all affiliate organizations annually.

# ADMINISTRATION

## OVERALL CONFERENCE POLICIES

No person may serve in any elected position for more than six consecutive years except the area Bishop, Conference Superintendent, Conference Secretary, Conference Treasurer, and Ministerial Appointments Committee.

In the event that a member of the Board of Administration, Ministerial Education and Guidance Board, or Ministerial Appointments Committee is not able to complete his/her term, the Board of Administration is authorized to appoint a replacement until the next Annual Conference at which time the Conference body will elect a person to fill the term.

The Superintendent shall be an ex-officio member of all conference committees and task groups.

In keeping with the Book of Discipline, the Genesis Conference is committed to keeping a balance of lay and clergy in elected positions.

Amendments to this Policy Manual must be approved by the Genesis Conference Board of Administration by a simple majority of those present. General edits will be made from time to time and can be handled as an administrative function. *This Genesis Policy Manual is intended to serve as a supplement to the FMC-USA Book of Discipline and the Holy Scriptures. Any place in which Genesis policy is determined to be in direct contradiction with the Book of Discipline or the Bible should be brought to the BOA for review.*

The Conference Superintendent, Director of Operations, Director of Financial Services, Chair of Conference Board of Administration (BOA), and the Conference Treasurer are authorized to sign contracts, deeds, and other legal documents related to real estate and/or financial matters on behalf of the Genesis Conference Board Administration.

## FINANCIAL POLICIES

Conference boards, committees, and task groups shall organize without a treasurer except for the Board of Administration.

The fiscal year for the Genesis Conference and its churches shall be the calendar year.

The Genesis Conference prioritizes allocating funds and resources to those initiatives that best support the growth of our conference at large and align with the values of the Genesis Conference. Conference funds shall not be made available to support non-Free Methodist

ministries or agencies. We may pass along requests for support from outside organizations to our local churches, who are free to make their own determinations concerning support for such organizations and programs who are consistent with the local church's ministries and priorities.

Any matter presented on the floor of the Annual Conference involving finances shall be referred to the Board of Administration with power to act unless the bar of the Conference elects to vote on the measure by two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) majority of the bar.

The Conference Treasurer(s) and Director of Financial Services are designated as authorized signatories for signing Conference checks.

All Conference records will be subject to a minimum of an Annual Financial Review or Agreed Upon Procedures Review by an independent auditor.

The Conference Finance Committee is a legal sub-committee of Genesis Conference BOA.

The Genesis Conference BOA shall approve all investments of monies and liquidation of assets, upon recommendation of the Finance Team.

All Conference and local church Treasurers shall be bonded.

#### FAIR SHARE

"Fair Share" is the monthly amount each church pays to support the greater, connected church (FMCUSA and Genesis Conference). Each church's share is determined as a percentage of their prior year's income (minus pass-through expenses—see next entry), or calculated by the Genesis Director of Finance according to their current income (with the approval of the Genesis BOA). The Fair Share percentage is set and approved annually by the Genesis BOA.

A portion of the money received is forwarded to the denomination to cover our part in the Equal Participation Plan (i.e. covering the denomination's budget). The remainder stays with the Conference to fund our annual budget.

Each local church is responsible for making monthly Fair Share payments to the Conference, as well as separate pension payments to the FMCUSA for their appointed pastors. Local church treasurers must submit required reports in a timely manner, as designated by the Superintendent and the denomination.

## PASS-THROUGH DEDUCTION POLICY

Pass-through items are an allowable deduction in calculating a church's adjusted total annual income as reported on the Church Annual Report to FMCUSA. The adjusted total income figure is used to calculate a church's EPP and Fair Share obligations.

### QUALIFYING PASS-THROUGHS

Any *donations* received toward capital projects, church planting or as part of an estate gift or bequest do not count toward the church's annual income.

Any *spending* toward attending conferences, training, missions trips, or toward supporting missions, outreach or another local non-profit (such as a food pantry) do not count toward the church's annual income.

Any *funds* that are collected by the church and are aggregated for convenience or for efficiency/cost savings for which the donor would not receive a taxable donation receipt (money for concerts, events, etc.) do not count toward the church's annual income.

### GENESIS CONFERENCE PROCESS FOR REVIEWING AND APPROVING PASS-THROUGHS:

A pass-through review committee will consist of the Conference Administrator and Conference Treasurer. The Superintendent will serve as a third person, when needed, for a tie-breaker or to help resolve or avoid a conflict of interest.

The Committee will review applications for possible deductions; the results of the review will be reported back to Genesis churches prior to finalizing the decision. Churches must either confirm or appeal the results of the review as soon as possible after receiving their report.

The Committee will work within time frame established by FMCUSA.

Final & signed Pass-Through Deduction Applications will be sent to FMCUSA by their deadline.

## CHALLENGE LOAN FUND (CLF)

**Purpose:** CLF exists to offer low interest loans to churches who may not qualify for traditional loan funding options.

Monies for the Challenge Loan Fund shall come from the sale of Conference / church properties.

Any churches that are to be granted loans from the Challenge Loan Fund must be approved by the Board of Administration.

Churches receiving CLF loans will be monitored by the Board of Administration.

The interest earned on these funds may be used by the Board of Administration for Conference approved ministries.

Designated funds shall be placed in the Challenge Loan Fund as soon as they become available.

## CHURCH RELAUNCH FUND

The Genesis Conference will consider extending funds on a monthly or quarterly disbursement basis to a church relaunch if the following requirements are met:

- The pastor or church leader applies to the Conference for evaluation and approval.
- The pastor or church leader presents a clear plan for growth which includes deadlines for meeting specified goals, and may include closing temporarily.
- The pastor or church leader presents a detailed budget to demonstrate where funds will be allocated in order to fuel ministry growth, and is prepared to provide a Profit and Loss report and Balance Sheet to the Conference as needed.
- The pastor or church leader's plan includes clear goals including: securing buy-in from a percentage of established congregants, attendance, and discipleship decisions.
- The pastor or church leader has identified a coach (possibly a field superintendent) to regularly meet with them throughout the relaunch process.
- The amount of funds granted and the timeline of disbursement will be determined on a case by case basis by the Conference.

## EARLY INTERVENTION POLICY

**Purpose:** To identify, engage and address churches needing assistance in becoming productive, healthy, and financially sound.

The Genesis BOA will review the Monthly Fair Share Summary Reports to identify churches that are 3 months or more behind in their Fair Share contributions, which will signal the need for communication and possible intervention.

The Genesis MEG Board, and/or Superintendent will engage churches requiring assistance based on Annual Confidential Reports and interim feedback from MEG Board Interviews, and/or direct contact with the Superintendent.

An early intervention team (drawn from conference staff, MEG, BOA, Finance Committee members, etc.) will be assembled based on the perceived need of the local church to include, but not be limited to:

- MEG/personnel consulting
- building and construction or project review
- administrative consulting
- boardsmanship consulting
- team building consulting
- church health and systems consulting

## **RISK MANAGEMENT, INSURANCE, AND LIABILITY FOR LOCAL CHURCHES**

### **PREVENTION OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH**

All churches will implement and provide annual confirmation of the [Policy on Sexual Misconduct Toward Children and Adults](#). The Policy includes a requirement that the church perform a background check on all volunteers and staff who work with children. The requirements for a background check are outlined in the Policy. Any and all abuse situations identified must be forwarded to the Conference Superintendent.

### **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

All churches and ministries of the Genesis Conference that have employees are required to adopt a Sexual Harassment policy. The Genesis Conference recommends that each church and ministry of the Conference with employees adopt the sample [Sexual Harassment Policy](#) from Brotherhood Mutual which has been approved by the Free Methodist denominational leadership (or a stronger one). If a different Sexual Harassment Policy is adopted, it must be submitted to the Genesis Conference BOA for review and approval. All churches and ministries of the Conference that have employees are also required to complete Sexual Harassment prevention training.

### **INSURANCE**

All churches must be in compliance with the insurance guidelines recommended by the FMCUSA. (See [the Insurance Worksheet for Local Churches](#) at [genesismc.com/church-administration](http://genesismc.com/church-administration))



Every local church must carry fire, general liability, sexual abuse coverage, medical, and general comprehensive insurance, per the minimum requirements of the FMCUSA.

Each local church is responsible for providing workers compensation, life and long-term disability insurance for its appointed and paid employees. The Genesis Conference carries a policy for these kinds of insurance that pastors can be enrolled in at any time. It is highly recommended that the church also consider providing tenant insurance and short-term disability.

Employees with religious responsibilities in local churches are exempt from the New York State Unemployment Insurance system but can elect to participate by petitioning the New York State Unemployment Commission. Our recommendation is that the church review and identify each job description and retain its exemption within legal requirements. If the local church employs non-clergy staff it may be required and beneficial to elect to participate in the NYS Unemployment System depending on job descriptions defined by the local church.

#### LITIGATION

If the local church faces any litigation of any kind, the Conference office and the Chief Operating Officer of the FMCUSA must be informed immediately.

#### EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Genesis Conference strongly encourages each local church to have an emergency action plan in place. Use the resources [here](#) to create a plan appropriate for your church and review it on an annual basis. The Department of Homeland Security also has a resource [here](#).

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Your church is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization that is incorporated as a non-profit corporation under the NYS Religious Corporation Act. Maintenance of its tax-exempt status is important both for its continued financial stability and for public support. Therefore, the IRS as well as state regulatory and tax officials view the operations of your church as a public trust, which is subject to scrutiny by and accountable to such governmental authorities as well as to members of the public. Accordingly, all churches are strongly encouraged to adopt a conflict of interest policy for all employees, board members and leaders within the congregation. The Genesis Conference sample [Conflict of Interest policy](#) is recommended.

#### CHURCH RECORDS

The local church should retain all vital business records and documents in both physical and digital formats that can be readily located or accessed by the local church and/or Genesis Conference officials and, in case of changes in leadership in the local church, by its future

officials and leaders. Because digital record formats can become obsolete, local churches should retain physical hard copies of records as well as digital copies.

Vital documents and records to be preserved include but are not limited to the following:

- the local church's certificate of incorporation, its by-laws or constitution, and any amendments;
- for a period of at least ten years, any contracts to which the local church is a party, any intellectual property agreements between the church and any of its pastors or staff members; and
- for a period of at least twenty years, all minutes of the local church's board meetings; financial giving records; financial statements, including profit and loss and balance sheets
- for an indefinite period of time, copies of all background checks obtained with respect to persons serving in church ministries, and property or other liability insurance policies obtained by the local Church.

## **CHURCH PROPERTY CHANGES – BUYING, SELLING, LOANS, LEASEHOLD IMPROVEMENTS, ETC.**

### **PURCHASE, LEASE OR REMODEL**

When a local church in the Genesis Conference plans to purchase, remodel, or alter properties, and the cost for such a project will exceed 10% of its annual income, the following guidelines will be followed (regardless of the availability of funds):

The Director of Operations serves as the liaison between the local church and the Conference BOA in all matters relating to church property changes. The Director has no authority to act and all final decisions will be made by the BOA.

Contact the Director of Operations as early in the project as possible to consult with him/her on the intentions of the church. If a property purchase is being considered, please review the [FMCUSA Checklist for Purchasing Real Estate](#).

Complete, send, and present to the BOA the appropriate application (from [here](#)) based on the type of project planned. This will allow the Board of Administration opportunity to dialog with the local board, planning/building committee, (or other designated group) if deemed necessary. Accompanying the application, the BOA will also need to know that history of average worship attendance and finances for the past two years, plus the current year to date

attendance, income/expenses and performance against budget to gauge growth trends and church health.

The Director of Operations shall advise the pastor if and when the church is going to be required to present the project in person to the Conference BOA. If a formal presentation is required, the following persons from the local society should be present when the presentation is made: pastor, trustee chairperson, and any other representative involved in property improvement, unless waived by the BOA. When the presentation is made, written evidence of the vote of the society or the governing body (in instances where the society has transferred power to act for them) will be presented, including the society's or governing body's vote, written material regarding the number of eligible voting members, number of those members actually present, and the numbers casting yes and no votes on a project.

Working drawings and plans must be presented for proposed new structures and for alterations to existing structures.

If changes involve purchasing property, written evidence of equal property values must be presented (from a local realtor, bank appraiser, or similar real estate professional).

Evidence of the local society's ability to secure needed finances and its ability to repay, along with the impact of same on the local budget. Also, if indebtedness is anticipated, the local church will be required to process the [FMCUSA Application for Permission to Mortgage](#).

The Board of Administration may decide to act on the application, table it for further review, or approve it contingently with a requirement for obtaining further information and/or documentation.

Churches requesting the purchase of property are expected to include a 90 day contingency in their purchase offer to allow adequate time for this process to move forward, unless permission for a shorter period is granted in advance by the Conference Director of Operations.

Churches are encouraged to limit down payments to 1% of the purchase price or up to a maximum of \$5,000. Higher amounts may be considered in consultation with the Conference Director of Operations.

#### **APPLICATION TO SELL PROPERTY**

The Application to Sell Property should include a written appraisal of value, rationale for sale, and a plan for the disposition of funds once received. Local churches must present written evidence of the vote to sell, including how many are eligible to vote, the number who actually voted, and the number voting yes and no. Approval for the sale must come from the Genesis

Conference ([Property Sale Application](#)), FMCUSA ([Application for Permission To Sell](#)), and from the New York State Attorney General and Local Supreme Court Judge.

## ABANDONED PROPERTY

The Board of Administration shall have authority to dispose of abandoned properties at their discretion for the best use of the conference and in conjunction with the guidelines specified in the [FMCUSA Book of Discipline](#).

## INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

In the course of their employment by local churches, paid church staff members regularly create intellectual property that is subject to copyright. Pastors write sermons and send written homilies to their parishioners; teachers draft curricula and other educational materials; technical staff create software; and music and arts staff create audio-visual materials, write hymns and songs for worship, craft musical arrangements, and record their own compositions and the compositions of others. The possibility that copyrightable material may have commercial value and that a local church or the staff member will desire to make it available to others, with or without compensation, can give rise to issues as to the legal ownership of the intellectual property.

While recognizing that copyrightable material created by a church employee in the course of his or her employment ordinarily belongs to the local church as employer, the Genesis Conference recognizes that it will sometimes be in the best interests of both a local church and an employee to enter into alternative contractual arrangements, not only to encourage an employee's creative endeavors in furtherance of the church's ministries, but also because the ability to exploit the commercial value of intellectual property can afford a staff member the ability to supplement otherwise modest compensation.

In order to ensure that a local church's interests are fully secured, any such contractual arrangements should, ideally, be made at the time the staff member is hired and as a condition to hiring. Any such contractual arrangements should reflect terms that both parties deem fair and reasonable given the needs of the local church and the nature and circumstances of the employment. A local church is encouraged to consider such arrangements with staff members in appropriate circumstances.

Accordingly, the Board of Administration of the Genesis Conference of the Free Methodist Church recommends that any person who is offered a paid position on the staff of a local

church be provided a copy of this Policy and be asked by the local church to acknowledge in writing his or her agreement to the following:

*It is understood and recognized between \_\_\_\_\_ [name of staff member] ("the Employee") and \_\_\_\_\_ [name of individual church body] (the "Church") that any intellectual property that is subject to copyright and that is created by a person in the course of his or her employment is, as a matter of law, ordinarily owned by the person's employer, in this case, the Church.*

Accordingly, in the event that the Employee should, in the course of his/her employment, create or invent material that is subject to copyright, any such intellectual property shall remain the property of the Church unless the Church and the Employee shall enter into a mutually acceptable, alternative contractual agreement.

No such agreement shall be binding, effective, or legally enforceable unless it is in writing and signed by both parties. No such agreement shall be entered into on behalf of any local church unless it has been formally approved in writing by the local church's governing body.

In the absence of such an agreement, the Employee shall take all reasonably required steps to protect the Church's ownership of all material created in the course of his or her employment that are subject to copyright, and shall take all appropriate steps to secure to the Church the exclusive rights afforded by law to copyright owners. In the event of a breach by the Employee of his or her obligations under this agreement, the Church shall be entitled to exercise all rights and remedies afforded by law, including the right to obtain injunctive relief, and shall be entitled to recover attorney's fees reasonably incurred in the course of enforcing its rights.

Any such agreement shall be made between the Church and the Employee before any copyrightable material is created. In the event such an agreement is contemplated, both the Church and the Employee should consult legal counsel with respect to their respective interests.

Copyrightable material that is created by the Employee entirely on his or her own time, without using facilities or property of the Church, that does not relate directly to the Church's ministries and that does not result from the Employee's work on behalf of the Church, shall remain the property of the Employee.

## NAME CHANGE POLICY

Churches who desire to change their name are able to do so, but must adhere to the following guidelines:

- The church must be clearly identified as a Free Methodist Congregation in its organizing documents (i.e. by laws, constitution and articles of incorporation). If "Free Methodist" is not explicitly included in the name, it must be clearly identified within the organizing and governing documents that the church is a Free Methodist Church. Additionally, all real property that the church owns must include the "trust clause" in the deed as found in Paragraph 6400 D of the 2011 Book of Discipline.
- If a church chooses to name/rename itself without including the words "Free Methodist" it must seek approval to do so from the Conference Superintendent and the Genesis Conference BOA.
- The church should send a letter to the Genesis Conference Board of Administration requesting the name change and explaining the rationale.
- This letter should indicate whether the name change is being accomplished through a "DBA" process or an amended Certificate of Incorporation.
- Churches **are not** required to include the title, "Free Methodist Church" on external signage. However, a phrase such as "A Free Methodist Church" or "A Free Methodist Worshipping Community/Congregation" is encouraged.
- This policy applies to churches at every stage of recognized development as noted in the Free Methodist Church USA Book of Discipline including: Church Plants, Fellowships, Societies and Affiliated Congregations.

# PERSONNEL / HUMAN RESOURCES

## PASTORAL CARE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Pastoral care and accountability is a high priority in Genesis. Every pastor and church has access to a team of overseers (superintendent and staff) and a field superintendent. Pastors can also access Conference Community Groups with other pastors, Listening Elders, and subsidized counseling.

## COUNSELING COVERAGE FOR PASTORS

Genesis Conference may cover 50% of documented uncovered costs, for up to six sessions of counseling, after bills are submitted to insurance. This assistance with counseling costs will be available:

- 1) for pastors under appointment in churches.
- 2) for follow-up counseling appointments for ministerial candidates who have completed the conference required mental health assessment and are recommended to do so with a qualified and MEG approved counselor. The mental health assessment is part of the MEG/ordination system.

## PASTORAL COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS GUIDELINES

### PASTOR'S EMPLOYMENT STATUS

A pastor is approved for employment and appointed to a congregation by the Conference, but is employed by the local church.

Compensation and benefit standards are provided on the conference website through the [Genesis Conference Compensation Grid System](#), found on the Resources page. These standards are considered a beginning point for pastoral support. A full-time pastor is defined as one who is working 40 hours or more per week for the church.

For compensation purposes, the pastor's work week will begin on Monday and end on Sunday.

In establishing an annual salary for the pastor, churches are encouraged to pay their pastor(s) generously, comparable to other professionals in their community.

Pastors are responsible for submitting a [Change of Status Form](#) with FMC-USA in a timely manner whenever there is a change in compensation (cash salary or housing allowance). This form should be submitted within 30 days of any change.

Pastors who are paid on a part-time basis are free to pursue supplemental income. Pastors who are not being paid full-time should not be asked or expected to be working full-time hours on behalf of the church.

#### THE MINIMUM FINANCIAL SUPPORT PACKAGE FOR FULL-TIME PASTORS INCLUDES:

- Salary, housing (or fair market value of parsonage), utilities, Medicare and Social Security. The per item breakdown of the total salary package shall be at the discretion of the pastor.
- Life insurance, disability insurance, and accidental death & dismemberment insurance. These are available as a [group policy](#) through the Conference. The local church is responsible for making timely premium payments to Conference if this method is used.
- Workers' Compensation Insurance.
- FM Pension – Pension payments for eligible appointed pastors are made directly to the FMCUSA Human Resources based on Pension formula provided by [FMCUSA fm:hr](#). Pastors are responsible for filing their own [Change of Status](#) Form, whenever needed.
- *While not part of their compensation*, appointed pastors are encouraged to work with the local church leadership team to establish an Accountable Reimbursement Plan. This is for reimbursement of “on-the-job” expenses and mileage plus continuing education. See the [Guidelines for the Accountable Reimbursement Plan](#).

#### ADDITIONAL BENEFITS FOR FULL-TIME PASTORS INCLUDES:

- Paid Time Off (PTO—includes vacation, personal and sick days):
  - Pastors with up to 10 years of service within the denomination qualify for a minimum of four weeks (28 days) of PTO per year.
  - Pastors with 11 or more years of service within the denomination qualify for a minimum of five weeks (35 days) of PTO per year.
  - PTO is renewed each Conference year, which runs from July 1 to June 30. PTO does not build or carry over from year to year.
  - Pastors keep track of their own PTO usage. Pastors provide the local church board with advance notice of vacation plans and emergency contact information.



- A pastor is responsible for providing to the local church board a ministry coverage plan for his/her vacation time period.
- The local church will assume the cost of a guest speaker while the pastor is on vacation, if needed.
- Unusual circumstances requiring extended sick leave are to be reviewed by local church board and MEG Board and should follow the Pastor Wholeness and Family Medical Leave Act policy. Personal and family health: pastors are encouraged to pay special attention to their mental and emotional well-being, and that of their families. Guidelines are found in the [Pastor Wholeness policy](#).
- Recognized paid holidays are: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. If a holiday falls on a Sunday, another day of the week will be designated as a paid holiday.
- Family Medical Leave Policy: Pastors are eligible for up to 12 weeks of leave to care for themselves, their spouses, parents and children. The full description can be found in Section C of the [Pastor Wholeness policy](#).
- Maternity/Paternity Leave: Parents to newborns, and/or new parents by virtue of adoption or foster care are eligible for paid leave to care for the child and aid in the family transition. The full description can be found in Section B of the [Pastor Wholeness policy](#).
- Paid Continuing Education: 1 week per year to attend a conference or other training event. Churches are to pay registration cost for the pastor (and spouse when appropriate) to attend at least one ministry conference or training annually.
- Paid Study Leave: 1 week per year for the purpose of study and reading (Distinct from vacation weeks and any continuing education)
- Ministry Involvement Outside the Local Church: Such ministry is considered work-time and arrangements are to be worked out with the local church board. Commitments will not normally exceed 20 hours per month. Examples include Conference/denominational service; weddings, funerals, or other services for community members; pastoral or prayer gatherings. *This is considered separate from the work of outreach or evangelism in the community, which is already an anticipated part of the life of the pastor and church, though much of it takes place beyond the walls of the church building.*
- Churches are to pay any lodging, meal, and travel costs for pastor to attend Annual Conference.

**Churches and pastors are to comply with current Federal & State Tax regulations and also specific Clergy Salary tax guidelines including:**

- Appropriate designation of housing allowance portion of annual salary
- Actual reimbursement for professional expenses
- Quarterly reporting and payment of withholding & self-employment taxes
- Taking advantage of savings through items such as Roth IRA

Pastors are encouraged to invest their financial resources responsibly and ethically.

## **FM PENSION PROGRAM**

Each appointed and ordained pastor, along with conference ministerial candidates that serve as lead pastors who receive compensation/housing, as well as those who work in conference offices, are required to be enrolled in the plan. Others who may enroll voluntarily include local church and organization staff including conference ministerial candidates, and licensed pastors (with board approval), and ordained FM pastors released for service outside the denomination. Throughout the time of employment, all participants are responsible for ensuring changes in annual compensation are updated accordingly.

Churches are responsible for making monthly pension payments for their pastors who are eligible for the FM pension program. The local church must ensure that their pastor's pension is fully funded. Payment is made directly to FMC-USA. Since pension is part of expected pastoral support, churches are responsible for regular, on-time monthly payments.

All qualified newly hired pastors and first-time salaried pastors are required to enroll in the FM Pension program by completing the [Pension Enrollment Form](#) no later than December 31 of the year in which they were hired or began receiving a salary.

## **PARSONAGE AND HOUSING ALLOWANCE GUIDELINES**

Churches and pastors are to collaboratively work out housing arrangements.

### **PARSONAGES**

In ministry settings where a parsonage is provided, it should be large enough to accommodate the needs of current and future pastors and their families. The parsonage should be attractive and functional so it represents the church well in the community and brings joy to those who live in it. The staff and volunteers of the church should ensure that the

utilities are paid for and that the house is maintained well, while giving the pastor the freedom to live in it as if it is their own.

Pastors should be aware that many churches that have a parsonage will not be able to afford a housing allowance and ownership of the parsonage, even if they would prefer to own their own home. The parsonage is part of pastoral compensation and therefore a valuable asset when maintained well. Renting out the parsonage for income is discouraged. Each appointed pastor is encouraged to determine whether a housing allowance is appropriate for his/her circumstance.

## HOUSING ALLOWANCE

Where a parsonage is not available or the pastor wants to own his/her own home, a Housing Allowance Resolution must be approved annually by the local church board. See [Guidelines for Clergy Housing Allowance](#) and [Sample Housing Allowance resolution](#). Also, please see FMCUSA guidance on clergy housing allowance and tax considerations.

A Housing Allowance Resolution must be approved annually by the local church board. See [Guidelines for Clergy Housing Allowance](#) and [Sample Housing Allowance resolution](#).

## SABBATICAL FOR PASTORS

We encourage our churches and pastors to work together to plan for sabbatical leave for their pastor(s). A sabbatical leave is a period of time away from the pastor's regular duties, offered to its pastors by the church, for the mutual benefit of the pastor and the local church.

A sabbatical is not a vacation, not a reward for good work, nor simply a perk to keep the pastor happy. It is a time for personal renewal, formal or informal study, and professional re-tooling. It is good for the teacher to become a student again and the professional clergy to become simply a worshipper. The benefits for the health and longevity of our pastors will be passed along as a byproduct to our congregations.

Genesis Conference elders appointed as lead pastors can apply for a three-month sabbatical leave after having completed six or more years of continuous, full-time service in a local church. In some cases, allowances may be made for those with a minimum of six years continuous service in multiple local churches within the conference, in consultation with the Superintendent. Local churches are encouraged to consider establishing sabbatical policies for staff pastors.

See [Sabbatical Policy](#) for full policy and guidelines. This policy was established and will be updated periodically by the MEG Board.

## **EMPLOYMENT OF CHURCH STAFF IN MINISTRY POSITIONS**

### **NON-APPOINTED PERSONS**

Churches are allowed and encouraged, if financially able, to hire needed staff to support the ministry of the local church. Appropriate background checks are required for each employee. Such persons should be clearly introduced to (when applicable) and in agreement with the Free Methodist Statement of Faith in the Book of Discipline, the FM Way, and our denominational values and culture.

### **APPOINTED PERSONS**

When considering hiring a pastor under appointment as an associate pastor or an assistant to the pastor, the local church will work in accord with the Superintendent and the MEG Board for the hiring process.

## **RETIRED PASTORS AND SPOUSAL BENEFIT (LEGACY)**

For pastors who retired prior to December 31, 2015, a monthly stipend for supplemental health care was provided as a fixed benefit amount. Eligibility was as follows:

- Applicant must have been a member of the Conference and at an age that made them eligible for Medicare at the time of their retirement to have been eligible for retirement benefits.
- Applicant must have served as a full-time pastor within the Free Methodist Church for a minimum of 15 years.
- Applicant must have served in the Genesis Conference full-time for ten or more years during his/her active ministry, and must have served the Genesis Conference full-time within the last five years before retirement.
- Surviving spouse qualifications are based on the pastor's qualifications and are eligible to receive one half (1/2) of the benefit. Qualifications can be waived by the Board of Administration in extenuating circumstances.
- Pastors retiring after 2015 will not receive a monthly stipend for supplemental health care.

## **RETIRED PASTORS' EMERGENCY HEALTH BENEFIT**

The Conference has established a Pastors' Emergency Fund for healthcare emergencies during retirement. Amounts provided depend on the availability of funds, at the discretion of the superintendent and the BOA.

## **SURVIVING SPOUSE OF AN ACTIVE PASTOR—BENEFITS**

Health insurance will be provided to the surviving spouse of an active appointed pastor if the pastor was the provider of health insurance for the family. Eligibility would be as follows:

- The qualifying pastor's spouse must be in good standing with the Free Methodist Church.
- The qualifying pastor's spouse will be fully covered under health insurance at Conference expense for a reasonable period of time, as determined by the Board of Administration.
- If insurance is available from another source, the Conference will reimburse the surviving spouse up to the cost of the Conference plan.
- Each and every situation will be reviewed by the Board of Administration.
- The Conference will cover the moving costs of the surviving spouse of an appointed pastor who passed away while under conference appointment if the spouse is living in a parsonage.
- In the event an appointed pastor dies, the Conference Superintendent will work with the local church to assist the surviving spouse with the provision of housing for up to six months.

## **GLOBAL ASSOCIATE**

A Global Associate is a pastor under appointment in the conference for ministry broader than a church. He or she raises their own funds/salary. A Global Associate remains under the oversight of the conference.