



Free Methodist Church USA
39th General Conference
RESOLUTION

INSTRUCTIONS:

Complete requested information, adding additional pages as necessary. Save and e-mail completed form to your Annual Conference office.

INTRODUCED BY: General Conference Delegates of The River Conference

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NAME: The River Conference

WRITTEN BY: Michael Traylor, Superintendent

General Conference Secretary - OFFICE USE ONLY

Resolution No. 416

Received Date: 12/30/2022

Resolution Committee Grade: _____

BOA Consideration: _____

GC Consideration: _____

RELATED TO PARAGRAPH: 4110

Referred to Ministry Team Number:

SUBJECT OR TITLE: Expansion of the Board of Bishops

Final Vote: Yes No

WHEREAS:

The book of discipline states regarding the responsibilities of Bishops:

¶4100 Bishops are the general overseers of the Church.

They lead the Church to fulfill its mission which requires them to be holy examples with skill and experience to provide that oversight. They must understand the nature and purpose of the Church. They must also be able to communicate clearly the gospel, the mission and vision of the Free Methodist Church; possess a well-cultivated understanding of other cultures; and, identify, develop, and lead godly, competent leaders. Each bishop shall be amenable to the General Conference for the discharge of his/her official duties and shall be responsible for his/her conduct to the annual conference to which he/she belongs.

This includes oversight in Annual conferences, World Missions, as well as participation of the conference Board of Administration, Study Commission on Doctrine, and ecumenical liaisons. Although harder to quantify, vision casting and missional alignment continue to demand significant time and energies from our Bishops.

With regards to structure and the number of the members of the Board of Bishops, The Book of Discipline reads:

The Nomination and Election of Bishops

*¶4110 A. The General Conference shall elect by ballot two or more traveling elders as bishops to serve as the pastoral overseers of various areas of the denomination who shall constitute the Board of Bishops. These are to be persons who exhibit exemplary character and leadership qualities, and who embody deep commitment to the mission, doctrine and theology of the Free Methodist Church. The term of office of bishops shall be four years and shall begin 90 days after the close of the General Conference at which they are elected. **The number of bishops to be elected will be established by General Conference action and remains in effect until changed by a subsequent General Conference action.***

¶4110 B. The nomination and election process shall be as follows:

1. Call to Prayer: During the year prior to General Conference, the Board of Bishops and the Board of Administration shall call the Church to prayer, specifically focused on the election of bishops.

*2. Search Committee: A Search Committee will be formed by the FMCUSA Board of Administration each quadrennium to prayerfully seek out qualified candidates and receive nominations from annual conferences. Members of the Search Committee must be spiritually mature. Some of them must also have experience in developing or searching for candidates of significant positions of leadership. The Search Committee must include at least one lay and one clergy member from the Board of Administration. **Consideration shall be given to ethnic, gender, cultural and geographical representation across the breadth of the FMCUSA.***

3. Candidate Qualifications: The nominees should have fruitful leadership experience related to the spiritual life and leadership responsibilities noted in Par. 4100 and 4120. Ethnic, gender, cultural and geographical considerations shall be given due attention in selecting nominees for bishop. Potential candidates must grant their permission to proceed through the nomination process. Nominations from annual conferences to the Search Committee must be accompanied by supporting rationale on a form designed and provided by the Search Committee. Sitting bishops, having already been previously qualified, who are willing to continue to serve, will be placed on the ballot with the other nominees.

4. Procedures: The refined list of nominees, with supporting rationale, will be forwarded to the Board of Administration of the FMCUSA. The Board of Administration may ask the Search Committee to consider (an) additional nominee(s). The total number of nominees for bishops forwarded to the Board of

Administration will exceed by at least two the number of bishops currently serving. The General Conference secretary shall compile the nominee information in standardized format and distribute it, by paper or electronic means, to all delegates no later than thirty days prior to the opening of General Conference. The ballots for election of bishops shall consist of the names of these nominees and the incumbent bishops who are willing to continue to serve.

In the rich history of Free Methodism in the United States, there has been no ethnic diversity and the first Female Bishop was elected in 2019. While paragraph 4110 B (2) clearly indicates that ethnic and gender diversity should be considered in considering candidates for Bishop, they are rarely considered or prioritized.

The vision of paragraph 4110 B to encourage is to promote diversity within our leadership. Nationally, disciples of color are leaving organizations that do not provide adequate cultural and ethnic representation in the organizational leadership. The solution is not to replace fruitful Bishops but to expand the number of Bishops to create an opportunity for diversity in leadership.

While the number of members of the Board of Bishops (BOB) is currently three (3), the current BOB has implemented the hiring of five (5) Free Methodist Elders to serve as an Executive Leadership team to assist with the broad responsibilities of the office of the BOB. Even with those additions, the Bishops continue to have unsustainable levels of responsibility.

Therefore, BE IT RESOLVED:

The Board of Bishops will expand to five (5) members upon the Election of the Bishops, via election as described in paragraph 4110 of the 2019 Book of Discipline. This resolution represents a General Conference action and is contingent upon General Conference approval prior to the election of the 2023 Board of Bishops. The purpose of the proposed expansion is to promote ethnic and gender diversity, per the provisions of paragraph 4110 B and to support the expansion of operational responsibilities of the Board of Bishops.

Annual Conference Resolutions Committee Worksheet:

Mission: To love God, love people and make disciples.

Vision: To bring wholeness to the world through healthy biblical communities of holy people multiplying disciples, leaders, groups and churches.

1. Does the resolution have a direct relationship to the vision and mission of the Free Methodist Church?

Yes

No

2. How will the proposed change help us accomplish our vision and mission?

3. The Resolutions Committee rates this resolution as:

(A) Support - recommend adoption

(B) Recommended - worthy of review

(C) Rejected - anticipate General Conference rejection

Other Comments: