



**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:**

Thaddeus Roller, Mark Adams and David Harvey

**ANNUAL CONFERENCE NAME:**

Sierra Pacific Conference

**WRITTEN BY:**

Thaddeus Roller and Mark Adams

General Conference Secretary - OFFICE USE ONLY

Resolution No. 601

Received Date: 11/29/22

Resolution Committee Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

BOA Consideration: \_\_\_\_\_

GC Consideration: \_\_\_\_\_

**RELATED TO PARAGRAPH**

8100; 6610.C; 6600.K; 5410.H; 3411

Referred to Ministry Team Number:

**SUBJECT OR TITLE:**

**Lay Administered Sacraments**

Final Vote:                      Yes                      No

## **WHEREAS:**

The Book of Discipline restricts the administration of the Lord's Supper and Baptism to ordained elders (5400.C), conference ministerial candidates appointed to lead churches (5430.C), licensed pastors (5640.A) and also, under supervision of an ordained elder, to conference deacons (6610.C), local ministerial candidates (6500.K) and conference ministerial candidates appointed as assistants to pastors (5340.H), and;

Whereas the Scripture itself, nowhere explicitly teaches that these sacraments are to be exclusively administered by ordained elders, or any other "category" of believer, and;

Whereas the Scripture provides ample examples of these sacraments administered by lay disciples (Acts 8:12,13,38; 9:10,26,36 and others), and;

Whereas both the Biblical and historical emphasis on baptism and communion is on the merit of the one in whose name the sacrament is administered, Jesus Christ, rather than on the merit of the name or position of the one administering the sacrament, and;

Whereas we consider the great commission as normative for all disciples, and yet, under our current polity, we only allow clergy to fulfill the "baptizing them" clause, and;

Whereas historically, early Methodists in emerging "societies" were viewed as a renewal movement within the Church of England and were encouraged to look to ordained clergy in the mother church for sacramental rites in order to maintain connection with and renew the institution, today's multiplying Free Methodist churches are not merely renewal movements but part of the mother church and should no longer maintain this requirement, and;

Whereas the provisions in the discipline have, over many years, increasingly moved sacramental administration from being solely the province of the fully ordained to those under the supervision of the ordained in recognition of the priesthood of all believers and multiplicative church growth strategies, and;

Whereas many current church planting movements, both domestically and internationally, operate on a "house church" (or equivalent) model which generally function in the absence of an ordained elder, licensed pastor, conference deacon or conference ministerial candidate, and;

Whereas many such groups who are indeed part of the Free Methodist spirit-fueled movement catalyzing leaders and churches, seek to comply with our current polity, but are thereby forced to delay for considerable time, the celebration of the sacraments which Jesus commanded the church to engage, and;

Whereas we desire to fully empower the rapid multiplication of healthy churches, both domestically and internationally, through encouraging full participation in the "Life of the Church" (3411) which includes sacramental worship, without diminishing the sanctity of the Lord's Supper or Baptism, and;

Whereas we do not want to diminish the sacramental role of elders, deacons, licensed pastors, conference ministerial candidates or local ministerial candidates (Paragraphs 5400.C, 5430.C, 5640.A, 6610.C, 6500.K, 5340.H), while providing clarity in the instructions regarding the administration of the sacraments (§8000, §8100)

**Therefore, BE IT RESOLVED:**

**That Paragraph 8000 be amended by the addition of the following sentence at the end of the paragraph**

*An ordained elder or other person authorized to baptize, may in turn authorize any mature member in good standing under their care to baptize others. When this authorization is given it may be either temporary or ongoing and should include an element of accountable oversight by the authorizing individual.*

**That Paragraph 8100 be amended to read (new language in italics):**

*An ordained elder or other person authorized to serve communion, may in turn authorize any mature member in good standing under their care to serve the Lord's Supper. When this authorization is given it may be either temporary or ongoing and should include an element of accountable oversight by the authorizing individual.*

Let all our ordained pastors *and those authorized to serve communion* exercise due care to see that no person known to be living an immoral life or to be guilty of any disreputable practice be admitted to the Lord's table among us until satisfactory evidence of repentance and amendment of life has been given.

All persons properly included in the general invitation may be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper among us.

~~The officiating pastor~~ *officiant* may select lay assistants in the distribution of the elements. ~~The use of individual communion cups is recommended, wherever practicable.~~

Alternate rituals printed in the Pastors and Church Leaders Manual may be used. Sections marked with an asterisk may be used when an abbreviated service is desired.

## 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?

***Strongly encourage rapid multiplication of churches via full empowerment of well trained and accountable laity.***

The Resolutions Committee rates this resolution as:

(A) **Support - recommend adoption**

(B) Recommended - worthy of review

(C) Rejected - anticipate General Conference rejection

Other Comments:

***This resolution was the only split vote among delegates, with the majority embracing the simple but profound shifts in ecclesial authority regarding sacraments, but others believing that if adopted, the resolution may lessen the authority of clergy and ties to the church as an institution.***

Stuart Welch, SPC Resolution Committee Secretary