



**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: The Board of Bishops and the Executive Leadership Team of the FMCUSA

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NAME:

WRITTEN BY: Larry Walkemeyer, Gerald Coates, Brett Heintzman

General Conference Secretary - OFFICE USE ONLY

Resolution No. 607

Received Date: 12/31/2022

Resolution Committee Grade: _____

BOA Consideration: _____

GC Consideration: _____

RELATED TO PARAGRAPH(S): Addition of two new paragraphs 6070 and 6080

Referred to Ministry Team Number:

SUBJECT OR TITLE: Essential Ecclesiology and Expressions of Church.

Final Vote: Yes No

WHEREAS:

- The FMCUSA has embraced new church planting networks that show how church planting can be done effectively and creatively, outside more traditional methods and approaches.
- Creative expressions of church are being birthed today that are being accepted within our structures.
- Such new and emerging expressions include house churches, dinner churches, online churches, churches that meet around affinity groups, substance abuse recovery groups, and special interest groups.
- It has become necessary for us as a denomination to define our most essential ecclesiology so as to help us understand what is essential for a church to function in biblically healthy ways.
- For us to become a movement again we must remove all obstacles to church planting and growth that are truly nonessential.
- We desire to unleash such a movement in our day, we therefore seek to define the church and our essential ecclesiology based upon the Scriptures and in agreement with our already existing doctrinal statement on the church found in paragraph 121 - not less than what the Scriptures reveal, but not more than the Scriptures either.
- Such additions to our discipline will provide freedom for Church Planting Networks to flourish in ways that are neither prescriptive nor restrictive.

Therefore, BE IT RESOLVED:

- That two new paragraphs be added to Chapter Six of the Book of Discipline to address these issues.
 - Paragraph 6070 titled “Essential Ecclesiology”
 - Paragraph 6080 titled “Expressions of Church”

PARAGRAPH 6070 – ESSENTIAL ECCLESIOLOGY

The essentials of our ecclesiology can be summed up in the following seven scriptural characteristics:

1. Jesus is worshipped as Lord. (Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it that it should be holy and without blemish. ¶121) (See 1 Cor 1:2, Phil 2:9-11, Rom 10:9)
 - a. The gathered believers are united in loving covenant fellowship around the Trinitarian presence of the One true God: The Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. (See Mat 28:19, John 14:26)
 - b. Jesus is honored as the incarnation of God and as the Lord and foundation/cornerstone of the church. (See Col 2:9, Col 1:15, 18, Mat 16:18, Eph 2:19-20)
 - c. Worship in any of its multiple forms (teaching, testimony, prayer, singing, giving, etc.) is occurring regularly. (See Heb 13:15, Col 3:16-17, 1 Peter 2:5)
 - d. Jesus is honored and his presence recognized when a group (even 2 or 3) gather in his name. (See Mat 18:20, Rev 2:1)
 - e. The Lordship of Jesus Christ as manifest in the created order is recognized and celebrated. (See Rom 1:20, Col 1:16, Rev 4:11)
2. Scripture is taught and obeyed as truth. (In its requirements it seeks to honor Christ and obey the written Word of God. ¶121) (See Heb 4:12, Mat 4:4, Acts 2:42)
 - a. The Scriptures are honored as the authority in all matters of doctrine and life. (See 1 Cor 15:3-4, 2 Tim 3:15, 2 Peter 3:16)
 - b. The Scriptures are read and shared as the directive of the faith community. (See 1 Tim 4:13,16)
 - c. The Scriptures provide moral authority and the standard of conduct for the community. (See 2 Tim 3:16-17)
 - d. The Scriptures define and prioritize individual and corporate holiness. (See 1 Cor 1:2, Eph 2:21)
3. Believers gather regularly for fellowship and mutual edification and equipping. (The Free Methodist Church purposes to be representative of what the church of Jesus Christ should be on earth. It therefore requires specific commitment regarding the faith and life of its members. ¶121) (See Acts 2:42, Rom 12:4-6)
 - a. The church is a community of “believers,” those who have been born again into the Body of Christ — interdependent persons (the people of God) who assemble for worship, koinonia fellowship, and witness. (See John 1:12-13, 1 Cor 10:17, 1 Cor 12:13, 1 Peter 2:17, 1 Peter 5:9)
 - b. The assembling happens frequently enough to advance the familial interactive realities of the church. (See Heb 10:24-25, 1 Cor 14:26)
 - c. The “one anothers” of Scripture are practiced as a fulfillment of fellowship and discipleship. (See Rom 12:10, Eph 5:21)
 - d. Active love, mutuality, generosity, and caring for the needs of one another, is prioritized. (See Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:34-35)
 - e. Unity of the faith and spirit overcome divisions caused by race, class, status, wealth, or gender. (See Gal

3:26-28, 1 John 1:3,7)

- f. Prayer is a defining practice of the fellowship. (See Acts 2:42, Acts 12:5, Acts 14:23, Col 4:2)
4. Sacraments are practiced. (The church is a fellowship of the redeemed and the redeeming, preaching the Word of God and administering the sacraments according to Christ's instruction. ¶121)
 - a. Baptism is practiced for initiating believers into the church. (See Acts 2:38, 41, 1 Cor 12:13, Eph 4:4-5)
 - b. Communion/The Lord's Supper is practiced frequently as the ongoing real presence of Jesus Christ and in remembrance of the reality and centrality of Christ's convicting, converting, and sanctifying work. (See Acts 2:42, 1 Cor 11:23-26)
 5. Spiritual Authority is present, credible, and active. (The church is created by God. It is the people of God. Christ Jesus is its Lord and Head. ¶121) (See Hebrews 13:17)
 - a. Overseers and leaders are established and held accountable in a credible and biblical manner. (See Acts 14:23, Acts 15:6, Acts 20:28, 1 Tim 5:17, Titus 1:5)
 - b. Overseers and leaders teach and equip the saints for maturity, ministry, and mission. (See Eph 4:11-12, James 3:1)
 - c. Church Discipline is exercised to guard the church and assist believers' growth in discipleship. (See 1 Cor 5:4-5)
 - d. Credible spiritual authority ensures accountable, equitable processes for the collection, stewardship, and distribution of financial resources. (See Acts 6:3)
 6. God's Mission of disciple-making and servanthood is pursued. (It exists to fulfill the purposes of God in Christ. It redemptively ministers to persons. ¶121)
 - a. The church understands itself as an expression of God's kingdom mission. (See Mat 6:9-10, Mat 6:33)
 - b. The Great Commission (going and making disciples) is prioritized and practiced. (See Mat 28:19-20, 2 Tim 2:2)
 - c. Serving the community is prioritized and practiced. (See Mat 5:16, 1 Peter 2:12, Mark 10:45)
 - d. Witness in word and deed is prioritized and viewed as the first step in disciple-making. (See Acts 1:8, Acts 2:47)
 - e. The church pursues its mission through practicing the priesthood of all believers. (See Eph 2:10, 1 Peter 2:9)
 - f. Generosity and assistance to the poor, widows, orphans, and immigrants is prioritized. (See Gal 2:10, James 1:27)
 7. The Holy Spirit is active and acknowledged in the gathering. (The Holy Spirit is its life and power. ¶121) (See 2 Cor 13:14, 1 Cor 3:16, Eph 2:22)
 - a. The Spirit is empowering the fruit and gifts of the Spirit. (See Gal 5:22-23, 1 Cor 12:7)
 - b. The Spirit is teaching the gathered believers the words and acts of Jesus. (See John 14:26, 1 John 2:27)
 - c. The Spirit is comforting, correcting, and empowering the church. (See Acts 9:31, Eph 3:16, Col 1:9)

PARAGRAPH 6080 – EXPRESSIONS OF CHURCH

The guidance of Church Planting projects as found in paragraphs 6810 A-H are instructive for the formation of new churches. This guidance is not to be understood as prescriptive or restrictive, however. Consistent with the spirit of paragraph 6040, as long as church plants live within the framework of the non-negotiables (¶ —), they are free to be creative in the expression of church. Some quickly multiplying gatherings will not form into Fellowships or Societies (as defined in the *Discipline*) but may serve as new church incubators. The sacerdotal functions fall under the authority of the overseeing body.

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:

