



**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: Rev. Dr. Mindi Cromwell

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NAME: _____
Great Plains and Mid-America
The River Conference

WRITTEN BY: Rev. Mindi Grieser Cromwell, Ph.D., and
Rev. Bruce N. G. Cromwell, Ph.D.

General Conference Secretary - OFFICE USE ONLY

Resolution No. 702

Received Date: 12/21/2022

Resolution Committee Grade: _____

BOA Consideration: _____

GC Consideration: _____

RELATED TO PARAGRAPH 7130: Responding to Disorder

Referred to Ministry Team Number:

SUBJECT OR TITLE: Clergy Sexual Abuse

Final Vote: Yes No

WHEREAS: Sexual abuse by clergy, church staff, ministry volunteers, and congregation members is not infrequent, with one study documenting over 7,000 claims of sexual abuse filed to just three insurance companies over a 20-year period¹, and

WHEREAS the FMCUSA does not have a consistent, trauma informed policy in regards to elders credibly accused or found guilty of sexual abuse or misconduct.

WHEREAS in August of 2022, the Southern Baptist Convention, the second-largest faith group in the United States, reported that they were being investigated by the Justice Department for their lack of a clearly articulated and consistent policy and their mishandling of sexual abuse cases², and

WHEREAS studies show that systems and structures in which an abuser operates have often been unknowingly manipulated by the abuser, such that MEG boards, churches, etc., may have difficulty in determining an abuser's genuine and full repentance toward restoration for ministry³, and

WHEREAS studies demonstrate that sexual abuse by clergy members leads to spiritual trauma and is a form of spiritual abuse⁴, and

WHEREAS someone who has used their spiritual authority to manipulate another sexually or otherwise, causing spiritual, emotional, and physical trauma, may not be trusted to properly exercise such authority in the future, regardless of promises made,

Therefore, BE IT RESOLVED:

That a new paragraph be added to the *Book of Discipline*, 7130.B.1.g, stating:

g. Immediate Surrender of Credentials: When an elder is found criminally guilty of sexual misconduct, their credentials shall immediately be declared null and void, without the possibility of reinstatement. The elder may enter a restoration process which could result in restitution to lay membership but not to the restoration of their credentials.

¹ Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 2007

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2022/08/12/fbi-southern-baptist-sexual-abuse/>

³ See both <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/june-web-only/sex-offenders-groom-churches-too.html?share=> and Anna C. Salter's 1991 book, *Predators, Pedophiles, Rapists, And Other Sex Offenders*, which claims that "many offenders report that religious people are even easier to fool than most people."

⁴ See Diane Langberg's 2018 book, *Suffering and the Heart of God: How Trauma Destroys and Christ Restores*, particularly pages 81-101 which detail "The Spiritual Impact of Abuse".

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: