



**Free Methodist Church USA  
39th General Conference  
RESOLUTION**

INTRODUCED BY: Justice Network of the Free Methodist Church

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NAME: N/A

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General Conference Secretary - OFFICE USE ONLY

Resolution No. 418

Received Date: 12/31/2022

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

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

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

**RELATED TO PARAGRAPH - ¶ 4110**

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.

Referred to Ministry Team Number:

<p>SUBJECT OR TITLE: A MOTION TO EXPAND THE BOARD OF BISHOPS</p>	<p>Final Vote: Yes No</p>
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**WHEREAS:** The FMC-USA church continues to grow in diversity in its membership, with immigrant churches being our largest source of growth. While the FMC membership in the US has become more diverse, the leadership has yet to follow suit.

**WHEREAS:** Despite our longstanding value of diversity, historic abolitionist position, and established networks of churches of color (e.g., the Pacific Coast Japanese Conference, Hispanic Region/Conference, African Heritage Network), the FMC is yet to have a person of color in the role of Bishop.

**WHEREAS:** Denominational leadership in our post-Christendom society and within an ecclesiological, ideologically, and culturally diverse denomination is complex. Moreover, it is critical to acknowledge the regional diversity of Christianity in the U.S., which requires effective leaders to have a particular acumen regarding how regional cultures shape American Protestantism and, consequently, the FMC. Thus our leadership needs to be deeply attuned (both in their experiences and ongoing engagement) to the church in the U.S.

**WHEREAS:** The practical challenge of incumbency is that these Bishops are generally reelected. In order to diversify the Board of Bishops (BOB) and better meet the needs of the FMC-USA, it is important to expand the BOB to (1) better ensure diversity and (2) better address the diverse cultural and functional challenges currently relevant to the FMC-USA.

**WHEREAS:** Electing bishops in simple hierarchical votes does not allow for nuanced voting to ensure diverse representation (i.e., race, gender, region). Flat voting on name-recognition, reputation and/or resume experiences does not provide space to address issues of representation and diverse leadership that we believe are essential if the FMC wishes to thrive in the U.S.

**Therefore, BE IT RESOLVED:** That the FMC Board of Bishops be expanded to four candidates.

**Moreover, BE IT RESOLVED:** That the candidates shall be elected individually rather than through a singular vote on the top candidates. The process shall consist of four rounds of voting on the slate of candidates, and the top person from each of those rounds shall be elected in the relevant slot. Delegates shall be intentional in considering diversity in their voting and shall be instructed to do so prior to voting.

**Moreover, BE IT RESOLVED:** That the international requirements of Bishops be reduced to a minimum and an active process be put in place to support other nations and regions in developing independent General Conferences and/or that the primary oversight of international FMC affairs is given to a Bishop designated with “international” as their region or a separate member of the Denominational Leadership.

**Moreover, BE IT RESOLVED:** That criteria of cross-cultural collaboration be particularly weighted in favor of people of color living in the United States who inherently and constantly engage in cross-cultural leadership as a minoritized group within U.S. society and the FMC.

