

**A REPORT TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF
THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN CANADA**
FROM THE BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION—OCTOBER 1996

THE CANADIAN RESPONSE TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL COUNCIL

A REVIEW OF OUR INSTITUTIONAL JOURNEY

In December of 1994, the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church in Canada voted, by a ninety percent majority, to restructure in the interest of accomplishing its mission more effectively. Out of concern for church order and constitutional integrity, the Conference adopted a comprehensive bylaw. This instrument, identified as The Transitional Bylaw, included all permissions necessary to implement the changes along with alternate organizational plans for use should the Constitutional Council ever reject the configuration as unconstitutional. The legislation was then referred to the Constitutional Council for review.

The Council met in June of 1995, studied the Canadian Transitional Bylaw, and took the following initial action:

“In view of the fact that the existence of Annual Conferences is so deeply assumed in the constitution section of the Book of Discipline, we affirm the transitional documents of the Canada General Conference as outlined in their Transitional Bylaw and Strategy Plan, provided that long range plans include the formation of Annual Conferences when growth so permits, and that the Constitutional Council review and act on the final draft of the complete Strategy Plan prior to its submission to the Canada General Conference for a vote.”

The Constitutional Council plans to convene next in the fall of 1997. At that time, they anticipate a response to the issue they have raised and a report on the continued experience of the church with the recent configuration. This timing is advantageous for the Canadian General Conference in that it grants an extension to the duration of the “transitional phase” allowing for a deliberative response to the specific action taken by the council in June of 1995.

This Transitional Phase, then, has been extended to include:

Transitional Phase

1. The Adoption of the Transitional Bylaw—December 1994
2. Review by the Constitutional Council—June 1995
3. Response and Refinement by the Canadian Church—Summer 1995 to Fall 1997
4. Report to the Constitutional Council—Fall 1997
5. Report to the Canadian Church at the next General Conference—Summer 1998

(3 through 5 at the discretion of the Constitutional Council and the Canadian Conference.)

During this Transitional Phase, the church will continue to be ordered by our previously adopted Transitional Bylaw which names the Book of Discipline as authoritative in all matters not covered by the bylaw. This Transitional Phase will continue until the Constitutional Council grants final approval.

A RESPONSE TO THE ACTION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL COUNCIL

1. The Free Methodist Church in Canada acknowledges the Constitutional Council's response to our Transitional Bylaw and Strategic Plan.
2. Knowing that the growth of the church will call for new forms of denominational life, we commit to continuous evaluation of our structures and a comprehensive review of the structure as we approach 12,000 members. This review will be our response to the provision of the Constitutional Council of 1995 calling for the formation of Annual Conferences, "... when growth so permits".
3. The Transitional Phase will be extended, as suggested by the Constitutional Council in its June 1995 session. The Canadian Church will continue in this Transitional Phase until the Constitutional Council has reviewed and taken action on our proposed configuration.

A FURTHER RESPONSE

Respecting the role of the Constitutional Council and seeking the wisdom of that body, Canadian leaders have requested more complete information regarding the concerns of the council members which might have been reflected in the discussion but not in the actual motion. The following three issues have been cited by the leadership of the Constitutional Council. In an effort to go beyond minimums, the Canadian BOA is seeking to respond to these additional concerns not mentioned in the minutes.

1. **The Annual Conference Issue**—Terminology and formal structures aside, what provision is there, in the new configuration, for our people to gather regularly, discuss, take ownership, be accountable and bond within the regions of the church?
2. **The Stationing Issue**—Methodology aside, does the conference or the local church have final authority in pastoral appointments?
3. **The Parallel Inter-face Issue**—How can the world wide Free Methodist Church equalize the strength of a ballot if small General Conferences choose to have large delegations and larger conferences choose smaller delegations?

The Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church in Canada recommends the following:

In response to concern #1, *The Annual Conference Issue*,

1.1 *Area Gatherings*

That under the provisions of 3.02 (b) (iii), Area rallies, seminars and fellowship gatherings be promoted.

1.2 *The General Conference - a Convention for All*

That the tithing program for the Core Ministry include a major share of the cost of the General Conference, insuring that every church will participate in that gathering.

In response to concern #2, *The Stationing Issue*,

2.1 *The Appointment System*

Whereas the responsibility of appointing of pastors, formerly assigned to the Ministerial Appointment Committee, has been reassigned to the Board of Ministerial Education & Guidance, we recommend

- (1) that the body be known as the Board of Ministerial Education, Guidance and Placement (MEGAP); and*
- (2) that the Bishop Chair the body for decisions on appointments.*

2.2 *Conference Review of Leadership Team*

That the Board of Administration be a part of an annual evaluation of the National Ministry Team and that an appropriate report be given to the General Conference each time it convenes, in an effort to ensure accountability between the church and its leaders.

(Need for clearly defined objectives)

In response to concern #3, *The Parallel Inter-face Issue*,

3.1 *Proportional Influence*

That the Canadian General Conference, recognizing that there are many inequities from General Conference to General Conference regarding the relative influence of a single ballot, we recommend to the Constitutional Council that, for the duration of our transitional phase, on referendum votes, the total voting report of the enlarged Canadian General Conference be reduced to a power of 76, this being the actual number at the time of the adoption of the Transitional Bylaw.

If these measures are adopted, the Free Methodist Church in Canada will have responded well beyond the requirements of the Constitutional Council.

We recommend the adoption of this policy paper.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

**ACTION TAKEN BY THE BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION
OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN CANADA
SEPTEMBER 9, 1996**

REPORTED HERE BECAUSE OF ITS RELEVANCE TO CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

WHEREAS the four Free Methodist bishops who reside in North America; Bishop Bates, Bishop Foster, Bishop Snider and Bishop Walsh; representing the Free Methodist Church of North America and the Free Methodist Church in Canada, have made a bilateral recommendation to the Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church of North America and the Board of Administration of the Free Methodist Church in Canada, that a joint task force for the study of General Conference structure (Chapter 2 of the Book of Discipline) be established and that the task force be comprised of the four bishops named plus four laypersons to be named by the respective Boards of Administration; and,

WHEREAS our Board of Administration through our Study Commission on Doctrine has already made significant process with such a study, reflecting our interest in constitutional change; and,

WHEREAS the international experience of the Free Methodist Church offers several examples which indicate that our constitutional statement on General Conference structure needs revision:

THEREFORE we approve the creation of the joint task force and name Norman Smith to function with Bishop Walsh as the Canadian representative.

The Report from the Board Of Administration to the 1996 General Conference of The Free Methodist Church in Canada. October 1996

Over the past three years, the members of the Board of Administration of the Canadian General Conference have communicated in committee and sub-committee, by tele-conference, via FAX, E-mail, Snail-mail and courier. Much of their work is of a rather prosaic nature, and deals with the normal routine of institutional life. During the course of these past three years however, there have been some significant developments that affect us all. The following is an overview sketch of the developments that have taken place under the leadership of the BOA and the Leadership Team at the Canadian Ministries Centre.

1993

- The 2nd Canadian General Conference, **July 30 - August 3, 1993**, elected BOA members.
- The new BOA first met on **October 15-16, 1993** to begin implementing the wishes of the 1993 General Conference.
- The establishment of a task force to “conduct a thorough study of denominational administrative structures and procedures...”
- Lyle E. Schaller was invited to guide the church through its self study and to help it create a strategic plan for the future.
- Appointment of a Canadian Study Commission on Doctrine
- The publishing of the 1993 Canadian Book of Discipline.

1994

- The BOA met on **April 15-16, 1994**.
- The Initial Report of the Strategic Planning Task Force was received and studied.
- Brainstorming on the future of Free Methodism in Canada was the major agenda for our first meeting of 1994.
- The establishing of “Giving Streams” distinct from “Core Ministries” was first articulated.
- The BOA met again on **May 27 and 28, 1994** to continue their deliberations.
- The establishment of Vision Vancouver with Ron Bonar appointed as “Director of Church Planting for B.C.”
- Report on the video circulated across the church to get early feedback on the partial report of the Strategic Planning Task Force.
- Dan and Kathy Sheffield appointed to South Africa.
- Norman Bull was hired as Interim Administrator.
- Approval for the writing of the second draft of the Strategic Planning Task Force Report for circulation to each Annual Conference.

1994 (Continued)

- On **June 15, 1994** final editing of the 2nd edition of the Strategic Planning Task Force Report to be mailed to members of the Annual Conferences..
- A second Teleconference was held on **July 27, 1994**, to review the 87% positive vote from the four Annual Conferences, to interpret the results and to determine the right “speed” of change. Homework assignments were give to a “Project Planning Committee” to study ways and means of implementing various parts of the Strategic Plan.
- BOA met again on **August 26-27, 1994** to continue discussion of the Strategic Plan and reports from the “Project Planning Committee”.
- Decision to call for an adjourned sitting of the General Conference for December 1994.
- **BOA met again on October 14 and 15, 1994.**
- The Transitional Bylaw begins to be formed
- The Strategic Planning Presentation put into final form for the Adjourned Sitting of the General Conference.
- A process for the hiring of Denominational Executives (Directors of Administrative, Church Services and Ministry Advancement) was established, waiting implementation if the Strategic Planning proposal is accepted by General Conference Delegates.
- **The BOA met again on December 2, 1994**
- Decision to ask for the permission of the delegates to allow “The Articles of Religion” to be included as an item of business at the adjourned sitting of the General Conference.
- Final form of the “Transitional Bylaw” reviewed for presentation.
- **The Adjourned Sitting of the General Conference met December 2 and 3, 1994** and approved the Strategic Plan and the Transitional Bylaws by votes of 90% in the affirmative.
- The revised “Articles of Religion” were also approved at the Adjourned sitting, by a vote of 78% and referred to the Constitutional Council for a referendum.

1995

- **The BOA met April 28-29, 1995**
- Norman Bull was employed as Director of Administrative Services and Dennis Camplin was employed as Director of Church Services.
- Launching Church Growth initiatives in Toronto called “Mission Metro”.
- Date set for the 1996 General Conference in conjunction with “The World Shapers Conference.”
- Proposal accepted to create a distinct 1995 Canadian Yearbook.
- Donna Elford appointed as Editor of the Free Methodist Herald.
- Investigation of planting a new church in the Malvern area begins.
- **The BOA met October 13-14, 1995**
- Further implementation of the “Mission Metro” initiatives under the leadership of Jim Kesselring.
- Further developments in establishing a church in the Malvern area.
- Mary-Elsie Fletcher employed as Director of Ministry Advancement.
- Establishment of “The Tithe” in funding Core Ministries.

1996

- **BOA met February 9-10, 1996**

- A Conference Nominating Committee was appointed to make recommendations to the 1996 General Conference.
- Canadian policy created for the selection and appointment of Missionaries.
- Creation of a Malvern Steering Committee to carry out the construction of a new facility on the Malvern property.
- Continued implementation of the recommendations of the Strategic Plan.
- Recommended that the transitional bylaw continue in place until the 1998 General Conference.

- **The BOA met again, June 21 and 22, 1996**

- Plans made for the 1996 General Conference
- Discussions were held on "Constitutional Reform"
- Ministerial Education and Guidance Retreats and "J-Terms" held across the country.
- Proposal on a "Free Methodist Foundation"
- Deployment of Sok Em to Cambodia as a VISA missionary.
- General Conference "Study Teams" established.

- **Teleconference, September 9, 1996**

- Establishment of the Standing Rules and Parliamentary Procedure for the 1996 General Conference.
- Final preparations for mailing out the 1996 General Conference "Beige Papers".
- Clarifying various constitutional issues in regards to the Conference.
- Establishing the General Conference Agenda