

REPORT OF THE CONNECTIONALISM STUDY COMMITTEE

**Prepared for the 1996 General Conference of
The Free Methodist Church in Canada
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Note: Draft report subject to revision.



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1. INTRODUCTION

By definition, the meeting of a General Conference focuses on Connectionalism. Concerns about connectionalism are woven throughout the broad range of responses received from Canadian Free Methodists this past spring. This issue was touched on both directly and indirectly through other concerns such as membership, leadership and communication. The desire to remain connected is strong. The issue seems to be how best to accomplish this and in what areas is it most important to remain connected.

Whereas some denominations, even some with the name "Methodist," centre their connectionalism on polity (the form or process of governance), allowing pluralism regarding doctrine and moral vision, Free Methodism has, by contrast, never been pluralistic about truth issues. Our church has asked all its people to stand together on issues of doctrine (see the Articles of Religion -- pp. SCOD 5-9), Christian experience (see the Discipline's statements on Christian Experience -- par. 300), the expressions of the holy life (see the Discipline's statements on Christian Conduct -- par. 320), and membership in the church (see the Membership Covenant and "Christian Community" section -- par 340).

However, for some time now, the church has been evolving toward greater pluralism on polity. Whereas at one time the Book of Discipline mandated many structural details for local churches, it has for some time called for "a broad range of possibilities for committee structures" and directs that "every local church should be organized in terms of ministries, not structural necessities" (par. 400.3). This policy, which might be termed: "together on truth issues and flexible on issues of structure," is being reaffirmed by the Study Committees reporting to this General Conference.

The Study Commission on Doctrine (SCOD) report recommends approval of a denominational referendum on action originating in Canada to word our Articles of Religion in modern language which reflects the historic foundational beliefs of Free Methodism. On these basics Free Methodism continues to ask for oneness.

Here it may be helpful to address a common misunderstanding. Many readers of "Articles of Religion" are frustrated because such Articles seem incomplete, and tend to have a tone of controversy. This is because Articles of Religion are a "genre" in which the church states its collective position on core truth issues (past and present), especially those where error or controversy has threatened the church. Thus, to note reactionary or combative language is to recognize the "stuff" of such articles. As Bishop Emeritus Bastian notes in his foreword to Paul Livermore's excellent The God of Our Salvation - Volume 1 (Light and Life Press, 1995), Articles of Religion were never intended to bear all the freight of the church's theology. [See also Thomas Oden's description of Articles of Religion in Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition (Zondervan, 1988).] The revision before us is an attempt to take our historical articles and update their wording, without change of meaning or function.

As well, no changes are contemplated with regard to our Methodist concern for personal transformation and holy living (see the Book of Discipline on Christian Experience -- par. 300 and Christian Conduct -- par 320). The membership recommendations from the Study Commission on Doctrine maintain the church's historic view that membership standards and requirements are to be held by all Free Methodists together, and thus are set by the denomination, not the local church. In fact, the Study Commission on Doctrine report argues that moving the place of entry into membership can help Free Methodism to draw more people into the holy life. Thus the denomination's core connecting vision of faith and life is not being altered by any recommendation to this General Conference.

Crucial to the connectedness of any organization is the nature of its leadership development and deployment. The Free Methodist Church in Canada seeks to maintain its connectedness on the foundational matters already cited not through the force of hierarchical power or mandated structures, but primarily through the deployment of Spirit-filled, adequately trained, well-formed, accountable leaders who serve in local churches. Rather than attempt to encode rules which can govern every eventuality (an impossibility, and undesirable if possible!) and develop the institutional clout to enforce them all (also an impossibility), Free Methodism has depended on leadership persons and teams for discernment on those issues not established by General Conference action. See the Leadership report for an outline of the core values that guide our leaders and for a discussion of leadership development principles, issues and strategies that relate to this key building block in our connection.

Another issue which flows out of vital Christianity and which has connectional implications is missions. Many local churches do not have the resources to act alone in missions. Even Free Methodists in churches large enough to act alone have long believed that much more good could be done (here in Canada, as well as elsewhere in the world) if we would work together. Recommendations regarding this key building block in our connection are found in the Missions report.

The feedback from across the country also revealed that the issue of communication, so tied to any connectionalism we will have, was woven through the written input of Canadian Free Methodists both directly and indirectly. Recommendations regarding the communication structures needed for good connectionalism are found in the Communication report.

Increasingly, church leaders are discovering that growth is not effectively "programmed" from the top down in organizations. "Empowerment" of grass roots people is being rediscovered everywhere. We are learning that our local churches and teams within local churches are key to growth and multiplication. At the same time, we are discovering the benefits of creatively working together. Breakthroughs and new churches in British Columbia and in the greater Toronto area are examples. Such connectional concerns are addressed, with recommendations, in the Growth report.

Connectional structures were the concerns of the Connectionalism study committee. Thus, issues of structure for clergy development and placement oversight, finance (funding the denomination, creating a Foundation), and policy re: place and frequency of national gatherings

are dealt with here. There is also a report regarding new issues of connectionalism which are in the early stages of study (see appendix).

Are we losing our connectionalism? No! The Connectionalism Study Committee believes we are actually strengthening it -- through the various means covered in our report and those of the other Study Committees.

2. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Clergy Personnel Education, Guidance and Placement Structure

While the Leadership Study Committee is bringing proposals for the function of clergy personnel work of the Canadian church, the Connectionalism Study Committee was asked to recommend a structure to oversee this function. Thus we are recommending the creation of a Ministerial Education, Guidance and Placement Committee with flexibility appropriate to the geographical breadth of the church in Canada.

2.1.2 Recommendations

BE IT RESOLVED THAT

- 2.1.2.1 A standing committee of the General Conference to give leadership to the clergy personnel work of the denomination be formed, with the name "The Ministerial Education, Guidance and Placement Committee."

<p style="text-align: center;">CONNECTIONALISM BALLOT 2.1.2.1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I vote to approve this recommendation.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>

2.1.2.2 It will be composed of not more than 24 persons and not fewer than 16 persons, equally divided among clergy and lay persons.

CONNECTIONALISM BALLOT 2.1.2.2

I vote to approve this recommendation.

☐ YES ☐ NO

2.1.2.3 It will be free to function in four regional sections, each of which may act on behalf of the Canadian Board of Ministerial Education, Guidance and Placement.

CONNECTIONALISM BALLOT 2.1.2.3

I vote to approve this recommendation.

☐ YES ☐ NO

2.1.2.4 The Director of Church Services will chair the whole and the sections.

CONNECTIONALISM BALLOT 2.1.2.4

I vote to approve this recommendation.

☐ YES ☐ NO

2.1.2.5 Each section will elect a vice-chair.

CONNECTIONALISM BALLOT 2.1.2.5

I vote to approve this recommendation.

☐ YES ☐ NO

2.2 FREE METHODIST FOUNDATION

The financial managers of the Free Methodist Church in Canada have concluded that the creation of a Canadian Free Methodist Foundation would assist us in several important ways (see “Why a Foundation” below). Such a Foundation will strengthen our connection by building a shared resource base that will, in the future, enable us to significantly extend our ministries together. It will also protect our connected assets.

This proposal was developed by the Ministry Centre staff, studied and approved by the Board of Administration, and referred to the General Conference Connectionalism Study Committee. It is now being recommended to the whole General Conference.

2.2.1 Why a Foundation?

There are several appropriate reasons why The Free Methodist Church in Canada should establish a foundation.

2.2.1.1 To Create an Endowment - The primary reason to establish a foundation is to create a capital base or endowment for the ultimate benefit of The Free Methodist Church in Canada. As a large capital base is built up, the income flow to the parallel organization can be substantial. This will provide opportunity for new ministry initiatives and/or reduce the fund raising requirements for operational and/or giving streams budget purposes.

2.2.1.2 Segregation of Funds - The establishment of a foundation creates a vehicle to separate “operating” funds and assets from more “permanent” funds and capital assets. This permits a distinction between annual operational fund raising and capital campaigns. It protects surplus funds or capital from being used for operational purposes. Donors considering a large gift can be assured it will have long-term benefit and not be depleted to meet a short-term cash shortfall.

2.2.1.3 Creating Named Funds - The foundation structure is ideal for establishing subsidiary funds, in honour of an individual for example. This is more difficult to establish within a charitable organization due to Revenue Canada disbursement quotas.

2.2.1.4 Asset Protection - The establishment of a foundation as a separate legal entity provides a vehicle to hold certain corporate assets. Due to our present organizational structure, all our assets would be at risk should legal action be taken against a local church for whatever reason, or should a suit be initiated directly against The Free Methodist Church in Canada. Some funds such as investments, designated funds, and possibly loan funds could be transferred into the foundation. This would help to protect assets from any legal action against The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

2.2.1.5 **Planned Giving** - A foundation is a good vehicle through which to provide a planned giving service. It has a natural tie in with the endowment/large gift aspect of a foundation. (Note: the future direction of the planned giving function in FMCC is being addressed in a separate report).

2.2.1.6 **Investment Services** - As the Foundation invests its funds, the agencies of the church may choose to contract with the Foundation for investment services.

2.2.2 Mission Statement

The purpose of the foundation is to complement the mission and ministry of The Free Methodist Church in Canada by fund-raising, development of endowment capital and provision of planned giving services.

2.2.3 Purpose/Objectives

The foundation exists specifically and exclusively for the benefit of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

The objects of the foundation will be detailed in the incorporation documents. The general objectives of the foundation are:

2.2.3.1 To solicit and receive gifts of real and personal property for endowment purposes and to administer such gifts subject to any conditions, restrictions or limitations imposed by the donors.

2.2.3.2 To invest all the assets of the foundation

2.2.3.3 To provide planned giving services to the constituency of The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

2.2.3.4 To offer investment services to agencies of The Free Methodist Church in Canada

2.2.4 Organizational Structure

2.2.4.1 Type of Foundation

The foundation will be established as a parallel, public foundation without share capital. "Parallel" means a foundation established by the board of a "parent" charitable organization, in this case The Free Methodist Church in Canada. By definition, "public" in this context means more than 50% of the directors and officers deal with each other at arm's length and not more than 50% of the contributed capital is coming from one person or group of persons not dealing at

arm's length. "Without share capital" means there are no shareholders and there is no share capital in the corporation.

2.2.4.2 Head Office

The Canadian Ministry Centre will be the documented head office of the foundation.

2.2.4.3 Directors

The By-Laws of the foundation stipulate there will be not less than 5 directors and not more than 11. We are recommending that there be 5 directors initially. If BOA votes to proceed, recommendations for the directors of the foundation could be submitted for approval to the next meeting of the Board of Administration. These directors will of necessity not be present directors of the Board of Administration.

2.2.4.4 Officers

It is proposed that the officers of the foundation be: President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary and that these offices be filled from within the Board of Directors. The Assistant Treasurer of the foundation could be named as an officer of the corporation and the position could be filled by the Director of Administrative Services of The Free Methodist Church in Canada. This action would of necessity be taken by the board of the foundation. It is necessary that the two organizations, The Free Methodist Church in Canada and The Free Methodist Foundation, Canada, be kept separate to the maximum extent possible.

2.2.4.5 Control

The Free Methodist Church in Canada will exercise control over the foundation essentially in three ways. Firstly, all directors of the Board must be approved by the Board of Administration of The Free Methodist Church in Canada. Secondly, in the event of dissolution of the foundation, the net assets are to be transferred to The Free Methodist Church in Canada. Thirdly, the objects of the foundation are determined by The Free Methodist Church in Canada.

2.2.5 Budget

Estimated startup costs are as follows:

Incorporation costs	\$ 6,000
Printing, related expense	\$ 2,000
Board expense	\$ 5,000
Promotional material, misc.	<u>\$ 7,000</u>
Total	\$ 20,000

Projected income:

Average asset base during 1996	\$1,500,000
Projected yield	8%
Income generated	\$120,000
Net income available	\$100,000

(Note that the present asset base is approximately \$500,000)

2.2.6 Recommendations

BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

2.2.6.1 The Free Methodist Church in Canada establish a parallel foundation under the name of "The Free Methodist Foundation in Canada" with the mission, purpose/objectives, and organizational structure outlined in sections 2.2.2 through 2.2.4 above.

CONNECTIONALISM BALLOT 2.2.6.1

I vote to approve this recommendation.

☐ YES ☐ NO

2.2.6.2 The Director, Administrative Services, in conjunction with legal counsel, be directed to prepare the draft Application for Incorporation and draft General Operating By-Law for approval by the Board of Administration prior to submission to the Federal Government for incorporation.

CONNECTIONALISM BALLOT 2.2.6.2

I vote to approve this recommendation.

☐ YES ☐ NO

2.2.6.3 Five foundation board members be authorized to sign the Application for Incorporation on behalf of The Free Methodist Church in Canada and to act as its first Board of Directors, the names of such individuals to be submitted by the nominating committee of the General Conference to the Board of Administration for approval at its next meeting.

CONNECTIONALISM BALLOT 2.2.6.3

I vote to approve this recommendation.

☐ YES ☐ NO

2.3 Finance - Funding the Denomination

An important matter when dealing with organizational connectedness is the issue of how the denomination will be financed. Generally speaking, the only source of funds the denomination has is the local society. Traditionally, various formulas have been used by the corporate office to assess the local congregations. Beginning in 1996, a decision was made to fund Core Ministries by asking local churches to “tithe” their general budget receipts. The Canadian Ministry Centre would operate with the tithe funds received from churches across Canada. This new concept has been well received for the most part with at least 90% of congregations participating, most at the 10% level. At the end of July, 50% of the 1996 Core Budget had been raised which was right on target.

2.3.1 Recommendation

WHEREAS support of the ministry of the denomination is an important link in connectionalism; and

WHEREAS the tithe principle seems to be well accepted; and

WHEREAS the tithe principle seems to be the most equitable method for local congregations to collectively support the denominational ministry;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT

2.3.1.1 The Core Ministry of The Free Methodist Church in Canada be financially supported by local societies remitting a tithe (10%) of general budget receipts.

CONNECTIONALISM BALLOT 2.3.1.1

I vote to approve this recommendation.

☐ YES ☐ NO

2.4 Future General Conferences

The 1996 General Conference body needs to make a decision regarding future General Conferences. The issues to be decided are the timing of General Conferences, i.e. how often will General Conference be held, the location(s) of General Conferences and how will the cost of the conference be funded.

Traditionally, in Canada, General Conference has been held every three years. The 1994 Strategic Plan stated the General Conference would convene every two years. This was a compromise between the yearly meeting of the Annual Conferences and a tri-annual General Conference. In terms of location, all Canadian General Conferences, including the December 1994 adjourned sitting, have been held in Eastern Canada. A preliminary analysis indicates the travel cost of an event held in Western Canada would be 175% higher than if conferences continue to be held in Eastern Canada. For the 1996 General Conference, the decision was made to use a non-subsidized travel equalization plan. All participants contributed an equal amount to a travel fund and all participants were reimbursed for actual travel expenses, whether it be air travel from Vancouver or car mileage costs from a local point in Ontario. Alternatives to a travel equalization plan would be for every local church and/or delegate to be responsible for travel cost, regardless of location or to cover the cost of General Conference, including travel, in the Core budget with the necessary adjustment in the per cent of general budget receipts to be remitted by local churches.

2.4.1 Recommendations

2.4.1.1 WHEREAS the 1994 Strategic Plan indicated General Conference would convene every two years; and

WHEREAS the timing of the next General Conference may be impacted by matters related to the Constitutional Council and the pending revision of the Book of Discipline;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT

The General Conference of The Free Methodist Church in Canada meet approximately every two years.

CONNECTIONALISM BALLOT 2.4.1.1

I vote to approve this recommendation.

☐ YES ☐ NO

2.4.1.2 WHEREAS a significant percentage of the members of General Canada are in Eastern Canada; and

WHEREAS the travel cost to hold General Conference in Western Canada is significantly higher than an event in Eastern Canada;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT

the next General Conference be held in Eastern Canada at a time and place to be determined by the Board of Administration.

CONNECTIONALISM BALLOT 2.4.1.2

I vote to approve this recommendation.

☐ YES ☐ NO

2.4.1.3 WHEREAS it is important that geography not penalize anyone from participating in the General Conference; and

WHEREAS the travel equalization plan does serve to equalize costs; and

WHEREAS the costs of Conference should be kept to a minimum;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT

the 1997 and 1998 Core Budgets be built with plans to subsidize the travel costs, and that any costs not covered by the Core Ministry Budget be carried by a travel equalization plan.

CONNECTIONALISM BALLOT 2.4.1.3

I vote to approve this recommendation.

☐ YES ☐ NO

APPENDIX

REPORT RE: ONGOING STUDY OF CORPORATE LEGAL ISSUES

The Board of Administration is in the early stages of reviewing a number of legal issues related to our organization structure. The following provides a brief overview of these issues for the information of the General Conference. The Board has recently established an Ad Hoc Study Committee to review two issues identified by our corporate legal counsel Mr. Terrance S. Carter.

This Ad Hoc Study Committee consists of Rev. Allan Hyndman, Mr. Greg Pulham and Mr. Norman Smith, with staff support from Mr. Norman Bull. Due to the early stage of these discussions, and the need for support from legal counsel, we have no recommendations to present at this time.

As a result of his work on the re-organization, Terrance Carter has identified two issues which he believes the Free Methodist Church needs to review. This review is needed, to help us clearly understand our present structure, and its future direction. It is also needed, in part, because in some areas, our corporate documentation, the 1959 Act of Incorporation, and the Discipline are either not clear, or contradictory regarding these issues. The two issues under review are:

a) The Basic Building Block of the Organization: Or where is membership held?

What is the basic building block of the Church organization? And where is membership held? Many of us would probably find it difficult to answer these questions. There are two possible answers to these questions. One view is that the Free Methodist Church in Canada (FMCC) is single monolithic body, with individual lay members organized into local congregations. Individual lay persons are members of the FMCC, not local church members.

The basic building block of the organization is the individual member. Much of our history, and the language of the Discipline would support this view. Another view is that membership is held at the local church level, and the FMCC is an umbrella organization of local congregations and clergy. In this view, the basic building block of the denomination is the local church.

b) Property Ownership

While many of us probably believe that the national church holds the title to local church properties, our documentation is confusing. The trust clause specified in the Discipline suggests that all local church property is held in trust for the FMCC. However, the legal wording of the 1959 Act of Incorporation indicates that the local congregation holds the title to local property, provided they remain a part of the FMCC. The situation is complicated by two other factors. While our Act of Incorporation is Federal, property issues are solely within

the jurisdiction of the provinces. A partial survey of local church deeds indicates that most do not contain a trust clause.

Many of us probably see these as highly technical legal issues which are only of interest to legal professionals. However, they can have very significant practical implications on the church. A few Illustrations:

- One question arising from the issue of the basic building block of the church is Who employs our pastors? Are they employees of the national church, or are they employees of the local church? We are already involved in discussions with auditors of the Government of Ontario regarding Employee Health Tax payments. The Ontario Government has taken a position that our pastors are employed by the national church. If this position is ultimately upheld, we could be liable for significant increases in future EHT payments, and significant costs to cover past under-payments.
- The property ownership issue may have implications on our ability to provide mortgage funds for local church properties from the Pension Fund.
- The property ownership issue may also have impact on the legal liabilities of the church as a whole. If for example, someone were injured on church property, who would be liable if this resulted in a suit, the local church or the national church?

As indicated above, the Board is in the early stages of considering these issues. The theological, sociological and legal implications of these questions will all need to be carefully considered in developing recommended directions.

2.6 APPENDIX B: RESPONSE TO RESOLUTION RE: ACTIONS CONFLICTING WITH MEMBERSHIP AND ORDINATION VOWS

A resolution was received from a group of members of the Bramalea Free Methodist Church (Doug Nicholls, Alison Nicholls, Shiela Kelly, Debra Wilbur, Jim Wilbur, Shelley Alexander, Dean Alexander, Carolyn Gonyou, Douglas Gonyou), Ann Ward from Warkworth, and K. Lavern Snider (see attached) which questions the constitutionality of this present meeting. It reflects a passion for institutional and personal integrity which we all affirm. However, it is unfortunately based on misunderstandings of the present constitutional status of the Canadian Church. See the clarifications in the "Whereas" section below. Therefore the Connectionalism Study Committee is recommending that this resolution be rejected.

2.6.1 Recommendation

WHEREAS the process for change with the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church in Canada is constitutionally legitimate because paragraph 250.5.1 of the Book of Discipline contemplates an amendment being brought into effect prior to approval when it states that if the constitutional council rules that an act is in conflict with the Constitution, the "implementation of said act shall automatically be suspended" (actions not already implemented cannot by definition be "suspended"); and,

WHEREAS the Constitutional Council, having thoroughly reviewed the Transitional Bylaw and the Strategic Plan, has not ruled either our change process or our new structure unconstitutional; and,

WHEREAS the Chair of the Constitutional Council, Bishop Gerald E. Bates, confirms the legitimacy of this present body as the current Canadian General Conference, during this transitional phase (see attached letter); and,

WHEREAS, though the former structure eliminated deacons from eligibility for General Conference membership, their exclusion was an outcome of structural considerations and not of any perception that they lacked competence for important decisions; and

WHEREAS the Strategic Plan, which has formed the Transitional Bylaw and thus the new configuration of the General Conference, is designed to shift major decisions as close to the local church as possible; and,

WHEREAS this newly configured General Conference is the only denominational structure that is currently legal (according to the Canadian Act of Parliament) and constitutional (according to the Transitional Bylaw), though it is recognized that the transitional phase will come to an end; and,

WHEREAS the resolution re: “actions conflicting with membership and ordination vows” is in error in that the minutes of the Constitutional Council do specifically refer to the Transitional Bylaw; and,

WHEREAS the Constitutional Council did not disapprove our action, but instead did “affirm the Transitional Documents of the Canada General Conference as outlined in their Transitional Bylaw and their Strategy Plan” not-with-standing the two conditions, which are being addressed at this General Conference; and,

WHEREAS though it was not clear in the minutes, it was the Constitutional Council that recommended that the due process of seeking approval be extended to give further opportunity to experience the new configuration; and

WHEREAS, though our process was legitimate, as indicated above, we have nonetheless anticipated the need for increased freedom to contextualize Free Methodist ministries into every culture of the world by having our Board of Administration and our Study Commission on Doctrine do extensive preliminary work in studying Chapter two of the Constitution with a view to proposing a referendum vote which would result in constitutional change (this process has now been suspended since the four bishops from North America have offered to give leadership to the effort by recommending a joint task force to study said chapter); therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Canadian General Conference reject the Resolution re: “Actions conflicting with membership and ordination vows.”

CONNECTIONALISM BALLOT 2.6.1

I vote to approve this recommendation to reject the resolution re: actions conflicting with membership and ordination vows.

☐ YES ☐ NO



Free Methodist Church of North America

Board of Bishops

Gerald E. Bates David M. Foster Richard D. Snyder

September 12, 1996

Bishop Gary Walsh
Free Methodist Church in Canada
4315 Village Centre Ct.
Mississauga, ON L4Z 1S2
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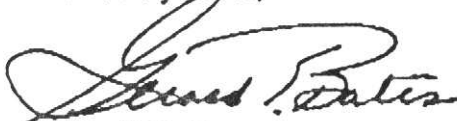
Dear Bishop Walsh:

First, let me thank you for the invitation to the Canadian General Conference in October. Unfortunately, those dates are exactly on the dates of our general Board of Administration when a lot of duties here fall on me so I shall not be able to be present. I believe Bishop Foster will be able to represent the U.S. Board of Bishops.

I appreciate the dialogues we have had around the action of the Constitutional Council regarding the Transitional By-law. I would think that this General Conference will give you good opportunity to reflect on the experience of the past couple of years, perhaps to make adjustments, and also to consider necessary responses to the Council.

I wish you God's best and His wisdom and blessing as you meet together. If there is occasion, please convey my warm greetings to the conference.

Sincerely yours,



Gerald E. Bates

GEB:cm

RESOLUTION

To: The October 1996 Conference of The Free Methodist Church in Canada
From: A group of members of the Bramalea Free Methodist Church
(Doug Nicholls, Alison Nicholls, Sheila Kelly, Debra Wilbur, Jim Wilbur,
Shelley Alexander, Dean Alexander, Carolyn Gonyou, Douglas Gonyou)
Ann Ward from Warkworth and K. Lavern Snider

WHEREAS, the Free Methodist Church around the world is founded on a common constitution (the Book of Discipline chapters one and two) and this “constitutes” each General Conference in terms of doctrine and governance; and,

WHEREAS, every Free Methodist has said yes to the question: “Do you accept the Articles of Religion, the Membership Covenant and the Organization and Government of the Free Methodist Church, and will you endeavor to live in harmony with them?” (Para. 350 question 5) and,

WHEREAS, all members, ministerial and lay, have subscribed to the membership covenant which says, “I will respect duly constituted authority in the home, church, and state except when it is in violation of the clear teachings of the Scripture” (Para 180.1) and also “I accept the Articles of Religion and the authority of the Book of Discipline in matters of church government” (185.2); and,

WHEREAS, the constitution may be amended by a prescribed procedure so that changes in forms of governance are at least deemed possible, yet no steps have been taken within the Canadian church to first amend the Constitution thus providing for legitimate variance from present prescribed governmental structures; and,

WHEREAS, the constitution decrees regarding the makeup of a general conference, for example, that of the ministers, only elders may sit on the general conference, and only then when they have been elected by a body of their ordained peers (Para 270.2.2), yet the body meeting in October 1966 will have on it potentially all elders and deacons who hold membership in Canada, none of whom was elected by peers; and,

WHEREAS, only a General Conference thus duly constituted in accordance with the provisions of the Book of Discipline is empowered to function as a legislative body, “having full power to make rules and regulations under the limitations and restrictions described in Para. 210”) Para. 610.1) and,

WHEREAS, the October body calling itself a general conference does not meet these criteria and therefore if it attempts to legislate violates our Book of Discipline; and,

WHEREAS, The transitional By-law adopted by an adjourned sitting of the last General Conference in December of 1994 and drawn up in legal form at a cost to the Canadian church of approximately \$10,000, states that "In the event that the Constitutional Council does not approve the Transitional By-law, then it shall be deemed to have been repealed as of the date of the next General Conference of the FMCC...."(October 1996), and the Constitutional Council meeting in Indianapolis in June of 1995 made no mention of this document, thus giving no formal statement of approval as would be expected to such a legal document: therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the body here assembled not put its members in conflict with their membership and ordination vows by asking them to legislate actions that will be binding on the Canadian church when such legislating would be in violation of the constitution, but rather make this body's priority to take actions to seek to amend the constitution; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT should the body vote to go ahead and legislate, in violation of its membership commitments, it first take action to suspend the Constitution, thus signaling unambiguously to the Free Methodist Church internationally its intention to be independent from the Constitution of the Free Methodist Church in its mode of governance.