

## ***An interview with Rev. Dennis Camplin on the Meaning of Ordination***

*(Rev. Camplin is a retired minister who has served the FMCiC for many years as a pastor, Superintendent, Director of Personnel, intentional interim pastor and mentor)*

**Q. A new Ministerial Candidate is sitting in front of you and asks: “Tell me what it means to be ordained and why it is important.” What would you say?**

**A.** First, I congratulate you for pursuing leadership in the church in that you have been tracking with the conference towards becoming an ordained minister.

From Old Testament times God calls particular groups and/or individuals to serve Him and His people in pastoral and priestly ways. For example, of the twelve tribes of Israel it was the Tribe of Levi who was called to serve the others as priests and agents of the redemptive work of God through the administration of sacrifices and rituals of the Old Testament temple. The Levites therefore did not receive land inheritance but were cared for through the tithe and other provisions of food and shelter.

They were set apart from temporal responsibilities and distractions so that they could focus on the spiritual nature of their calling.

From time to time God called individuals to serve Him in specific ways. He called Noah to build an ark so that a remnant could be spared the destruction of the flood of judgment. Abraham was called to leave the comfort and security of his father’s land so that his Father could open to his people the Land of Promise. Moses was called and commissioned to lead the Children of Israel out of the land of bondage. The obedience of each of these persons was vital in the plan of God to establish his kingdom and provide salvation which was to come through the Savior, Jesus Christ.

Jesus called the twelve disciples to train with him so that they could serve as apostles when He had completed his redemptive mission in the will of the Father. And the Apostle Paul responded to God’s call to take the Good news of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

In marvelous ways God continues his work through persons who are called to serve and the willingness of these called people to leave behind other pursuits in order to serve in the life of the church.

In fact, God promised the church that He would provide it with prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers. (Ephesians 4:11) He also gave to the church the responsibility to approve persons who possess gifts and calling to serve the church and advance the kingdom.

Denominations today continue the practice of setting persons apart in ordination for the responsibility of spiritual leadership among them.

As you know, the act of ordination comes at the end of a period of training through formal education and practical experience. In The Free Methodist Church in Canada you have met with members of the Ministerial Education Guidance and Placement Committee who have the responsibility of discerning your gifting, call, character and readiness for ordination in this part of the Church.

Your ordination has meaning for you, for the church and for the people who will enter your life throughout your ministry career.

For you, ordination is the confirmation and blessing of the church. The church, through the Ministerial Education Guidance and Placement Committee, observes a person’s gifting for ministry. It has had the chance to invest into your preparation and to watch you develop in your call and ministry skills. When the church ordains, it tells you and the world that you are authentic in your response to the call of God on your life.

Of course for the church your ordination is a way to recognize the gifts that God provides for the church as mentioned in Ephesians 4 and other New Testament scriptures.

People who are part of the church as well as people who you will touch through your ministry have confidence to know that you have been willing to be accountable to others in the credentialing process. You are not a self-appointed leader but one who is in leadership because you have been approved by the church through the process of ordination.

Your ordination helps you clarify the investment of your time and energies and frees you to devote your life to the ministry of the word and sacrament and the development of leadership in the people you serve. This, of course, potentially means leadership in the church and conference. You are part of a movement and a connection where you care for and are cared for by others.

Ordination in itself does not change you but it strongly affirms you. It recognizes who you are, commissions you to serve in the church and obligates you to be accountable for the responsibility given you.

**Q. A group of leaders from a church pastored by a Ministerial Candidate want to be supportive of their pastor's ordination but they are not sure about what ordination will "do" to (or for) their pastor. Is this when she will get her "stain glassed" voice? What is the scriptural basis for ordination as it is practiced today?**

**A.** As you study through the scriptures you will notice that God is in the habit of calling particular and individual persons to set aside other pursuits and serve Him in the context of the Old Testament temple or the New Testament church. There are lots of examples, but consider the call that God placed on the Tribe of Levi. Men who belonged to that tribe were to administer the sacrifices and temple order and thus serve the people in their worship of God. God provided for their living in a way different from that of the other tribes. They were called to a life of obedience and service.

In the New Testament the Apostle Paul was called to take the Gospel message to the Gentiles. Wherever he went he established churches. But in those churches that were established, leaders, pastors and teachers, were appointed consistent with the promise contained in Ephesians 4. Often Paul would assign the appointment of pastors to persons like Timothy and Titus. In fact in the two letters bearing those names, characteristics of the kind of persons who qualify are described.

The church still needs pastoral leaders and God still calls individuals to serve and lead. The process of affirmation is a very important process. In The Free Methodist Church in Canada Methodist Church in Canada we call this process "tracking." Your pastor has come to the point in this tracking process where church leaders are ready to affirm his/her gifting and call to ministry through ordination.

The New Testament urges us to not be hasty in placing hands of ordination upon a person but to test the call through practical experience under the guidance of leaders – ordained and lay. Your pastor has faithfully submitted to this biblical direction through accountability to the Ministerial Education, Guidance and Place Committee of the Conference and the appointments that it has made.

Ordination tells your pastor that the church recognizes that God has called him/her to the important function of pastoral leadership in the church. Ordination tells the people of the church that your pastor is obedient to the call of God and is willing to leave other pursuits so that he/she can give time, energy and focus to fulfill that call in the life of the church.

Ordination changes a person profoundly and also not at all. After ordination your pastor will not look different and hopefully will not sound different. But within the core of his/her being he/she will move forward in the confidence that affirmation from the church and obligation to the church gives. He/she will experience the mystery of the human and the divine working together in the Church as the Spirit prepares him/her to be the body of Christ in the world today and to be presented as the Bride of Christ in the world to come.