

Ethical Covenant for Free Methodist Pastors and Ministry Leaders

INTRODUCTION

The Apostle Paul guides Timothy (1 Timothy 4:16) toward conduct as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ with, “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” Reminding the apostolic protégé of both personal and public ethics, Paul instructs in the confrontation of false teachers, ministry diligence and public proclamation of Scripture.

As Free Methodist pastors and leaders, we covenant to be guided by these ethical and professional standards and recognize that living out these precepts, which flow from best practice in the Free Methodist Way, will increasingly bear spiritual fruit and organizational unity, whereas persistent misalignment may disqualify us from leadership and ordained ministry.

LIFE-GIVING HOLINESS

Full Surrender. I fully surrender to the loving reign of God over every aspect of my life, seeking the Spirit’s transformational power for myself, my family, relationships, church, peers, community and the world.

Perfect Love. With God’s help I will abstain from sinful and addictive behaviors that may harm my body, mind, spirit, finances and relationships, desiring to live out of Spirit-perfected love, that I may serve as a model of Christ to those I lead.

Holy Community. I will seek the help of my faith community when I struggle, especially in relationships in which I have been offended or have offended others, endeavoring to live in authentic reconciling love, trusting in their guidance and support even as I face trials and temptations with those sins which so easily entangle. I promise to keep sacred all which is shared in confidence, except in rare cases when sharing is discerned to be necessary to protect the innocent or vulnerable, for legal action/proceedings, or mandatory reporting is required by law.

LOVE-DRIVEN JUSTICE

Love Everyone. I value the image of God in all human beings.

Relational Justice. I refuse to act with bigotry, prejudice, misogyny or otherwise demean any people, and shall to the best of my ability foster an environment of mutual respect in organizations I lead and influence.

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Kingdom Justice. I aim to promote a better society and healthier natural world for all people everywhere, opposing systemic, environmental and interpersonal injustice through prayer, gospel proclamation, public advocacy and community compassion, in a spirit of reconciling love, rejecting both vengeance and retaliation.

CHRIST-COMPELLED MULTIPLICATION

Proclaim Salvation. I will proclaim full salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone, inviting all who respond to experience baptism and the Spirit-fueled life of perfect love in Christian community, and consider with deep care how all of my online and in-person communication may promote rather than hinder the witness of Christ.

Multiply Disciples. I embrace Jesus' call to make disciples who make disciples, being careful to invite into leadership not those with whom I have the closest affection or personal relationship but those evidencing the gifting and call of God.

Grow Movements. I shall support and deploy leaders and groups to multiply ministries and churches throughout my community and the world, rejecting congregational maintenance in favor of participating in Spirit-led movement.

CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATION

Embrace Diversity. I seek to understand perspectives other than my own, to build relationships with and learn from people different from me and commit to developing and raising up disciples and leaders reflecting a broad range of those who comprise the community I serve.

Mission First. I refuse to place my personal comfort, remuneration or political convictions ahead of the mission of Jesus, and commit to collaborate with people, churches and organizations I serve, respecting the work of fellow Christian leaders regardless of their denominational, cultural or ethnic affiliation, with special care to foster mutual respect publicly and via social media.

Kingdom Collaboration. I embrace the global movement of Christ, encouraging the congregations I lead to pray, give and go globally, being mindful that my communication from the pulpit and online may have profound impact upon my sisters and brothers in nations and under political systems that differ from my own, always giving due credit to those who have influenced me.

GOD-GIVEN REVELATION

Scriptural Authority. I hold the Bible as the inspired Word of God and my final authority in matters of faith and practice and shall regularly, prayerfully search the Scriptures alone and with others in order to better align my thoughts, beliefs, and action with divine instruction.

Biblical Community. I endeavor to deepen my biblically sound theology through exploring Scripture in the context of the global community, seeking the wisdom of interpreters ancient and modern from each continent and various social locations.

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Spirit-Fueled. I seek wholeheartedly a Spirit-fueled movement through embracing the Scriptural truth that God the Father’s gift of biblical revelation is understood only through Holy Spirit endowed illumination empowering my life toward a real and present experience of the resurrected Jesus Christ.

DIGITAL WORLD

I embrace opportunities to promote the cause of Christ and the Free Methodist Church through various virtual and social media avenues, resisting the dark lures inherent in the digital world, acknowledging that my personal and professional behavior online is guided by this ethical statement.

Regarding Artificial Intelligence. I will utilize AI in ways that do not replace my own commitment to seeking the voice of the Lord, study, and prayer.

Regarding Holiness Online. I will refrain from the grip of pornography and other graphic online content and entertainment that detract from the spiritual health of my soul and relationships with the Lord and others.

Regarding Social Media The content we share on social media must reflect the theological integrity of Christian orthodoxy and align with the doctrines of the Free Methodist Church. As leaders and elders in the church, our digital presence should embody humility, dignity, and Christ-like love for all people, affirming the worth of every individual (cf. Book of Discipline, ¶3221).

As leaders, we must be deeply aware of the powerful influence our voice on social media has as representatives of the Free Methodist Church and the broader witness of the church. In this digital age, where divisive and destructive narratives abound, our posts should be intentionally redemptive—seeking to reconcile, restore, and build up the body of Christ. Every post or repost should be evaluated through the lens of how it honors Christ in tone and contributes to God’s purposes of unity and edification.

As leaders in the church, our primary allegiance is to Christ and His kingdom, and all other loyalties, including political partisanship, must be submitted to our commitment to the kingdom and unity in the Spirit (Ephesians 4:4–6). As spiritual leaders, we are called to be above reproach in all communication, demonstrating love for our neighbors and praying for our enemies.

“Free Methodists are aware of the demonic forces in the world which debase people, pervert the good, and lead people and institutions to ruin,” (Book of Discipline, p. 4), and we actively resist these forces, especially as they manifest on social media, seeking to undermine the unity and witness of Christ’s church.

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EMBRACE THE WAY

Healthy Change. I shall engage the processes available for healthy theological and practical dialogue and introduce Spirit-led, biblically consistent change in my local church, conference and denomination with respect. I recognize the importance of keeping all conversation in the light by talking directly to those involved and practicing biblical conflict resolution.

Living Harmony. I understand that I represent the Free Methodist Church, our diverse people and clear values, and will refrain from publicly communicating anything contrary to our doctrine, vision, values and practices and that should I be unable to do so as a matter of preference or conscience, I will voluntarily withdraw from the conference and/or church in a spirit of professional respect and Christian love.

ADDRESSING MISALIGNMENT

I understand that when concerns arise that Free Methodist pastors or ministry leaders may have violated through conduct, speech or use of social media, the clear spirit of this covenant, the annual conference will address the concerns in the following way:

The bishop, superintendent, district leader, or other appropriate leader will have a conversation with the person(s) involved and seek resolution, calling them to wisely consider the spirit of this ethical covenant. If the person(s) refuses, they will be referred to the conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board for further review and appropriate action as with other matters of character as outlined in Chapter 7 of the Book of Discipline.

Print Name

Signature

Date

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