

## **Free Methodist Church of North America**

The mission of the Free Methodist Church is to make known to all people everywhere God's call to wholeness through forgiveness and holiness in Jesus Christ, and to invite into membership and to equip for ministry all who respond in faith.

Influenced by the holiness movement, Rev. Benjamin Titus Roberts and others involved with the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church encouraged the return to primitive Methodism and the doctrine of entire sanctification. They were expelled from the Methodist Episcopal Church and were unable to join any other Methodist body. Therefore they began the Free Methodist Church on August 23, 1860.

In 2000, there were approximately 1000 churches, fellowships, and new church plants with 70,000 members in the United States and 516,000 members worldwide.

**Abortion:** The Free Methodist Church is firmly opposed to abortion. Abortion is selfish and malicious when it serves the ends of population or birth control, personal preference of convenience, and social or economic security. We recognize there are those whose views are contrary to ours. We believe they should be treated with respect and dignity since God's forgiveness is offered to all.

**Affiliations:** National Association of Evangelicals, Christian Holiness Partnership, World Methodist Council, and Evangelical Council For Financial Accountability

**Baptism:** Water baptism is a sacrament of the church. The Lord commands it. It is a declaration of faith. It signifies acceptance of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ. Baptism is a symbol of the new covenant of grace, just as circumcision was the symbol of the old covenant. Free Methodist baptize by immersion, pouring and sprinkling.

**Bioethics:** The biblical principles of the sanctity of life and the sovereignty of God guide our approach to bioethics. Our ethics are not determined only by the extent of the permissiveness of the law of the state or the possibilities of safe medical procedures. Free Methodist are forming statements on such ethical dilemmas as: the allocation of finite resources, organ transplantation, end-of-life concerns, genetic engineering and testing, gender identity issues and others.

**Birth Control:** No position.

**Capital Punishment:** No position.

**Christ's Return:** The return of Christ is certain and may occur at any moment. It is not given us to know the hour. The believer's response is joyous expectation, watchfulness, readiness, and diligence.

**Communion:** The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death. Christ, according to His promise, is really present in the sacrament. His body is given,

taken, and eaten only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. Communion is open to all who are repentant and trust in Christ alone for their salvation. The supper is also a sign of the love and unity that Christians have among themselves.

**Creation vs. Evolution:** We believe in God the Father, Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. We are concerned that concepts of first origins shall have completely fair consideration in public schools. Instructional materials are available that permit a scientific treatment of the several concepts of origin, including special creation (that all basic life forms and life processes were created by a supernatural creator). Therefore, the church desires the concept of special creation will be presented in, or along with, all courses, textbooks, library materials, and teaching aids dealing in any way with the subject of first origins.

**Deity of Jesus:** Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus of Nazareth was God in flesh, truly God and truly human. He came to save us. For us the Son of God suffered, was crucified, dead and buried. He poured out His life as a blameless sacrifice for our sin. Jesus Christ is risen victorious from the dead. He ascended into heaven where He sits as our exalted Lord at the right hand of God the Father. He will return to judge all people. "Every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:10-11).

**Distinguishing Beliefs/Practices:** Free Methodists today seek to continue the mission of first-century Christianity. They follow the vision of John Wesley and the early Methodists who declared they existed "to raise up a holy people."

Free Methodists are a fellowship of Christians in earnest to get to heaven. They are also committed to working in the world for the salvation of all men. They place their commitment to Christ and His church above all others. They believe the conditions of salvation are the same now as they were in the days of the apostles.

In doctrine, Free Methodists' beliefs are the standard beliefs of evangelical, Arminian Protestantism, with distinctive emphasis on the scriptural teaching of entire sanctification as held by John Wesley.

In experience, Free Methodists stress the reality of an inner cleansing and power that attests the doctrine of entire sanctification, both in the inward consciousness of the believer and in his outward life. Their worship is characterized by simplicity and freedom of the Spirit, liberated from elaborate ritual.

Free Methodists maintain a life of daily devotion to Christ that springs from inward holiness and separates the Christian from the world, even while he/she lives in the world. They believe the best way to keep worldliness from invading the church is for the church to invade the world with redemptive purpose.

Free Methodists practice a complete consecration of every power and possession to the service of God and man. They believe so strongly in the mission of the church that they

are committed to responsible stewardship in finance. Therefore they do not need to resort to commercial efforts to support the cause of Christ.

Free Methodists recognize that God gives spiritual gifts of service and leadership to both men and women. Since male and female are both created in the image of God, that image is most fully reflected when both women and men work in concert at all levels of the church. Therefore, all positions in the church are accessible to any whom God has called.

Free Methodists sense a special obligation to preach the gospel to the poor. The provisions of the gospel are for all. Jesus set the example. Of His ministry it was reported, "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Luke 7:22). This preaching to the poor was the crowning proof that He was the one who should come. In this respect the church must follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Free Methodists are committed to the New Testament ideals of simplicity and modesty as a style of life. They wish to call attention, not to themselves, but to their Lord.

**Divorce and Remarriage:** When a marriage is violated by sexual infidelity, the partners are encouraged to work for restoration. Where reconciliation is impossible, divorce may be unavoidable. Persons who have been involved in divorce while in a state of unbelief shall not be barred from becoming members, even though they remarry. Believers are not prohibited from marrying a person who was divorced while an unbeliever. A member of the church divorced from an adulterous spouse or deserted by an unbelieving mate, after attempts at forgiveness and reconciliation have been rejected, may remarry.

**Euthanasia:** There is no justification for euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide. It is understood that a terminally ill person's request that life not be sustained by heroic measures, does not constitute euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide. We recognize that it is permissible to use painkillers and other medications, which carry the risk of shortening life so long as the intent is to relieve or otherwise benefit the patient, rather than to cause death. We further recognize the responsibility of medical professionals to alleviate pain within these parameters. Christians must discourage the assumption that some lives are not worth living. We believe that there is no such thing as a "useless" life. The value and worth in our lives rests primarily in our relationship with a God Who loves us.

**Government:** The Free Methodist Church is a modified episcopacy with equal lay representation in all the major governing bodies of the church.

**Heaven/Hell:** For those who trust Jesus Christ and obediently follow Him, there is a heaven of eternal glory and the blessedness of Christ's presence. But for the finally impenitent there is a hell of eternal suffering and separation from God.

**Homosexuality:** Homosexual behavior, as all sexual deviation, is a perversion of God's created order. The sanctity of marriage and the family is to be preserved against all manner of immoral conduct. The Free Methodist Church does not recognize the

legitimacy or participation in the practice of same-sex marriage.

Homosexual behavior is contrary to the will of God as clearly stated in Scripture. Persons with homosexual inclinations are accountable to God for their behavior. The forgiving and delivering grace of God in Christ is all-sufficient for the homosexual.

The church has a personal and corporate responsibility to be God's instrument of healing, restoring love to the homosexual seeking recovery of Christian conduct and life-style. The church opposes legislation which makes homosexual conduct or life-style legitimate.

**Inspiration of Scripture:** The Bible is God's written Word, uniquely inspired by the Holy Spirit. It bears unerring witness to Jesus Christ, the living Word. As attested by the early church and subsequent councils, it is the trustworthy record of God's revelation, completely faithful in all it affirms. It has been faithfully preserved and proves itself true in human experience. The Scriptures have come to us through human authors who wrote, as God moved them, in the languages and literary forms of their times. The Bible has authority over all human life. Whatever cannot be found in the Bible nor can be proved by it is not to be required as an article of belief or as necessary to salvation.

**Miracles:** Free Methodists hold that all healing, whether of body, mind, or spirit, has its ultimate source in God who is above all and through all and in all. He may heal by the mediation of surgery, medication, change of environment, counseling, corrected attitudes, or through the restorative process of nature itself. He may heal through one or more of the above or in combination with prayer. Or He may heal by direct intervention in response to prayer.

**Restrictions:** Members are expected to abstain from: the manufacture, sale, and use of alcohol, harmful drugs and tobacco; all forms of gambling; membership in secret societies; and involvement with pornography.

**Security of Salvation:** God gives assurance of salvation and peace of heart to all who repent and put their faith in him. The Holy Spirit witnesses to the believers' spirits that they are forgiven of their sins and adopted into the family of God. The Christian has peace with God through Jesus Christ because guilt is taken away and fear of judgment is removed. God continues to give assurance to believers through the Scriptures, the conscious presence of the Holy Spirit, and love for and fellowship with other Christians.

**Speaking in Tongues and Other Gifts of the Spirit:** The believer is to seek as the evidence of the Holy Spirit's fullness, not the gifts themselves, but the Giver. Speaking or teaching to speak unintelligible sounds is not consistent with the order brought about by the Holy Spirit. The language of worship is the language of the people. All communication in worship is to be experienced with understanding.

**Trinity:** There is but one living and true God, the maker and preserver of all things. In the unity of this Godhead there are three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

These are one in eternity, deity, and purpose, everlasting, and of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness.

**Women in Ministry:** Free Methodists recognize that God gives spiritual gifts of service and leadership to both men and women. Since male and female are both created in the image of God, that image is most fully reflected when both women and men work in concert at all levels of the church. Women should be encouraged to take their place in all areas of church leadership and ministry.

**For more information contact:** P.O. Box 535002, Indianapolis, IN 46253-5002; Phone: (317) 244-3660; Fax: (317) 241-1247; [info@freemethodistchurch.org](mailto:info@freemethodistchurch.org).