

A Proposal for BLFMC's Board Nominations and Elections

By: The Board of Administration of Beach Lake FM Church

Abstract

During BLFMC's 2018 Annual Society meeting on December 2 BLFMC's partnership motioned to appoint a committee composed of BLFMC's 2019 Board of Administration (BOA) plus two non-BOA partners of BLFMC to craft a proposal that restructures the processes and policies of the nomination and election of board officers and members. This committee was commissioned to develop an election process that provides more than one nominee for a board position. On January 7, 2019 the BOA appointed Elder Gary Sligh and Early Childhood Ministries Director Cindy Sue Barnes to serve as the two-non BOA partners requested by the partnership. On February 5, 2019 this committee convened and approved the following document to be offered to BLFMC's partnership as a review of the current process, an interpretation of the Free Methodist Church's *Book of Discipline's* guidelines, and a proposal of a new nominations and elections process to be voted on by BLFMC's partnership.

Reviewing BLFMC's Current Nomination & Voting Processes

The current process of creating the nominating committee and electing their nominees for BLFMC Boards is as follows:

- Creating the Nominating Committee: Beginning in October, Pastor initiates the creation of the nominating committee by first inviting a BLFMC Elder of his choosing to serve on the nominating committee. Pastor and Elder then invite a current member of the BOA to serve on the nominating committee, adding another voice to speak to the performance and qualifications of those currently serving on the BOA. Finally, these three who comprise the nominating committee invite at least one additional non-elder, non-BOA Partner to serve on the nominating committee.
- Proposing Nominees: The nominating committee convenes over a conference call to create the nomination ballot for the society meeting. They begin with a review of the godliness and performance of those currently serving on the Boards (BOA and BOT). All BOA positions are for one-year terms so as to create the conduit for change in the event of ungodliness or poor performance, while BOT positions hold three-year terms. Pending the review of those currently serving on the Boards, the nominating committee then proposes nominees for those positions deemed open, creating a list of at least three potential nominees to fill the open position(s). All proposals for candidates are voted on unanimously by the nominating committee.
- Securing Nominees: Pastor then asks each of those nominated by the committee if they believe God is leading them to accept the nomination. If one says no, Pastor moves onto the next candidate on the list provided by the nominating committee, until all available positions are filled by interested and God-led nominees.
- Voting on Nominees: At the Annual Society Meeting the first Sunday in December, the society (partnership) convenes to vote on the nominees presented by the nominating committee. The

ballot contains one nominee per position asking for a vote of “yes” or “no,” requiring a majority vote from the Partnership for a nominee to be elected to their nominated position.

After the Society Meeting, additional research concluded such practices were not in accord with the Free Methodist Church’s current *Book of Discipline*. The understanding among the Partnership since the society meeting adjourned to this day has been the policies in the *Book of Discipline* should become BLFMC policies, potentially accommodating the desires of the Partnership.

Local Society Administration According to the *Book of Discipline*

Paragraphs 6200-6310 of the *Book of Discipline* speak of the policies of the nominating committee, society meeting, and Board of Administration. What must take the primary focus is the creation of the nominating committee and the election of nominees. Below are key selections of the *Book of Discipline* that directly address the nomination and structure of Board members:

Nominating Committee

Par. 6250.F – The society shall elect a nominating committee (see ¶6310).ⁱ

Par. 6310.A – At the annual meeting, the society shall elect by ballot from its adult membership a standing nominating committee of not fewer than three nor more than nine persons, plus the senior pastor. The society shall consider persons for this committee who are spiritually mature and who understand and actively pursue the mission of the Church. The society shall determine the size of the Nominating Committee, the duration and rotation of terms and any term limits. The Nominating Committee may not present nominations for the next Nominating Committee; however the society may allow for nominations from the membership to be received in advance of the annual meeting. In this case, a form for nominations shall be provided at least 30 days prior to the election. The local Board of Administration shall process these nominations and provide a ballot including the names of all available nominees. In addition, the society may determine whether nominations will be allowed from the floor and set a standing rule in advance to that effect.ⁱⁱ

Par. 6310.D – The Nominating Committee shall:

1. recommend to the society persons to serve in the leadership roles of all standing committees or boards;
2. nominate annual conference delegates, if the society so chooses, presenting at least two nominations for each delegate position for election by ballot (see ¶6250.E);

ⁱ The Free Methodist Church, *Book of Discipline* (Indianapolis, IN: Light and Life Communications, 2016) 133.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 137.

3. consult ¶6200.E when considering persons for the position of delegate(s) and reserve delegate(s) to annual conference and for all leadership positions. The Board of Administration shall establish a procedure whereby the pastor and/or cabinet can review the nominations and remove from the final ballot the names of members who have shown inadequate growth in Christian practice or Christ-likeness. Prior to the annual election process, the pastor shall remind the society and/or Nominating Committee (whichever is most appropriate) of the scriptural qualifications for leadership positions as defined in ¶6200.E; and
4. make their report available to the society at least ten days prior to the election.ⁱⁱⁱ

Board of Administration & Board of Trustees

Par. 6250.G – The society shall elect adult members from the local church to serve in various capacities on the local Board of Administration, in addition to those named by virtue of office.^{iv}

Par. 6250.I – The Board of Administration may serve as the trustees of the church, or a separate board may be elected. When a separate board is elected, it shall consist of not less than three persons of whom two-thirds shall be adult members of the Free Methodist Church. All trustees shall be elected as specified in the charter or bylaws or by civil law (see ¶6400.B).^v

Par. 6300.A – The local Board of Administration shall be composed of the senior pastor and ministry leaders in the church as determined by the society. It is recommended that there shall be no less than seven, nor more than fifteen members. The board shall have at least one delegate and, when the society has a separate board of trustees, one trustee as well. It is also recommended that no member, with the exception of the pastor, serve for more than six consecutive years.

1. In consultation with the conference superintendent, the local church may choose other structures and titles to appropriately reflect core values and desired outcomes.
2. Board members shall be representative members of the local church, faithful in worship attendance, involved in ministry, and should also be supportive financially at least to the level of the tithe (see ¶6200.E).
3. Only adult members of the local church may serve on the local Board of Administration, except that members of an annual conference may serve on the board if the society elects them.
4. Whenever practicable, the board shall meet once a month.^{vi}

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid., 137-8.

^{iv} Ibid., 133.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Ibid., 134.

Par. 6300.C – The pastor is an ex-officio member of all boards and committees.^{vii}

Indeed, the *Book of Discipline* provides a comprehensive structure for the formation and purpose of the Nominating Committee as well as the election of nominees to a local church's Boards. However, the question remains, "Must a local church strictly adhere to all stated policies provided in the book of discipline?"

Freedom to Organize

Throughout the selections quoted above, keywords were intentionally included to create freedom in the local church, words like "recommended" and "may" and phrases like "the society shall consider... determine... allow." Such loose terms regarding the process are an overflow from a paragraph included in the *Book of Discipline* in the section titled "Local Church Administration," which comes immediately before all literature concerning the Nominating Committee and Boards nomination processes quote above.

Par. 6200.D – Recognizing the diversity in the Free Methodist Church, diversity in board and ministry structures is needed to meet the expected outcomes. Ministry settings vary due to size, goals and culture. The local church is free to organize its boards and ministry structures in such a manner as to maintain Free Methodist values while accomplishing the Expected Outcomes^{viii} (see ¶6060).^{ix}

Such a paragraph means a local church is afforded the freedom to organize her structures and ministries, on the societal or administrative levels. Additional paragraphs proving or demonstrating such an afforded freedom include:

Par. 6200.C – New societies and smaller churches should view the organization outlined as a goal to be reached as the church grows and ministries expand. Some offices/functions may be omitted or combined in such instances.^x

^{vii} Ibid., 135.

^{viii} The Expected outcomes can be found on p. 127, stating the following:

Par. 6060 – All structures, ministries, and personnel of the church shall produce these expected outcomes:

1. Every church a prayer-saturated congregation
2. Every church a worshipping congregation
3. Every church a discipling congregation
4. Every church an evangelizing congregation
5. Every church a reproducing congregation
6. Every church a culture-engaging congregation
7. Every church a world-mission congregation
8. Every church a purpose-driven congregation

^{ix} Ibid., 131.

^x Ibid., 131.

Par. 6250.L – The society may elect other personnel to serve the church.

Par. 6300.N – The board shall organize itself to provide oversight for the ministries of the church according to need. It shall give attention to providing leadership for evangelism and church growth, world missions, Christian education and the spiritual health of the congregation.

Therefore, it should be concluded that such policies outlined in the *Book of Discipline* pertaining to Local Church Administration ought to be utilized as strong *guidelines* in the formation of the structures of a local church, but the church retains the right to deviate from said policies when necessary. When, then, is such deviation from the discipline's guidelines necessitated?

Considering The Guidelines

There are some concerns with the *Book of Disciplines'* guidelines that ought to be considered before formulating and proposing a process. Those concerns are as follows:

- Longevity: The above guidelines provided by the *Book of Discipline* recommends a maximum service time for BOA members of six years. Though it provides no motive for such a limit, it can be assumed such a limit is intended to prevent burnout in service, much like a sabbatical for a pastor every seventh year of ministry. While it is good to provide space for an individual on the edge of burnout, must such a limit be required? What if such a person is still qualified to serve, has maintained godly leadership in their service, and is still eager to serve in such a role? Why should they be required to step away? Longevity in leadership is never a wrong thing; ungodliness and apathy in leadership are.
- Growth: As a local church increases in size, decisions left to the society become increasingly difficult to come by, as can be noted as the reason for such a proposal as this. After consulting with several other Free Methodist Pastors, it was discovered that larger FM churches (100+) have been forced to deviate in various ways from the guidelines proposed in the *Book of Discipline*. The reason for this is, as a partnership grows, not everyone can speak to the character and godliness of every other partner. Those voting will be forced to cast a vote on nominees they do not personally know and have not vetted. Therefore, those in leadership must be trusted to do the vetting work that every partner cannot do, which leads to the next concern.
- Trusting Leadership vs. Fairness to Partners: The highest reason leaders are elected to serve is to make decisions on behalf of the Partnership. While a proposed process should take into consideration its fairness to the Partnership, it should primarily commend a trusting relationship between the Partnership and her leadership. If the leadership has lost the trust the Partnership, then a process should be proposed that gives the Partnership a voice to make it known and the

power to make change. However, such a voice should not be used for the direct control of the leadership, which leads to the next concern.

- Accountability vs. Control: While a local leadership board is to be accountable to the partnership it oversees, it is not to be controlled by the partnership. Such a dynamic creates a powerless and visionless leadership at the mercy of a partnership full of uniquely gifted disciples of Jesus, not all of which are qualified or gifted to serve in higher leadership roles. While the proposed process must include avenues for accountability between the BOA and the Partnership, it cannot create a culture of control or else leadership becomes meaningless.

The Proposal

Therefore, how can we create a healthy and fair process of composing a nominating committee and electing Board members that takes into consideration the above guidelines and concerns? Consider this proposal:

Nominating Committee

On the first Sunday in September, the BOA will issue a ballot to the Partnership to elect the Nominating Committee, which is to be made up of the following categories of members:

- Lead Pastor as Ex-Officio member
- One current Elder of BLFMC
- One current BOA member – If a BOA member also serves as an elder, he can only be elected as an elder. The BOA member who serves on the nominating committee can be reelected to serve another year but will have no say in the nominating committee's vote to approve such a nomination—all other nominating committee members will determine this.
- Not fewer than one but no more than seven BLFMC partner(s) as At-Large member(s). The number of at-large members needed will be determined by the BOA on the basis of size and culture of the church. BLFMC's Elder Board will propose the requested number of spiritually qualified at-large nominees, offering two additional candidates than the determined number of at-large members, creating a pool of candidates to choose from. In the event spiritually unqualified or unwilling candidates are only available, only nominees for the needed number of positions as determined by the BOA can be offered. The partnership can make candidate recommendations to the Elder Board for their consideration.

The nominee(s) for each category that receives the highest number of votes will be elected to serve on the nominating committee. Partners that are not present on this Sunday cannot cast an absentee ballot (Par. 6250.C). A sample ballot is as follows:

Sample Ballot for Nominating Committee

Nominating Committee Nominees

Lead Pastor as Ex-Officio Member

Elder (circle one): Paul Moses Elijah John the Baptist

BOA Member (circle one): Abednego Apollos David Esther Joshua Rachel Beniah

Two At-Large Members (circle two of the four nominees below):

Dorcas Gideon Isaiah Ruth

Board of Administration Elections

The nominating committee will convene to propose nominees for all open positions on all Boards, with the Lead Pastor serving as Ex-Officio member of the Board of Administration. Nominees must be partners of BLFMC, must meet the Spiritual Qualifications, and must be led by God to serve. The Nominating Committee will offer two nominees for every officer position of the BOA, as follows: Delegate, Reserve Delegate, Secretary, and Chairman of Finance (Trustee Chairman is determined by the Board of Trustees). In the event a second nominee cannot be secured for reasons such as refused nomination or none qualified, only one nominee per position can be offered for voting. A "write-in" line will *not* be made available for each officer position, as each officer position requires specific qualifications. The nominee for each officer position that receives the majority vote will be elected to serve in that position. Those nominees for the officer positions who were not elected will be added to the list of nominees for the at-large positions.

The number of at-large members of the BOA will be no less than two, no more than nine, and will be determined by the BOA on the basis of the size and needs of the church. The nominating committee will propose a nominee for every available at-large position with the understanding additional nominees will be added to the list after the officer elections. A "write-in" line will be made available for this ballot. Those nominees who receive the most votes will be elected to each at-large position. Sample ballots are as follows:

Sample Ballot for Electing BOA Officers

Officer Positions of BOA: (circle one nominee for each position)

Delegate: Bartholomew Eleazar

Reserve Delegate: Anna Phinehas

Chairman of Finance: Joseph Hezekiah

Secretary: Elisabeth Hannah

Chairman of Trustees: (determined by the Board of Trustees)

Sample Ballot for Electing At-Large Members of BOA

At-Large Members of BOA: (circle three of the names listed below)

Nathan

Micaiah

Abigail

Eleazar*

Phinehas*

Hezekiah*

Hannah*

Write In: _____

**From Ballot for BOA Officers*

A list of all nominees for each position will be provided to the partnership the second, third, and fourth Sundays of November. Once the new Board of Administration is elected, the BOA will assign the at-large members liaison responsibilities to the various ministries throughout the church.

Board of Trustees

Previously, the policies concerning the nomination, election, and terms of the Board of Trustees has been that this board is to be composed of five trustees serving terms of three years. However, research has discovered that the *Bylaws of the Free Methodist Church of Beach Lake, Pennsylvania* speaks to the election, function, and other conditions of the Board of Trustees. Therefore, no vote of approval is required to approve this section of the proposal; rather, this section serves as a notice of updated procedures. Here is what the bylaws state:

Article II

Board of Trustees

Section I:

The secular affairs of this corporation shall be exercised and conducted by a board of five trustees as elected by the society of the Free Methodist Church of Beach Lake, PA.

Section II:

The qualifications of all such trustees shall be as provided in the DISCIPLINE of the Free Methodist Church of North America.^{xi}

^{xi} Par. 6250 I - The local Board of Administration may serve as the trustees of the society, or a separate board may be elected. When a separate board is elected, it shall consist of not less than three persons of whom two-thirds shall be adult members of the Free Methodist Church. All trustees shall be elected as specified in the charter or bylaws or by civil law (see Par. 6400 B).

Section III:

The term of office for each Trustee shall be for five years, or until his successor is elected and qualified. In order to provide for a continuity of members on the Board of Trustees, one trustee shall be elected each year; provided, however that the trustees in office at the time of the adoption of these bylaws shall serve for the balance of their respective terms, or until the successor of each is elected and qualified.

Section IV:

Any vacancy occurring in the office of trustee shall be filled by an election at a special meeting of the membership or society called for the purpose, and any trustee so elected shall hold office for the unexpired term.

Section V:

Immediately after the annual meeting, the board of trustees shall meet and organize by electing a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer, or secretary-treasurer.

Section VI:

All meetings of the trustees shall be held as directed from time to time or at the call of the president or pastor.

Section VII:

The duties of the several officers shall be as provided in the DISCIPLINE of the Free Methodist Church of North America, or as prescribed by the society of the Free Methodist Church of Beach Lake, Pennsylvania.^{xii}

Pastor Scott with the President (Chairman) of the Trustees, Bill Greco, will work to align our current procedures with our bylaws. While this section details the qualifications of trustees ("two-thirds shall be adult members"), duties of such a board ("the task of caring for property and facilities"), terms and conditions ("five years," "one trustee shall be elected each year..."), as well as how they are elected ("as elected by the society"), it does not speak to how a trustee is to be nominated. Therefore, the following section serves as a proposal to the partnership for approving a policy for nominating members to be elected to the Board of Trustees.

Board of Trustee Nominations

The Nominating Committee, as organized above, shall convene to propose a nominee for any open position on the Board of Trustees. The Nominating Committee can renominate the trustee whose term is

^{xii} Par. 6400 B - The Board of Administration of an annual conference or a society of the Free Methodist Church shall have and hold in trust any and all property committed to it. Whenever local law requires church property to be held by trustees, and when the society authorizes its local Board of Administration to be the legal trustees, references in the *Book of Discipline* to "Board of Administration" may be construed to be synonymous with "Board of Trustees." The Board of Administration shall be elected by ballot where civil law requires. The task of caring for property and facilities may be referred to a separate properties committee.

expiring or can nominate a new member to serve who meets the Spiritual Qualifications and is led by God to serve. A "write-in" line will be made available for this ballot. The nominee who receives the most votes is elected.

Sample Ballot for Electing Members of the BOT

Current Members of BOT:

Jacob (Term expires 2019)

Bathsheba (Term expires 2020)

Asher (Term expires 2021)

Lois (Term expires 2022)

Samuel (Term expires 2023)

(circle the nominee's name or write in your own)

Nominee: Jacob

Write In: _____

Per Article II, Section V, immediately after the annual meeting, the board of trustees shall meet and organize by electing a president (chair), vice-president (vice-chair), and secretary to take minutes of trustee meetings (no treasurer is needed).