

Foreword

The Free Methodist Church of North America meets as a deliberative body, called a General Conference, approximately every four years. It is a time when Free Methodists join in celebrative worship, hear the Word, pray for God's guidance, debate the issues, decide on resolutions, set new directions, renew friendships and enjoy fellowship with each other.

Ministerial and lay delegates from the annual conferences across the United States and in other parts of the world, along with the bishops, meet together to clarify the mission, renew the vision, care for denominational business and examine the *Book of Discipline*. Representatives from Free Methodist institutions, associations and auxiliaries as well as executive directors with their leadership teams bring reports and add their insights.

The 2003 *Book of Discipline* is unique as it reflects the creativity and efforts of the Book of Discipline Reformatting Task Force (Byron Forbes, chair, Bill Smout, Barbara Fox, Glenn Teal, Matt Thomas, and Bishop Richard Snyder) who were asked to prepare a reformatted *Book of Discipline* for the Board of Administration's consideration and recommendation to the General Conference. Our special thanks to Bill Smout for his untiring work in organizing this project so that the proposed changes could be easily identified.

The *Book of Discipline* includes the common constitution of the Free Methodist Church worldwide. It is a blend of history, roots and international contemporary mission. It is the ecclesiastical and organizational manual of the church. It represents the heart and vision of the Free Methodist people who serve faithfully at the call of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is our prayer that this *Book of Discipline* will be a useful resource to guide the church in effective ministry under the direction of the Holy Spirit as together we live and serve our Master in the neighborhoods of our world.

— The Editors