

## Theology of Mission Free Methodist World Missions

Free Methodists affirm God as Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Book of Discipline ¶101). God is the Creator of all that is, including humans, who are created in God's image (*imago Dei*). As God's image bearer(s), humans are privileged to emulate God's character and attributes. Sadly, humans have failed to live up to this high calling. But God, through Jesus, makes a way to honor God anew through the restoration of the *imago Dei* in us. One of the most significant aspects of God's Trinitarian nature is that each member of the Godhead lives in perfect community—and invites those created in God's image to live in community with God and with one another.

### *God-shaped Community*

The Trinitarian community is characterized by *shalom*, a peaceable interrelatedness that actively seeks the wellbeing of others. This activeness is seen especially in Jesus's incarnation when he emptied himself in order that humans might enter into a relationship of *shalom* with God. Therefore, Free Methodists are committed to entering God's mission (*missio Dei*) by:

- Listening to others, including those unlike ourselves, in order that we might enter into *shalom*-community with them and invite them into *shalom*-community with God through Jesus;
- Ministering to, with, and by marginalized people—people neglected and despised by other humans but valued by God;
- Pursuing justice by breaking down barriers to *shalom*-community that divide people from one another;
- Celebrating the diversity of gifts that God has distributed to God's people by sharing our gifts with others and accepting their gifts in return, seeking to outdo one another in giving away that which we value most, and trusting each other with the resources God has entrusted to us;
- Inviting people to practice *shalom*-community within local bodies of believers (churches) and planting new churches where none yet exist.

### *God's Covenant Faithfulness*

One of the Bible's great themes is the succession of covenants God entered into with people and God's loving faithfulness to them. The Bible's word for this covenant faithfulness is *hesed*. By *hesed*, God seeks the welfare of God's covenant partners in all aspects, including our relationship with creation. Therefore, Free Methodists are committed to entering God's mission (*missio Dei*) by:

- Ministering to others' spiritual, physical, emotional, relational, and psychological needs;
- Declaring that God's mercy forgives guilt, God's honor covers shame, and God's loving power conquers fear;
- Caring for creation and finding the wellbeing of people within their physical, as well as cultural and spiritual contexts;
- Teaching believers how to live in covenant faithfulness to Christ by obeying Christ's commands and thus becoming Christ's disciples.

### *Broken Community and Broken Covenant*

Although by very nature God is a covenant keeper, humans are prone to broken community and to breaking covenant. The Bible calls this brokenness sin. Sin takes many forms, including personal, systemic, and cosmic evil. Humans are powerless to overcome sin on their own. Indeed, often humans are so immersed in their brokenness that it becomes normalized. We are blind to our own

brokenness. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that people are sensitized to their need for something more. Therefore, Free Methodists are committed to entering God's mission (*missio Dei*) by:

- Acknowledging our own brokenness;
- Grieving with others as brokenness touches their lives;
- Proclaiming the Good News with urgency because:

#### *God's Grace*

Brokenness is not the final word! Jesus changes everything! Through the saving work of Christ, God has made a way for people to re-enter community and re-establish covenant relationship with God. This is possible only through the grace of God (*charis theon*), who always takes the first step in expressing God's love to people. Therefore, Free Methodists are committed to entering God's mission (*missio Dei*) by:

- Proclaiming broadly and boldly God's prevenient grace, that grace which precedes anything humans might say, think, be, or do;
- Going everywhere the Holy Spirit allows us to go in order that we might "catch up" to God's prevenient grace and sending fully supported individuals where we ourselves cannot go;
- Inviting people everywhere to accept the offer of forgiveness that leads to eternal life—forgiveness extended by God and made possible by God's action in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus;
- Extending the means of grace—those tangible symbols, especially the sacraments of baptism and communion together with regular preaching from God's word, that make us aware of and enable us to accept God's gracious activity in our lives—which lead us to live in such a way that we please God.

#### *Missional Leadership*

God desires all people everywhere to enter into a life-giving relationship with God. God gives people various gifts so that God's desire for these relationships might come to fruition. Leadership is one of these gifts—but godly leadership is never self-seeking. Instead, godly leaders use their gifts to equip God's people to fulfill God's purposes. Therefore, Free Methodists are committed to entering God's mission (*missio Dei*) by:

- Fostering leadership that identifies, nurtures, and deploys the gifts of all God's people;
- Putting the needs of others before our own;
- Celebrating God's goodness by electing for leadership at all levels those whom God has so gifted, regardless of gender, nationality, or ethnicity;
- Modeling *shalom*-community and *hesed* both within and outside of the Church.

#### *Free Methodist World Missions*

Free Methodist World Missions (FMWM) exists to assist Free Methodists in fulfilling these vital commitments, especially as they pertain to transnational and cross-cultural ministry. FMWM is committed to undertaking its work with a thoroughgoing alignment of Free Methodist theology with FMWM priorities, goals, methods, and resources. Therefore, FMWM invites Free Methodists to work together to mutually assist and strengthen each other as we pursue our common purposes and commitments.