

Free Methodist Church USA
Ministerial Credentialing Services

Name: Plagiarism

Date: September, 2012 (New)

Policy: Plagiarized work of ministerial candidates will be of no credit. Appropriate disciplinary action will be coordinated between the overseeing instructor, the Credentialing office and conference superintendent.

Definitions:

Plagiarism is a serious offense against the integrity of the learning process and at its core is stealing another person's work. Plagiarism is presenting work in written or verbal form as if it were one's own work without giving proper credit.

Procedure:

1. Instructors who suspect plagiarism will perform due diligence in checking sources to confirm plagiarism as best they can.
2. If an instructor reasonably confirms plagiarism from a ministerial candidate, the instructor will contact the Credentialing office and will coordinate a conference call between the conference superintendent, and the Credentialing office.
3. The instructor will follow up with the student for resolution in a spirit of grace and truth.

Guidelines from the *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual*¹:

1. Code of Ethics for Ministers of The Free Methodist Church - Personal Standards, page 1
I will endeavor to acknowledge the influence of others upon my life and ministry, and give due credit to resource materials used.
2. Leading Through Preaching and Teaching, excerpt on plagiarism, pp. 50-51
Competent pastors always give proper source credit to things written or published under their name, or spoken by them from the pulpit. In this digital and Internet era, we must not pretend that simply because we are encouraged by online ministry resource sites to use their materials, we can let others believe that all these ideas are ours.

Black's Law Dictionary, 5th Edition, defines plagiarism as, "The act of appropriating the literary composition of another, or parts or passages of his/her writings, or the ideas or language of the same, and passing them off as the product of one's own mind. To be liable for plagiarism it is not necessary to exactly duplicate another's literary work, it being sufficient if unfair use of such work is made by lifting a substantial portion thereof. ..."

The implication for a pulpit or teaching minister is that when using other people's sermon outlines, concepts and quotations, we will in some contextually appropriate way acknowledge the same. This could be through a spoken comment, a footnote in the bulletin, or a footnote on the digital media screen that shows your notes.

We will also be people of integrity when it comes to the use of digital media (music, movie clips, drama vignettes, etc.). We expect Free Methodists to pay all appropriate usage or license fees. To quote from the *Evangelical Ministries to New Religion Manual of Ethical and Doctrinal Standards*: "We recognize that plagiarism can be committed unintentionally, such as when the original source for a stream of ideas and concepts has been forgotten or lost and the source is not physically before the writer as it is worked into a new document. Quoting clichés, catchphrases, or data of common knowledge (which can be found in three or more reference sources) is not cause for action. However, plagiarism of substantial portions of another writer's (or preacher's) material" would be considered as grounds for disciplinary discussion."

¹ Board of Bishops FMCNA, *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual* (Indianapolis: Light & Life Communications, 2006)