

## Church Incorporation Information Sheet

Updated 4/21/25

All Free Methodist Churches (once they reach Fellowship or Society status) must be incorporated. See chart below to determine if incorporation is required of your church:

Church Status	Incorporation Required?
Society	Yes
Fellowship	Yes
Church Planting Project (CPP) through Annual Conference	Should be incorporated through the Annual Conference (action required to add the CPP with your SOS)
Church Planting Project (CPP) through local church	Should be incorporated through the local church (action required to add the CPP with your SOS)
Affiliate	No
Emerging Ministry Point (EMP)	No
Preaching Point (PP)	No

We can give you general steps toward becoming incorporated, but because **every state has a different process for incorporation**, the best practice is to contact your Secretary of State.

1. Your church must obtain an EIN before applying for Articles of Incorporation. To apply online (which is the fastest method) visit the IRS website, or click on the below link:  
<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/how-to-apply-for-an-ein>
2. Be sure the Annual Conference and the FMCUSA has your EIN. This is how your church gets added to our 501c3 for tax exempt status.
3. There will be a form on your Secretary of State's website (see hyperlinks on last page of this document for easy access). In many cases it will be called *Articles of Incorporation*. Please find out what your state requires before proceeding.
  - a. The form will have a section for church by-laws. You can find our denominational by-laws template to be used by each FM church at the below link:  
<https://legal.fmcusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/FMCUSA-Church-Bylaws-Template.docx>  
On this form, you will:
    - Fill out the name of your church at the top title section and Article 1
    - Fill in your state in the following articles: 2, 3.3 (twice), 3.4.1, 5.2, and 9.1
    - Date and sign on page 6
  - b. You will likely need to list your Board of Directors, and their individual addresses.

Once incorporated, the Conference Office and the FMCUSA must receive a copy of incorporation documents.

- Contact your Conference Office to find out how to securely send them your documents.
- To send your incorporation documents to the FMCUSA, click [here](#).
- If the church is under the conference's incorporation, please let the FMCUSA know.

### Church Incorporation FAQs:

**Once my church is incorporated, will we need to go through the process again at some point?**

It really depends on what your state requires. Some require a report to be submitted every two years, others do not. If there are CPPs in your conference, make sure that those are included in the updates or reports to your Secretary of State.

**Our church was given incorporation for perpetuity; do we need to send anything in?**

If your church is incorporated for perpetuity, it means you do not have to re-file with your state unless something changes. You **do** need to send in a scanned copy of your incorporation documents to the Conference Office as well as the FMCUSA. You might need to pay a small fee (typically \$30-40) to obtain a copy of your incorporation.

**We have several CPPs. What forms should we fill out to add them to our conference or society INC status?**

We do not have all of the state forms for periodic reporting. The best route is to call your SOS office and ask them directly, or visit their website.

**Are we doing this to satisfy an insurance company requirement?**

No. We are doing this to protect church members, pastors, churches, and conferences as well as the denomination in the event of a lawsuit. All churches and conferences should have liability insurance and the FMCUSA must be added as additional insured. For more information on insurance requirements for churches and conferences, click [here](#).

**As a conference, how can we streamline the incorporation process for our churches?**

Conferences that have 100% incorporated churches have a dedicated staff person that either:

- A. Does the work for each church with the SOS themselves, or
- B. Walks a church layperson or pastor through the process.
- C. Other conferences have hired a person to handle just this kind of task for the churches within their conference.

**To see a sample Articles of Incorporation form, click below:**

<https://legal.fmcusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Church-Articles-of-Incorporation-Template11.pdf>

**The next page of this document contains hyperlinks and phone numbers for all of the Secretary of State websites.**

Please let me know if we can be of further service to you.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Goodberry  
Executive Administrative Assistant

**SOS Websites and Phone Numbers:**

Updated 6/7/2022

*If one of the links no longer works, please let us know. Thank you!*

1. [Alabama Secretary of State](#), 334-242-7200
2. [Alaska Secretary of State](#), 907-465-2530
3. [Arizona Secretary of State](#), 602-542-3230
4. [Arkansas Secretary of State](#), 501-682-1010
5. [California Secretary of State](#), 916-653-3795
6. [Colorado Secretary of State](#), 303-894-2251
7. [Connecticut Secretary of State](#), 203-566-3216
8. [Delaware Secretary of State](#), 302-739-4111
9. [District of Columbia Secretary of State](#), 202-727-7278
10. [Florida Secretary of State](#), 904-488-9000
11. [Georgia Secretary of State](#), 404-656-2817
12. [Guam Government Site](#)
13. [Hawaii Secretary of State](#), 808-586-2727
14. [Idaho Secretary of State](#), 208-334-2300
15. [Illinois Secretary of State](#), 217-782-7880
16. [Indiana Secretary of State](#), 317-232-6576
17. [Iowa Secretary of State](#), 515-281-5204
18. [Kansas Secretary of State](#), 913-296-2236
19. [Kentucky Secretary of State](#), 502-564-2848
20. [Louisiana Secretary of State](#), 504-925-4704
21. [Maine Secretary of State](#), 207-287-3676
22. [Maryland Secretary of State](#), 410-225-1330
23. [Massachusetts Secretary of State](#), 617-727-9640
24. [Michigan Secretary of State](#), 517-334-6206
25. [Minnesota Secretary of State](#), 612-296-2803
26. [Mississippi Secretary of State](#), 601-359-1333
27. [Missouri Secretary of State](#), 314-751-1310
28. [Montana Secretary of State](#), 406-444-3665
29. [Nebraska Secretary of State](#), 402-471-4079
30. [Nevada Secretary of State](#), 702-687-5203
31. [New Hampshire Secretary of State](#), 603-271-3242
32. [New Jersey Secretary of State](#), 609-530-6400
33. [New Mexico Secretary of State](#), 505-827-4508
34. [New York Secretary of State](#), 518-474-4752
35. [North Carolina Secretary of State](#), 919-733-4201
36. [North Dakota Secretary of State](#), 701-328-4284
37. [Ohio Secretary of State](#), 614-466-3910
38. [Oklahoma Secretary of State](#), 405-521-3911
39. [Oregon Secretary of State](#), 503-986-2200
40. [Pennsylvania Secretary of State](#), 717-787-1057
41. [Puerto Rico Secretary of State](#), 787-722-2121
42. [Rhode Island Secretary of State](#), 401-277-2357
43. [South Carolina Secretary of State](#), 803-734-2158
44. [South Dakota Secretary of State](#), 605-773-4845
45. [Tennessee Secretary of State](#), 615-741-2286
46. [Texas Secretary of State](#), 512-463-5555
47. [Utah Secretary of State](#), 801-530-4849
48. [Vermont Secretary of State](#), 802-828-2386
49. [Virgin Islands Secretary of State](#), 340-776-8515
50. [Virginia Secretary of State](#), 804-371-9141
51. [Washington Secretary of State](#), 360-725-0377
52. [West Virginia Secretary of State](#), 304-558-8000
53. [Wisconsin Secretary of State](#), 608-266-3590
54. [Wyoming Secretary of State](#), 307-777-7311