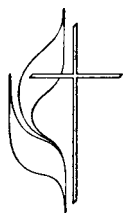


THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
NORTHERN EUROPE AND EURASIA CENTRAL CONFERENCE

The Book of Discipline  
2016 Supplement Adapted by  
The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference



Fredrikstad, Norway – 2016, October 19-23



# PREFACE

## The Northern Europe & Eurasia Edition

Earlier on, the Book of Discipline of the Methodist-Episcopal Church was translated into Scandinavian languages. In the second half of the 20th century, relevant parts of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church were adapted by the Central Conference and published also in the Scandinavian languages. When the Central Conference expanded to include all three Baltic Countries, Russia and seven other of the former Soviet republics, English became the official language. In 2001, 2005 and 2009 an adapted edition of the Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church was published in English. In 2012, the Northern Europe and Eurasian Central Conference decided to publish a Supplement for Northern Europe and Eurasia which combined with the Book of Discipline was to constitute the Northern Europe and Eurasia Book of Book of Discipline. The 2016 Supplement follows the same principles and is published in accordance with the provisions given in ¶ 31. Article IV 5 and further specified in ¶ 543.7. *A central conference shall have power to make such changes and adaptations of the Book of Discipline as the special conditions and the mission of the church in the area require, especially concerning the organization and administration of the work on local church, district, and annual conference levels, provided that no action shall be taken that is contrary to the Constitution and the General Rules of The United Methodist Church, and provided that the spirit of connectional relationship is kept between the local and the general church.*

This Supplement contains the Historical Statement of the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference, a Reading Guide and paragraphs of the Book of Discipline adapted by the Central Conference together with central documents from the 2016 Central Conference in Fredrikstad, Norway and a Directory. The Supplement is also available on [www.umc-ne.org](http://www.umc-ne.org).

We hand over this Supplement with prayer for our vast connectional Church.

*Bishop Christian Alsted  
Nordic and Baltic Area*

*Bishop Eduard Khegay  
Eurasia Area*



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# Historical Statement

## **Methodism in Northern Europe & Eurasia:**

Methodist ministry in Scandinavia began in Stockholm as an outreach of British Methodism. In 1830-42 Scottish Methodist pastor George Scott ran a rather comprehensive operation, which had a significant influence upon the initiation of Free Church life in Sweden. George Scott's activities broke down due to opposition of a dramatic nature.

The Northern European Countries were experiencing a period of strife and immense change. The increased population could no longer be supported neither agriculturally nor be incorporated into the new industries of the growing cities. Health and welfare standards were low, and social needs were great. Radical changes in society created a longing to find better living conditions in America. Likewise, many people became occupied with the search for help in spiritual values.

The arrival of the Methodist Church to Northern Europe was linked to immigration across the Atlantic, particularly among seamen who sailed to America. In the 1830's and the following decades, all Protestant denominations in the United States were influenced by the Second Great Awakening. In the same period, immigration from the countries of Northern Europe to America began growing at a massive rate towards the turn of the century. In the 1830's and 40's the first Scandinavian speaking Methodist churches were established in the United States, and conferences were eventually organized, utilizing the Scandinavian languages in worship services, newsletters, books and all matters of administration.

## **Bethel Ship John Wesley**

At the initiative of a Swedish sailor, a seaman's church was established in New York in 1832 in order to serve the harbour's sailors and to bring the gospel to the many emigrants there. The floating church – "Bethel Ship John Wesley" – became a significant instrument in bringing Methodism to the Nordic residents. Olaf Gustaf Hedström, of Sweden, led the mission in New York harbour for over 30 years, beginning in 1845. Many seamen and emigrants who had experienced conversion

carried the Methodist revival with them to other parts of the United States, as well as to their home countries in Northern Europe.

### **Norway**

In Norway, the story of Methodism began with seaman Ole Peter Petersen's preaching in 1849 and the years ahead. In 1851, O.P. Petersen established the Norwegian-Danish Methodist Church in America. In 1856, Danish-American Christian Willerup was sent to Scandinavia as a superintendent in order to lead the church, which had emerged spontaneously. The first Methodist church was founded during the same year, thereby making the establishment of the Methodist Church in Norway a reality. In 1876, the church in Norway received status as an Annual Conference. There were 29 pastors, 19 congregations and 2,798 members, and the conference got its own superintendent, Martin Hansen.

### **Denmark**

During a family visit to Copenhagen in 1845, Christian Willerup conducted the first public meetings. In 1856, when he was sent to Scandinavia as superintendent, the ministry began to take shape, and from 1858, when Willerup moved to Copenhagen, there were regular meetings. The first congregation was established in 1859, and in 1865 the church received official approval by the state, according to The Royal Constitution. In 1911 the Methodist ministry in Denmark received status as an Annual Conference, at the time there were 53 pastors, 27 congregations, 127 preaching stations and 3,634 members.

### **Sweden**

Various Methodist preachers operated in Sweden in the 1850's. This led to the establishment of the Methodist Church in Sweden in 1868. The work grew rapidly, and in 1876, the church was able to form as an independent Annual Conference with 55 pastors, 97 congregations, 249 preaching stations and 4,123 members. During the same year, the church received official approval by the state as an independent church. Victor Witting was appointed superintendent in Sweden.

In 2012, the Annual Conference in Sweden left the connection and merged with the Baptist Church of Sweden and the Mission Covenant



Church of Sweden, and created a new denomination, The Uniting Church in Sweden (Equmeniakyrkan). Former United Methodist district superintendent Lasse Svensson was elected as the first church leader of the denomination. The Uniting Church in Sweden and the United Methodist Church signed an agreement of full communion in 2015 both on a global and on a central conference level. This agreement was ratified by the 2016 General Conference.

Approximately 100 members including 12 clergy desiring to remain United Methodist joined the Finland Swedish provisional Annual Conference and formed a district in Sweden. The 2012 Central Conference decided to extend the border of the Finland Swedish Provisional Annual Conference to include Sweden.

### **Finland and Russia**

On the Finnish side of the Bay of Bothnia, Methodist preaching began to be heard by 1859 and the subsequent years. Gustaf Lervik, a coxswain who had returned to his homeland, began to preach in his home country after being converted aboard the Bethel Ship in New York. Later, the Bärnlund brothers joined in as preachers.

In the 1880's impulses from Sweden led to a new start for Methodism in Finland, the first congregation was established in 1881. Methodism in Finland fell in under the Swedish Annual Conference and had status as a district under the leadership of Superintendent B.A. Carlson.

In 1887 the first Finnish -speaking congregation was founded, and two years later B.A. Carlson established a mission to Russia, with meetings held in St. Petersburg. At that time Finland was part of the Russian empire, but ruled as a separate Grand Duchy with its own legislation. In 1891 the Finnish Senate recognized the Methodist church as a legal minority church in the country. In light of the situation the Swedish Annual Conference organized "The mission in Finland and St. Petersburg" the following year. By 1906 the Russian authorities had given official legal permission for Methodist preaching in St. Petersburg.

In 1907, German-American Dr. George A. Simons (son of Frisian immigrants from the island Sylt in Schleswig) was appointed as superintendent in St. Petersburg. The link to Sweden weakened, and under his leadership the work developed rapidly with ramifications for

Russia and Estonia. The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 put a stop to all possibilities for church growth, yet, in spite of opposition, the work continued into the 1920's.

The Methodist church gathered for the first time as an independent Annual Conference in 1911. The church had 1,568 members. In keeping with the development in Finland after its independence, the work was separated in a Swedish-speaking and a Finnish-speaking conference in 1923. Finnish-speaking Methodism suffered greatly during World War II, since 60 % of its members lived in regions that were incorporated into the Soviet Union.

### **The Baltic Countries**

Methodism in the Baltic Countries can be traced back to the beginning of the 1900's. From the north, Methodism travelled from St. Petersburg to Saaremaa (Ösel) and the Estonian mainland. From the south, the inspiration came from German Methodism, partly from the Methodist Church and partly from the Evangelical Association and The Christian Brethren Church. At the time of World War II the Evangelical Association and Brethren Church in Lithuania and Latvia were connected with Germany via the Königsberg District, while the Methodist Church's ties were with the Nordic Countries. In Estonia, Methodist preaching began in 1907, and the first congregation could be established in 1910.

Vassili Täht was sent by the Methodists in St. Petersburg. In Estonia he met Karl Kuum and together they were integral in starting up the Methodist congregation in Kuressaare (Arensburg at the time), on the island Saaremaa.

The Northwest German Conference appointed the first Methodist minister to service in Kaunas, Lithuania in 1905. In 1900, Pastor Heinrich Ramke of Königsberg had already preached in Kaunas, and during his stay discovered that a group in Kaunas, over several years, had been in contact with the Methodist Publishing House in Bremen. In 1911, the first church building was built in Kaunas, which was the first Methodist edifice built in the Baltics.

The Evangelical Association from the Königsberg District started evangelistic work in Riga, the capital of Latvia, in 1908, with the establishment of the first church in 1912. From this point, the work

developed into the formation of congregations in Kuldiga and Liepaja. German Methodism started work in Riga with the appointment of George R. Durdis in 1910. This led to the establishment of the first Methodist church in Riga in 1912. In 1911, the Methodists came into contact with the Moravian Brethren missionary Alfred Freiberg, who had founded the congregation in Liepaja, which in turn became a Methodist church.

The three Baltic Countries attained independence after World War I, and the work developed rapidly, with American support. Riga became the centre for Methodism in the Baltics with the establishment of a theological seminary and residence for superintendent Dr. George A. Simons.

In 1924, there were 47 Methodist pastors in the Baltics: 24 in Estonia, 15 in Latvia and 8 in Lithuania. The Baltic Annual Conference was organized in 1929, and each of the 3 countries received status as districts. The work in the Baltics grew, so that by 1939 there were around 3,000 registered members. During the same year, 13 Methodist pastors were registered serving 15 congregations in Estonia, 17 Methodist pastors serving 19 congregations in Latvia, and 7 Methodist pastors serving 7 congregations in Lithuania. At that time, the Evangelical Association had 3 pastors and 3 congregations in Latvia, as well as 7 pastors and 7 congregations in Lithuania. The Evangelical Association tallied around 1,000 members in Latvia and Lithuania.

The incorporation of the Baltic Countries into the Soviet Union after World War II was catastrophic for the Methodist Church. Systematic persecution of pastors and congregations, as well as confiscation of buildings destroyed a great deal of the work. Only Estonia was successful in maintaining the work of the church, due to notable national leaders such as Alexander Kuum.

The Baltic Countries regained their independence in 1991. In Latvia, a small group of earlier Methodists remained, and in 1991 these contacts led to the resurrection of the United Methodist church of Latvia, while the district was formally re-established in 1992 with three congregations. In 1995, the Methodist church of Lithuania resumed in Kaunas and a year later in Siauliai. The United Methodist church in Lithuania was formally re-established in 1996.

The work in all three Baltic countries has been characterized by growth. New congregations have been founded, and the operations have spread

from the indigenous languages and peoples to the Russian-speaking population. In Tallinn, there was already a Russian-language outreach in the 1950's, and in the 1980's, the Russian-language outreach likewise commenced in various places. The church in Estonia is an Annual conference. In Latvia and Lithuania, Methodism has status as District conferences within the Estonia Annual Conference, yet function by way of their registration as denominations within their respective countries and as annual conferences in praxis.

## **Europe**

The Depression during the 1930's caused further weakening of the ties to the church in America. Methodism in Northern Europe belonged to the Methodist Episcopal Church, under the auspices of the General Board of Missions, but the Unity conference of 1939 gave Methodism in northern Europe an altered affiliation to the Mother church. Until that time, the work in the Northern European countries had been a branch of the Methodist Episcopal Church, similar to the work in other Central European countries. After World War I, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South had established extensive mission organizations in war torn Europe where no other Methodist churches were established: Belgium, Poland and Czechoslovakia (today's Czech and Slovak Republics).

In addition to the two American Methodist churches, British Methodism, also called Wesleyan Methodism, had made inroads on the European continent with outreaches in French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and German speaking areas. Wesleyan Methodism was organized as part of the British Annual conference. Furthermore, the Methodist church tradition was represented in force by several small churches, which were all related to the United Brethren in Christ and The Evangelical Association. A series of church unions led to the uniting in church structure of the entire Methodist church family on the European continent, which organically is part of the larger United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Church is, by way of her membership in the Methodist church's World council, part of the massive cooperation between churches in the Methodist and Wesleyan traditions.

By the end of World War II, the European continent could organise two central conferences: The German and the Northern European. In addition, there were ten Annual conferences and two Missions

conferences from the former German area organised under episcopal supervision of the southeast Jurisdiction of the Methodist Church in the United States.

After World War II, there was an attempt to form a single European central conference. The attempt failed, and in 1954, a central conference for Central and Southern Europe was formed in addition to the other two central conferences, Germany and Northern Europe. The European Council of Central Conferences of the Methodist church was founded after negotiations under the Methodist world conference in Oslo in 1966. In 1980, the name was changed to the European council of the United Methodist Church. Plenary sessions with the British and Irish Methodist churches led to the 1993 formation of the new European Methodist Council, where all Methodist traditions in Europe were united for the first time within the same organization. Affiliates of the European Methodist Council included:

1. The consultative conference of the European Methodist churches, which commenced in 1957
2. The European Methodist Youth council, and
3. The World Federation of Methodist and Uniting church Women - Europe, and The World federation of Methodist and Uniting Women - Britain and Ireland.

## **Eurasia**

After the dismantling of the Soviet Union, The General Board of Global Ministries initiated a contact with Russian Orthodox Church and Soviet/Russian Peach Fund to assist in the re-establish education and organize help sending. At the same time several individual initiatives lead to the formation of congregations in several areas within Russia and Ukraine, mostly as the result of new contacts to Methodism in the United States. The first new congregations were established in Moscow, Samary and Yekaterinburg. Methodism was formally re-established in this part of the world in 1992 under the name The United Methodist Mission in The Commonwealth of Independent States, 100 years after the Methodist-Episcopal Mission in Finland and St. Petersburg was organized.

In 1991, Rüdiger Minor, bishop of the former East Germany Central Conference, was assigned as episcopal coordinator of Methodism in Eurasia.

The General Conference decided in 1992 to make Eurasia a separate Episcopal Area. The General Conference authorized the Northern Europe Central Conference, which had had oversight over the Methodist ministry in the former Soviet countries, to elect a bishop to carry out the work in the new area. With representatives present from the Russian United Methodist churches, the Central Conference of 1993 elected Rüdiger Minor as Bishop of Eurasia, with residence in Moscow. The next step was taken in 1996 when Russia Provisional Annual Conference was formed, which was confirmed by the Central Conference in Pärnu in 1997. Pastoral education was established in Moscow in 1997.

In 2001 Eurasia became an Annual Conference with full rights. The new conference consisted of 70 clergy members and 81 local churches. In 2003 the United Methodist Church in Eurasia was divided into four conferences: The Central Russia Annual Conference consisted of 923 members, 39 clergies and 33 local churches. The Northwest Russia Provisional Annual Conference consisted of 453 members, 21 clergies and 20 local churches. The South Russia-Ukraine-Moldova Provisional Annual Conference consisted of 759 members, 30 clergies and 30 local churches. The East Russia-Kazakhstan Provisional Annual Conference consisted of 416 members, 19 clergies and 14 local churches.

The central conference was, for the first time, held in Moscow in 2005. Ukraine was now separated from the South Russia Provisional Annual Conference to form its own Ukraine and Moldova Provisional Annual Conference.

In 2014 Ukraine experienced war, and Crimea became a Russian territory. As of today, October 2016, the conflict still exists. As a consequence some churches from the Ukraine and Moldova provisional annual conference have been transferred to the South Russia Provisional Annual Conference. These transfer are due to the special circumstances considered interim until a decision is made by the Central Conference.

### **The Northern Europe and European Central Conference**

World War I weakened the connection between Europe and America, thus a substantial independence of continental European Methodism from the Mother church in the United States became necessary. In 1920, the General Conference decided to divide Europe into several

episcopal areas. The Northern Europe Episcopal Area, including Methodism in the Nordic countries, was established and put under the supervisions of the Danish Bishop, Anton Bast.

Though Methodism in the North European countries was tied together historically, the new structure meant that the church in this region, to an even greater extent, would forge closer ties and fellowship in order to facilitate their new and greater independence. In 1924, the North Europe Episcopal Area organized as a central conference, and the Baltic-Slavic Annual Conference became integrated. In 1924, pastoral education for Scandinavian language candidates, which until that time took place in their respective annual conferences, became consolidated at the Nordic Theological Seminary, Överås, in Gothenburg. This common Nordic seminary continued until 1971, when a theological seminary was established in Bergen for Norwegian candidates. In 2008 Sweden Annual Conference joined the interdenominational Stockholm Theological Seminary, THS, and the pastoral training for Methodist pastors moved from Överås to THS. Pastoral education for the Baltic Area was re-established in 1994, with the opening of the Baltic Methodist Theological seminary in Tallinn.

With the geographic expansion, beginning with the “Glasnost” period in Soviet Union, the name of the Central Conference has changed from Nordic to Northern Europe (1989), and to Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference (2009), which now consists of the two Episcopal Areas - Nordic and Baltic, and the Eurasia Area.

## **Bishops**

Since World War II, the Central Conference has been led by bishops elected by the Central Conference itself: Theodor Arvidsson of Sweden (elected in 1946); Odd Hagen of Norway (elected 1953); Ole E. Borgen of Norway (elected 1970); Hans Växby of the Finland Swedish conference (elected 1989); Rüdiger Minor of the East Germany Central Conference (elected 1993); Øystein Olsen of Norway (elected 2001, the Nordic and Baltic Area); Hans Växby of the Finland Swedish conference (elected 2005, the Eurasia Area); Christian Alsted of Denmark (elected 2009, the Nordic and Baltic Area) and Eduard Khegay of Central Russia Annual Conference (elected 2012, the Eurasia Area).





# Ecumenical Agreements in the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference

## **The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference:**

The Leuenberg Concordia with Lutheran and Reformed Churches in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe 1994.

Agreement of full communion with the Uniting Church in Sweden (Equmeniakyrkan) 2015

## **Denmark Annual Conference:**

Agreement of full communion “On faith, one Baptism, one Grace” with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark 2016.

## **Estonia Annual Conference:**

Agreement in mutual recognition of both churches having signed the Leuenberg Concordia with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Estonia 1997.

## **Finland Swedish and Finnish Provisional Annual Conferences:**

Agreement of full communion “Sharing in Christ” with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 2010.

## **Norway Annual Conference:**

Agreement of full communion “The Fellowship of Grace” with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway 1994.

## **Sweden:**

Agreement of full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden 1993. The agreement is no longer valid after the annual conference left the connection.



# Adapted part of the Book of Discipline 2016

## Reading Guide

Many of the adaptations in previous separate editions of the Book of Discipline for the Northern Europe and Eurasia Annual Conference were not about content, but about transferring the text to our own context, cf. ¶543.7 & 16 & 17. As we do not publish a full Northern Europe and Eurasia Book of Discipline, this supplement doesn't contain editorial changes of terminology; instead we encourage the practice of "adaptive reading." The following is a guide for reading the Book of Discipline (BoD) in the Northern Europe and Eurasian (NEE) context and in addition a few clarifications.

### 1. Clarification of terms

Reading the Book of Discipline we encounter American terminology, and we need to know the Northern Europe and Eurasia equivalents or understanding.

- University Senate →

    this responsibility is handled by the Central Conference Council

- General Board of Higher Education and Ministry →

    when the reference concerns the Central Conference the Central Conference Council is responsible

- District Committee on Ordained Ministry →

    is included in the area of responsibility of the Board of Ordained Ministry in annual conferences that have no such committees

- Ministerial Education Fund →

    in Northern Europe and Eurasia there are other channels for the support of candidates for ministry

- General Boards and Agencies →

General Boards and Agencies operate only on a limited scale in the Central Conference; the annual conferences have their own boards and agencies

- World Service and other general funds →

References and regulations concerning General Funds do not apply, with the exception of the Episcopal Fund and the General Administration Fund. However, in Northern Europe and Eurasia the annual conferences are apportioned to the Central Conference Fund, and in Eurasia also to the Area Fund.

- Residence Program →

Continuing education for provisional clergy members of the annual conference

## **2. We practice a simplified organization in the annual conference and provisional annual conference organisation**

Most of the paragraphs where the BoD says, there “shall” be a certain committee or board, we read “may.” The exceptions on the annual conference level from this rule are

- Annual Conference Council
- Board of Ordained Ministry

## **3. Organization of the local church**

The guiding principles for the organization of the local church are outlined in BoD ¶ 243. According to BoD ¶ 244 “The basic organizational plan of the local church shall include provisions for the following unities: A charge conference, a church council, a committee on pastor-parish relations, a board of trustees, a committee on finance, a committee on nominations and leadership development, and such other elected leaders, commission, councils, committees, and task forces as the charge conference may determine.” Note that the paragraphs say “shall include provisions for the following units” which means that all functions must be taken care of, while it does not mean that all councils and committees must exist. Several functions can be taken

care of by the church council, if this in a more fruitful way enables the church to pursue its primary task and mission in the context of its own community.

#### **4. The Candidacy Process for Ordained Ministry**

The one year membership requirement § 310.1a to be considered for candidacy for ordained ministry is understood to be active membership, which also includes some degree of leadership responsibility. Each annual conference may set its own requirements for candidacy such as having completed the course of study for lay speaker.

#### **5. Working conditions**

The basic principle concerning the correlation between the Book of Discipline and the law in the individual countries is that we follow the Book of Discipline, when it is the most extensive, and we follow the law, when the law is the most extensive. For instance ¶ 355 gives regulations for maternity leave, but we follow the law of the country, as it is the most extensive in most of our countries.

#### **6. We adjust to the Northern Europe and Eurasia reality**

Several paragraphs and subparagraphs in previous NEE editions were deleted and marked with “Not relevant in the Northern Europe Central Conference.” We continue to ignore these in our reading, however, this is just about matters that are clearly referring to the American context, not matters we don’t agree with or don’t like.

*When this Reading Guide is not sufficient, turn to your district superintendent or bishop for further clarification and guidance. The guidelines for reading the Book of Discipline given in this introduction are included in the responsibility of the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Judicial Court (¶547.3) to “hear and determine the legality of any action of an annual conference taken under the adopted portions of the Discipline or of a decision of law by the presiding bishop pertaining to the adapted portion of the Discipline, upon appeal of the presiding bishop or of such percentage of the members of the annual conference as may be determined by the central conference concerned.”*



## Paragraphs adapted by the Central Conference

*Most of the adaptations in previous editions of the Northern Europe and Eurasia Book of Discipline are taken care of by the guiding principle in the Reading Guide. The following paragraphs are adapted by the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference to replace the corresponding paragraphs in the global Book of Discipline.*

### ¶ 267. Certified Lay Speaker

1. A certified lay speaker is a professing member of a local church or charge, who desires to serve the Church and who knows and is committed to Scripture and the doctrine, heritage, organization, and life of The United Methodist Church and who has received specific training to witness to the Christian faith through spoken communication, to lead within a church and community, and to provide caring ministry. The certified lay speaker serves the local church or charge (or beyond the local church or charge) in ways in which his or her witness, leadership, and service inspires others to a deeper commitment to Christ and more effective discipleship. The certified lay speaker, through continued study and training, should prepare to undertake one or more of the following functions, giving primary attention to service within the local church or charge, or other United Methodist ministry setting:

- a) Provide leadership, assistance, and support to the program emphases of the church or other United Methodist ministry.
- b) Lead meetings for prayer, training, study, and discussion when requested by the pastor or district superintendent.
- c) Conduct, or assist in conducting, services of worship, preach the Word, or give addresses when requested by the pastor or district superintendent.
- d) Work with appropriate committees and teams which provide congregational and community leadership or foster caring ministries.
- e) Assist in the distribution of the elements of Holy Communion upon request by a pastor.
- f) Teach the Scriptures, doctrine, organization, and ministries of The United Methodist Church.

2. The certified lay speaker serves by preaching the Word when requested by the pastor, district superintendent.

3. One may be certified as a lay speaker after he or she has:

- a) Obtained recommendation from the pastor and the church council and charge conference of the local church in which he or she holds membership.
- b) Completed a track of study including courses on leading worship, leading prayer, discovering spiritual gifts, preaching, United Methodist heritage and polity, and/or other courses as determined by the conference board of ordained ministry.

4. Recognition as certified lay speaker may be renewed annually after the certified lay speaker has:

- a) Submitted an annual report and renewal application to the charge conference or church council giving evidence of satisfactory performance as a certified lay speaker.
- b) Obtained recommendation for continued recognition as a certified lay speaker from the pastor and the church council

A certified lay speaker may transfer certification to another district or conference upon receipt of a letter from the previous pastor and district superintendent.

## Educational Standards for Certified Lay Speakers

To earn a certificate as a Lay Speaker, a person needs theoretical and practical training in close connection with the local church where the person is a member. The purpose is to develop skills for leadership of the spoken word and care-giving ministry in the local congregation.

A training course for certified Lay Speakers must include:

### **Bible study:**

Introduction to Old and New Testaments; self studies of the Bible; use of commentaries and Bible dictionaries

### **Spoken communication**

Personal testimonies; Biblical meditations, addresses and sermons, as well as conduct of worship and devotion



## **Leadership**

Church and community leadership, including leading of small group meetings for prayer, training, study and discussion

## **Care-giving ministry**

Counselling, spiritual advice, visiting and pastoral care

## **Methodist theology**

Doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church, BoD 2016: § 102 – 166, (Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task, The ministry of all Christians and Social Principles),

A Methodist presentation of the Christian faith and selected Wesley Standard Sermons.

## **Methodist polity**

Connectional structure, organization and church culture

## **Methodis history**

Methodist history in England, America, Northern Europe, and the local area (nation).

The United Methodist Theological Seminaries within the Central Conference, the Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, or another board or agency authorized by the Annual Conference develop the curriculum with literature available in each national language and the framework of time for the total training course:

Either

- a training course based on part time studies over minimum 20 two hours course days spread over 2 years, under the leadership of the ordained Elder in charge,

Or

- a training course scheduled as a one year full time bible school.

Or

- a training course based on a combination of self-studies and seminars planned for all lay speakers of an Annual Conference by a Theological Seminary or the Board of Ordained Ministry.

The training course might be open to any active member, but license as a lay speaker is depending on the recommendation of the Elder in charge and the sanction of the Charge Conference. License is given by the District Superintendent.

## The Superintendency

### ¶ 404. Provisions for Episcopal Areas

1. In central conferences, the number of bishops shall be determined on the basis of missional needs, as approved by the General Conference on recommendation of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters. Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference has been authorized to elect one bishop for the Nordic and Baltic Area and one for the Eurasia Area

### ¶ 405. Election and Consecration of Bishops

1. Eligibility—All ordained Elders under the age of sixty-eight in full membership with a United Methodist annual conference and in active service are eligible to the episcopacy.

#### 2. Term

a) In Northern Europe and Eurasia a bishop is elected for a first term of eight years. A bishop can be reelected for a second term of four years. A bishop who has served a second term, and will reach the official retirement age in his or her country within the following quadrennium can be reelected for a third term of four years.

b) An elder between the ages of sixty-four sixty-eight can only be elected for a term of four years.

### 3. Nomination

- a) An annual conference, in the session immediately prior to the next regular session of the central conference, may name one or more nominees for episcopal election. Also members, groups of members, disciplinary entities, and organizations within The United Methodist Church in Northern Europe and Eurasia can place a nomination. All nominations shall be made in writing to the central conference committee on episcopacy within a time limit set by the central conference council.
- b) A nomination must be made distinctively for one of the two areas.
- c) Nomination shall be closed before the first ballot.
- d) All nominations shall be accompanied by a presentation of the candidate in writing – half a page A4 (500 words, 30 lines). The chairperson of the central conference committee on episcopacy must approve the presentation before further distribution. Presentation of persons nominated within the set time limit will be published in the pre-conference material.
- e) The Northern Europe and European United Methodist magazines and web pages will follow the nomination process on their own initiative from a journalistic perspective. Both nominators and nominees can make themselves available for additional information.
- f) Nominators, in cooperation with the central conference committee on episcopacy, shall make it possible for the nominees to be present at the central conference.
- g) A public presentation and hearing will be held at the central conference.
- h) Debate and election speeches are allowed until the nomination is closed.

### 4. Process

- a) Election is by closed ballot and takes place in a session set by the central conference.
- b) Tellers elected by the conference will count the votes.
- c) Delegates, in electing bishops, shall give due consideration to the inclusiveness of The United Methodist Church with respect

to sex, race, and national origin. In addition, consideration shall be given to the nature of superintendency as described in ¶ 401.

d) The ballot is secret and personal. Delegates cannot be bound to vote for any specific nominee.

e) Two thirds of given and valid votes are necessary to elect a bishop.

5. Consecration - of bishops takes place at the session of the conference at which election occurs or at a place and time designated by the conference. The consecration service may include bishops from other jurisdictional and central conferences. At least one elder and one lay shall participate in the consecration. It is strongly urged that the consecration service also include representatives from other Christian communions, particularly those with whom we have a formal agreement that includes the mutual recognition of ministry and ordination

#### **¶ 418 Limitations on Years of Service.**

Annual Conferences can decide which of the following two rules concerning limits of years of service they want to follow.

A. The normal term for a district superintendent shall be up to six years, but this may be extended to no more than up to eight years at the discretion of the bishop, in consultation with the cabinet and the district committee on superintendency.

No superintendent shall serve for more than eight years in any consecutive eleven years. No elder shall serve as district superintendent more than fourteen years. In addition, consideration shall be given to the nature of superintendency as described in ¶ 401.

B. The normal term for a district superintendent shall be up to six years, but this may be extended to no more than up to ten years at the discretion of the bishop, in consultation with the cabinet and the district committee on superintendency.

No superintendent shall serve for more than ten years in any consecutive thirteen years. No elder shall serve as district superintendent more than eighteen years. In addition, consideration shall be given to the nature of superintendency as described in ¶ 401.

## The Conferences (Central Conference)

### ¶ 541. Composition

a) The central conference shall be composed of clergy and lay members in equal numbers, the clergy members elected by the clergy members of the annual conference and the lay members by the lay members thereof. Their qualifications and the manner of election shall be determined by the central conference itself, subject only to constitutional requirements. Each annual conference and provisional annual conference shall be entitled to at least two clergy and two lay delegates, and no other selection of delegates shall be authorized that would provide for more than one clergy delegate for every six clergy members of an annual conference; except that a majority of the number fixed by a central conference as the ratio of representation shall entitle an annual conference to an additional clergy delegate and to an additional lay delegate.

Each missionary conference and mission is authorized to elect and send one of its members to the central conference concerned as its representative, said representative to be accorded the privilege of sitting with the committees of the central conference, with the right to speak in the committees and in the regular sessions of the central conference, but without the right to vote. Representatives of missionary conferences or missions shall have the same claim for payment of expenses as is allowed to members of the central conference.

b) In the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference the number of delegates to which an Annual Conference or Provisional Annual Conference is entitled shall be computed on a two-factor-basis: the number of clergy members of the Annual Conference or Provisional Annual Conference, and the number of members of local churches in the Annual Conference or Provisional Annual Conference, as follows:

(1) One clergy delegate and one lay delegate for each 75 clergy members of the Annual Conference or Provisional Annual Conference or fraction thereof, and

(2) One clergy delegate and one lay delegate for every 700 confessing members in the local churches in the Annual

Conference or Provisional Annual Conference or fraction thereof.

(3) If the number of delegates from each of the categories clergy and lay are more than two plus two, it has to be checked that there are no more than one clergy delegate for every six clergy members of an Annual Conference or Provisional Annual Conference. Should this be the case, the number of delegates has to be reduced accordingly

(4) The Uniting Church in Sweden shall, as stated in our signed agreement, be entitled to two delegates, one clergy and one layperson with all rights and privileges of delegates including membership in committees, except the right to vote. The Church Leader of the Uniting Church in Sweden may also be invited to the Central Conference by the bishops of the conference.

#### **¶ 547. Conference Agencies**

1. A central conference may have a standing committee on women's work. This committee should preferably be composed of the women delegates and such other persons as the central conference may elect. The duty of this committee shall be to study the relation of women to the Church and to devise ways and means of developing this portion of the Church membership, to the end that it may assume its rightful responsibilities in the extension of the Kingdom. The committee shall make recommendations to the central conference regarding women's organizations within its areas. A central conference-organization may become a member of the World Federation of Methodist Women and may elect a representative to the World Federation of Methodist Women within the provisions of the federation.

2. A central conference may organize a women's unit, after consultation with the committee on women's work, in connection with any annual conference or provisional annual conference within its bounds and provide a constitution and bylaws for it.

3. A central conference that adapts and edits the Discipline as provided in ¶ 543.16 shall establish a judicial court, which in addition to other duties that the central conference may assign to it shall hear and determine the legality of any action of the central conference taken under the adapted portions of the Discipline or of a decision of law by

the presiding bishop of the central conference pertaining to the adapted portions of the Discipline, upon appeal by the presiding bishop or by one-fifth of the members of the central conference. Further, the judicial court shall hear and determine the legality if any action of an annual conference taken under the adapted portions of the Discipline or of a decision of law by the presiding bishop of the annual conference pertaining to the adapted portion of the Discipline, upon appeal of the presiding bishop or of such percentage of the members of the annual conference as may be determined by the central conference concerned.

a) Membership—The court shall be composed of one member each, with personal substitute, from Denmark, Estonia, Finland S/F, Latvia/Lithuania, Norway, Russia C/NW/E/S and Ukraine/Moldova.

4. A central conference may have a standing committee on young people’s ministry. This committee shall be composed of youth, young adults, and adult leaders of youth or young-adult ministry from each annual conference in the central conference. The duty of this committee shall be to study the relation of young people to the Church and to devise ways and means of developing the Church’s ministry for, with, and by young people. The committee shall make recommendations to the central conference regarding youth and young-adult organizations within its areas as well as elect delegates to the Global Young People’s Convocation (§ 1210).

5. Every board, standing committee, commission, council, and work area of the central conference shall designate one of its members as its coordinator of witness ministries. These persons shall help the agencies of which they are members to engage in witness ministries and, in particular, to ask, “How are we intentionally reaching new people for Jesus Christ through our ministries?” and “How are we helping new people grow and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ through our ministries and areas of responsibility?”

#### **¶ 549. Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Council**

The council executes assignments given by the central conference, and administers running business between central conference sessions. It is amenable and accountable to the central conference and reports to the central conference. The purpose of the council is for the discernment and articulation upholding of the vision for the church, sharing of

experience and good practices, and channelling of connectional resources and mutual help promoting connectional exchange and cooperation.

The council reports to the central conference, and prepares central conference sessions.

a) Membership

(1) Members of the council are the bishops ex officio, and the following number of representatives:

4 members, both clergy and lay, from Norway

2 members from Denmark

2 members from Estonia; 1 member each from Latvia and Lithuania

1 member each from Finland S and Finland F

1 member each from Central Russia, Northwest Russia and Belarus, South Russia, East Russia and Central Asia, and Ukraine and Moldova.

All members shall be involved in the national leadership of the church.

Substitutes shall be elected by the same number and in numerical order. Substitutes are not personal.

(2) Membership recommendations

All conferences shall seek equal representation between men/women, clergy/lay, and further to ensure representation of young people under the age of thirty five.

A Minimum of one member from each annual and national district conference must be a member of its conference council

(3) Membership term—The members and substitutes are elected for the quadrennium, serving from the adjournment of the ordinary central conference session in the beginning of the quadrennium until the adjournment of the following ordinary session.

b) Area groups—The members are divided into two groups, arranged by episcopal areas.

c) Meetings—The full council meets normally in the spring each year. In the fall, the area groups meet separately in their



respective area. Other arrangements can be agreed upon if the budget allows.

d) Officers—Each area group elects its own chairperson and secretary in the fall meetings. The bishops agree among themselves who is chairperson. The other bishop and the two area chairpersons are all vice chairpersons of the council. A council secretary is elected by the council. All elections are for the quadrennium.

e) Office—The office of the chairperson is also the Office of Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference.

f) Presidium

1) The chairperson, the three vice chairpersons, and the assistant to the chairperson, form the presidium of the council. Until other officers are elected, the two bishops and the assistant to the chairperson carry the responsibilities of the presidium.

(2) The presidium prepares meetings of the council, and assigns matters to the area groups.

(3) If necessary, the presidium can decide upon matters that cannot wait until next the meeting of the council.

g) Council responsibilities—It is the responsibility of the council

(1) To elect treasurer for the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Fund.

(2) To receive and approve annual financial reports for the fund mentioned above, audited by a certified public accountant.

(3) To give an annual report to the annual and national district conferences, and receive an annual statistical summary from these.

(4) To present a quadrennial summary of the financial reports of the funds mentioned above to the central conference for approval.

(5) Either to publish The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church in Northern Europe & Eurasia (NEEBoD) each quadrennium or in other ways make changes and adaptations available.

(6) To set time and select place for central conference sessions.

h) Area group responsibilities—It is the responsibility of the area groups to deal with matters assigned to them by the council or its presidium. Decisions with impact on matters outside the respective area require confirmation by the council or its presidium. On a permanent basis, the area groups are assigned

(1) To function as the committee on episcopacy (§ 550).

(2) To function as the episcopal residence committee with the responsibility:

(a) To make recommendations to the annual conferences regarding the purchase, sale, or rental of an episcopal residence.

(b) To prepare an annual budget covering the cost of providing the episcopal residence, which may also include utilities, insurance, and normal costs of upkeep in maintaining the residence.

(c) To supervise the expenditure of funds allocated from all sources for expenses related to the provision of the episcopal residence and to account for such expenditures annually to each annual conference in the episcopal area.

(d) To give oversight in all matters related to upkeep, maintenance, improvements, and appropriate insurance coverage for the episcopal residence.

(3) To be responsible for the necessary administration, in case of vacancy in the office of bishop due to death or other reason, until the vacancy is filled (§ 407).

(4) To develop annual budgets for the episcopal fund (Eurasia Episcopal Fund and the Nordic and Baltic Episcopal Fund respectively) to be submitted to the General Council on Finance and Administration for approval.

(5) To elect treasurer for each Area's Episcopal Fund, Area Funds and other funds under its field of responsibility.

(6) To receive and approve annual financial reports for the funds mentioned above, audited by a certified public accountant.

(7) To present a quadrennial summary of the financial reports of the funds mentioned above to the central conference, which grants discharge of liability for the period for approval.

i) Subcommittees—In order to support and perform its duties, the council can organize ad hoc subcommittees to fulfil its purpose and any of its permanent tasks

j) Economy

(1) The travel expenses of the council, including its area groups, are covered by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Fund. Accommodation and travel meals (per diem) are paid by the respective conference.

(2) Apportionments to the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference are paid by the annual and national district conferences based on a formula set by the Central Conference.

(3) The formula is a percentage of the total gross salary of all clergy under appointment in the local church on conference and district level and in institutions fully or partly owned by the church or a church entity. The gross salary includes the full salary (before taxes), all employee benefits and the value of free housing.

(4) The apportionment percentage for 2017 – 2020 is 0,75%

#### **¶ 550. Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Committee on Episcopacy—**

a) There shall be a central conference committee on episcopacy, composed by the elected members of the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Council. The elected vice chairperson of the Central Conference Council is the chairperson of the committee on episcopacy, and the secretary of the Central Conference Council is the secretary of the committee on episcopacy. The bishops are not members of the committee, but give a personal report to the committee in connection with an annual consultation.

b) The functions of the conference committee on episcopacy shall be:

(1) To support the bishop of the area in the oversight of the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Church, with special reference to the area where the bishop has presidential responsibility.

(2) To be available to the bishop for counsel

- (3) To assist in the determination of the episcopal needs of the area and to make recommendations to appropriate bodies.
- (4) To keep the bishop advised concerning conditions within the area as they affect relationships between the bishop and the people of the conference agencies.
- (5) To interpret to the people of the area and to conference agencies the nature and function of the episcopal office.
- (6) To engage in annual consultation and appraisal of the balance of the bishop's relationship and responsibilities to the area and annual conferences, general Church boards and agencies, and other areas of specialized ministry, including, at all levels, concern for the inclusiveness of the Church and its ministry with respect to sex, race, and national origin, and understanding and implementation of the consultation process in appointment making.
- (7) To include decisions and recommendations in the minutes of the central conference committee, and report to the central conference.

#### **¶ 551. Other central conference work**

can be performed by the following board, which is also responsible for the promoting and coordinating activities within respective working area without financing from the Central Conference Council: Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Youth Council.

#### **¶ 552. Apportionments into the Episcopal Fund and the General Administration Fund**

Apportionments to the Episcopal Fund and the General Administration Fund are paid by the annual conferences based on a formula set by the General Conference.

In the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference the annual and the national district conferences pay these apportionments by area to the respective episcopal areas based on the formula previously used to for apportionments to the episcopal fund.

The formula is a percentage of the total gross salary of all clergy under appointment in the local church, on conference and district level and in institutions fully or partly owned by the church or a church entity.

The gross salary includes the full salary (before taxes) all employee benefits and the value of free housing. The apportionment percentage is set at 2,50%.

We use this formula as long as it is approved the General Council on Finance and Administration.

### **¶ 553. The European Methodist Council**

1. The Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference is a member of the European Methodist Council.
2. A financial contribution to the council shall be included in the budget for the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Fund.
3. The Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference is represented in the European Methodist Council by six members, including the two bishops and at least two lay representatives. The annual and national district conferences submit nominations to the Central Conference Council, which makes the election.

## **The Conferences (The Annual Conference)**

### **¶ 611. Annual Conference Council**

In each annual and national district conference within Northern Europe Central Conference there shall be a conference council. In Denmark the council is called Landsledelsen, in Estonia Kirikuvalitsus, in Finland Kirkkohallitus (Finnish) or Kyrkostyrelsen (Swedish), in Latvia Baznīcas Valde, in Lithuania Baznycios administracinės, in Norway Hovedstyret, in Russia “Совет ежегодной конференции”, and in Ukraine “Рада щорічної конференції”.

### **¶612. Functions**

The conference council shall have the following functions, membership and organization:

1. Functions. The conference council shall have the following functions:

a) Annual conference council on finance and administration (§§613-619), of which the purpose is to develop, maintain, and administer a comprehensive and coordinated plan of fiscal and administrative policies, procedures, and management services for the annual conference.

b) Annual conference council responsible for connectional ministries (§§ 608)

c) Annual conference board of trustees (§§ 2512-2517)

d) Annual conference board on church location and building (§§2518-2524)

e) Annual conference committee on Christian unity and interreligious concerns (§§ 642)

f) Annual conference board of pensions, when not separately organized (§§ 639).

## 2. Membership.

a ) Members of the council are the bishop, the district superintendents, the conference lay leader, and those persons the conference wishes to elect. The conference treasurer may be a member of the conference council.

b ) Diversity is important for the annual conference council and its members should mirror the annual and district conference in regards to age, gender, geography and congregational affiliation.

c ) The conference council should have equal numbers of clergy and lay members.

3. Officers. The council shall have a chairperson elected by the annual conference. The council elects among its voting members a vice chairperson, a secretary, and other officers as the council decides. The conference treasurer/director of administrative services (§§ 619) shall be the treasurer of the council.

4. No member of the council shall vote on or take part in deliberations on significant matters directly or indirectly affecting her or his business, income, or employment, or the business, income, or employment of his or her immediate family.

## 5. Organization.

a) The council may establish committees and task forces and define their duties and authority as it deems necessary for fulfilling its purpose and responsibilities.

b) The annual conference may enact bylaws governing meetings, quorum, and other matters of procedure for the council, or it may authorize the council to enact such bylaws; in any event, such bylaws shall not be in conflict with the Book of Discipline.

c) If deemed necessary for the fulfillment of its functions and if so authorized by the annual conference, the council may be incorporated.

6. Amenability. The council shall be amenable and report directly to the annual conference.

### **¶ 613. Responsibilities.**

The council shall have authority and responsibility to perform the following functions:

1. To recommend to the annual conference for its action and determination budgets of anticipated income and proposed expenditures for all funds that provide for annual conference clergy support, annual conference administrative expenses, and annual conference benevolence and program causes (¶ 614).

2. To receive, consider, report, and make recommendations to the annual conference regarding the following prior to final decision by the annual conference:

(a) any proposal to raise capital funds for any purpose;

(b) funding considerations related to any proposal that may come before the conference;

(c) any requests to conduct a special conference-wide financial appeal, whether by special collections, campaigns, or otherwise in the local churches of the conference.

3. To recommend to the annual conference for its action and decision the methods or formulas by which apportionments to churches, charges, or districts for duly authorized general, central, conference, and district funds shall be determined (¶ 615).

4. To consult and cooperate with the commission on communication in providing district superintendents, pastors, and appropriate officers of the local churches and charge conferences with interpretive aids or other materials to assist

in gaining understanding and support of the conference budget and other approved conference causes. This shall include the theology and discipline of financial giving.

5. To develop policies governing the investment of conference funds, whether in debt or equity, short-term or long-term instruments, with the aim of maximizing funds available for mission in a manner consistent with the preservation of capital, the Policies Relative to Socially Responsible Investments (§ 716), and the Social Principles of the Church. A statement of such policies shall be printed in the conference journal at least once in each quadrennium.

6. To recommend to the annual conference procedures for funding local churches, including the theology of financial giving.

7. To advise local churches about making their church buildings, facilities, and programs accessible.

8. To recommend to the annual conference for its action procedures for dealing responsibly with situations in which budgeted funds, as approved by the annual conference, are inadequate to meet emerging missional needs or unforeseen circumstances.

9. To review at least quarterly and to account to the annual conference for the disbursement of funds in accordance with budgets approved by the conference.

10. To recommend to the annual conference for its action and determination the conditions under which it may borrow funds for current expense purposes and the maximum amount of such borrowing.

11. To have authority and supervision over the conference treasurer/director of administrative services subject to § 619; to establish policies governing the treasurer/director's work.

12. To work in cooperation with other annual conference agencies for the design and implementation of a plan by which the annual conference may designate the conference treasury as a central treasury for funds designated for any or all conference agencies participating in conference funds.

13. To establish uniform and equitable policies and practices in the employment and compensation of personnel, in consultation



and cooperation with other conference agencies that employ staff, unless the annual conference has designated another agency to carry this responsibility. These policies and practices shall be in accordance with the Social Principles (§ 162 A, E, F, and I).

14. To promote and standardize the financial recording and reporting system in the local churches of the conference.

15. In cooperation with relevant annual conference agencies and institutions, and local churches, to make recommendations to the annual conference regarding the development, promotion, and review of a broad general program of insurance protection. To train and encourage volunteers and employed in the areas of church business and administration.

16. To make recommendations to the annual conference for its action and determination regarding plans to initiate or cause to be organized a foundation or similar organization for the purpose of securing, conserving, or expending funds for the direct or indirect benefit or support of the annual conference, or of any conference agency, or any of its programs or work. The council shall have opportunity to make its recommendations regarding such plans if the foundation or similar organization is: (1) proposed to be organized by the annual conference itself, whether acting alone or in concert with other annual conferences; (2) proposed to be organized by any conference council, board, commission, committee, or other agency; (3) to make use of the name United Methodist in its title or solicitation; or (4) proposed for the purpose of soliciting gifts primarily from the United Methodist constituency.

17. To perform such other administrative and fiscal functions and services as the annual conference may assign.

18. To ensure that no apportioned conference funds are expended for the use of alcoholic beverages.

19. To ensure that no annual conference board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of UMC “not to reject or condemn lesbian or gay members and friends” (§ 161.F). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures. This restriction shall not

limit the Church's ministry in response to the HIV epidemic, nor shall it preclude funding for dialogs or educational events where the Church's official position is fairly and equally represented.

### ¶ 615. Apportionments

The council shall recommend to the annual conference for its action and determination the methods or formulas by which the approved budgeted amounts for clergy support, administration, and other causes shall be apportioned to the churches or charges of the conference.

### ¶ 635. Conference board of ordained ministry

1. Each annual conference at the first session following the General Conference shall elect for a term of four years a Board of Ordained Ministry. At least six ordained elders and deacons in full connection and, when possible, at least two associate members or full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study shall be included as members of the board with voice and vote. Each annual conference shall elect at least one-fifth laypersons, which may include diaconal ministers, and may at its discretion elect further lay members, up to one-third of the membership of the board. All laypersons shall be professing members of local churches in the annual conference. The board membership shall include both men and women, and attention should be paid to the demographic constituents of the conference. When possible, at least one ordained clergyperson in the retired relationship, at least one ordained clergyperson in extension ministry, and when possible at least one young adult clergyperson in full connection age 35 or younger, and a district superintendent named by the bishop to represent the cabinet

a) Members shall be nominated by the presiding bishop after consultation with the chairperson of the board, the executive committee, or a committee elected by the board of the previous quadrennium, and with the cabinet. To ensure adequate board membership, consultation shall include an evaluation of the workload of the board in meeting disciplinary and annual conference responsibilities. Vacancies shall be filled by the bishop after consultation with the chairperson of the board.

An elected board member may serve a maximum of three consecutive four-year terms

b) This board shall be directly amenable to the annual conference, notwithstanding its organizational relationship within any other program or administrative unit of the annual conference. The annual conference council on finance and administration shall recommend adequate administrative funds for the board and its staff in light of its workload.

c) The board shall organize by electing from its membership a chairperson, registrars, and such other officers as it may deem necessary. A vocational discernment coordinator may be named to coordinate the candidacy mentoring process. The board shall designate its executive committee, which shall include elders, deacons, and laity. The board shall organize in such manner as to care for its responsibilities, including the needs of certified persons, diaconal ministers, local pastors, deacons, and elders. The board may include in its organization a division of deacons and a division of elders.

d) Each annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry shall establish a Conference Relations Committee of at least three persons to hear requests for discontinuance of provisional members, involuntary leave of absence, administrative location, involuntary retirement, or other such matters as may be referred to them by the board of ordained ministry. District superintendents shall not serve on the Conference Relations Committee.

e) To ensure maximum contact with and support of persons in appointments beyond the local church, the board shall maintain relationships with all general agencies that have responsibility for persons in such appointments.

f) The board shall meet at least once prior to its meeting at the time of the annual conference session and may set a deadline prior to annual conference for transacting its business.

g) The board shall select from its own membership an official representative to serve as a member of or liaison to existing district committees on ordained ministry.

h) The board shall provide orientation for new members, including distribution of any available written guidelines.

2. The duties of the annual conference board of ordained ministry shall be:

a) To assume the primary responsibility for the enlistment and recruitment of ordained clergy by working in consultation with the cabinet to study and interpret the clergy needs and resources of the annual conference, with due regard to the inclusive nature of the Church. It shall, with the assistance of the local church committee on pastor-parish relations, conference agencies, and every ordained minister of the conference, enlist women and men of all races and ethnic origins for the ordained ministry and guide those persons in the process of education, training, and ordination, recommending colleges and schools of theology listed by the Central Conference Council. Persons recruited should have an understanding of and appreciation for persons of different racial and ethnic heritages.

b) To renew a culture of call in the church by giving strategic leadership to annual conferences, districts, congregations, campus ministries, camps, and other appropriate ministries, especially among youth and young adults.

c) To seek from a school of theology information about the personal and professional qualities of an applicant for provisional membership or of a provisional member; provided, however, that the applicant or member consent to the provision of such information.

d) To receive annual reports on the progress made by each ministerial student enrolled in a theological school and to record credit for work satisfactorily completed.

e) It shall require a transcript of credits from each applicant before recognizing any of the applicant's educational claims. In case of doubt, the board may submit a transcript to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry for evaluation.

f) The board shall annually appoint and train a sufficient number of mentors in each district in consultation with the district superintendent.

g) To guide the candidate for ordained ministry who is not enrolled in a theological school and who is pursuing

the Course of Study as adopted by the Central Conference Council

h) To examine all applicants as to their fitness for the ordained ministry and make full inquiry as to the fitness of the candidate for: (1) annual election as local pastor; (2) election to associate membership; (3) election to provisional membership; and (4) election to full conference membership.

i) To provide all candidates for ordained ministry a written statement on the disciplinary and annual conference requirements for the local pastor, provisional, and full membership.

j) To interview and report recommendation concerning: (1) student local pastors; (2) certified candidates for ordination as deacons; and (3) certified candidates for ordination as elders.

k) To assign a board member to serve as liaison to retired clergy in the conference.

l) To interview applicants and make recommendation concerning: (1) changes from the effective relation to a leave of absence or retirement; (2) return to the effective relation from other relations; (3) honourable location; (4) readmission of located persons and persons discontinued from provisional membership; (5) sabbatical leave; (6) incapacity leave; (7) appointment as a student; (8) termination; and (9) changes to or from less than full-time ministry.

The board shall keep a record of these changes and the reason behind them and place a copy in the permanent records of the annual conference maintained by the secretary of the conference.

m) To ensure confidentiality in relation to the interview and reporting process. The personal data and private information provided through the examinations of and by the Board of Ordained Ministry will not be available for distribution and publication. There are occasions when the Board of Ordained Ministry would not report privileged information, which in the judgement of the board, if revealed in the executive session of clergy members in full connection with the annual conference, would be an undue invasion of privacy without adding measurably to the conference's information about

the person's qualifications for ordained ministry. However, it is the right of the executive session of the clergy members in full connection with an annual conference to receive all pertinent information, confidential or otherwise, related to the qualifications and/or character of any candidate or clergy member of the conference.

n) To be in consultation with the bishop through the chairperson or the executive committee regarding transfers. This consultation is to be at the bishop's initiative and, where possible, to take place prior to transfers into the annual conference.

o) To provide support services for the ordained minister's career development, including personal and career counselling, continuing education, formation in servant leadership and continuing spiritual growth in Christ, assistance in preparation for retirement, and all matters pertaining to clergy morale. In providing such support, the board, in cooperation with the cabinet, shall give training and guidance to each local committee on pastor-parish relations regarding its work and role.

p) To work with and support the Order of Deacon and the Order of Elder, including receiving reports, offering financial support, and coordinating the Orders' activity with the continuing formation offerings of the board. The board may delegate continuing formation responsibility to the Orders by mutual agreement, with final approval, evaluation, and budgeting remaining with the board.

q) To work with and support the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members (see ¶ 323), including receiving reports, offering financial support, and coordinating their continuing formation.

r) To provide a means of evaluating the effectiveness of ordained ministers in the annual conference (¶¶ 604.4, 350). Suggested guidelines will be provided by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Division of Ordained Ministry. In cooperation with the cabinet, the board shall develop standards of effectiveness for clergy serving as pastors of congregations in that annual conference.

- s) To interpret the high ethical standards of ordained ministry set forth in the Discipline and to study matters pertaining to character (§605.7).
- t) To recommend to the full members of the annual conference for validation special ministries for which members seek appointment. The appointment to such ministries is the prerogative of the bishop and the cabinet.
- u) To provide continuing support and management of consecrated diaconal ministers using the policies described in §§ 301-317 of the 1992 Book of Discipline.
- v) To care for the administration of professional certification established by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry through (1) enlisting and recruiting clergy and laity to become certified in Christian education, music, youth, evangelism, and other areas established by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry; (2) determining whether applicants meet the standards established by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry; (3) to recommend to the annual conference board and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry; (4) to renew or discontinue professional certification biannually based on a review of their ministry; and (5) to report annually to the annual conference for publication in the conference journal a roster of all persons certified in professional careers for which they have received certification, including places of service address.
- w) To report annually to the annual conference for publication in the conference journal a roster of all persons certified as Lay Ministers.
- x) To administer the portion of the Ministerial Education Fund for use by the annual conference in its programs of enlistment, basic professional educational aid, continuing formation, ethnic ministry and language training, and professional growth of ordained ministers. Priority shall be given to scholarships for seminary students preparing for ordination.
- y) To cooperate with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and assist in: (1) the interpretation of current legislation concerning ordained ministry; (2) the interpretation

and promotion of the Ministerial Education Fund; (3) the promotion and observance of Ministry Sunday; and (4) the supplying of a record of all information, recommendations, and action on each candidate for ordained ministry after each session of the annual conference; (5) the promotion and addition of standards required for certification in specialized ministry careers.

z) To promote in the annual conference and/or jurisdictional conference a system of financial aid to ministerial students. A conference transferring a person with less than three years of active service into another conference may require reimbursement either from the person or from the receiving conference for outstanding obligations for theological education financed through conference funds.

aa) To report in a timely manner any change in the conference relationship of a clergy member of the conference to the conference board of pensions.

3. The board shall elect a registrar and such associate registrars as it may determine; one such associate registrar to be given responsibility for candidacy, including giving leadership to the training and guidance of mentors in each district. A staff executive may be named by the board to fulfill the functions of registrar.

a) The registrar shall keep full personnel records for all candidates for ordained ministry under the care of the board, including essential biographical data, transcripts of academic credit, instruments of evaluation, and, where it applies, psychological and medical test records, sermons, theological statements, and other pertinent data.

b) Pertinent information and recommendations concerning each candidate shall be certified to the annual conference. The registrar shall forward an acknowledgement of transfer to the pastor of the local church where each newly elected provisional and associate member held membership.

c) The registrar shall keep a record of the standing of the students in the course of Study and report to the conference when required. This record shall include the credits allowed students for work done in accredited schools of theology



in approved Course of Study schools, or Course of Study correspondence.

d) The registrar shall file in the bishop's office for permanent record a copy of circumstances involving the discontinuance of provisional membership or termination of the local pastor status.

e) The records and files of the Board of Ordained Ministry are kept on behalf of the annual conference and shall be maintained under guidelines provided by the General Council on Finance and Administration in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the General Board of Pensions.

4. Administrative costs of the Board of Ordained Ministry shall be a claim on the conference operating budget. The Board of Ordained Ministry shall have direct access to the conference council on finance and administration in support of its program.

## The Conferences (The District Conference)

### **¶ 666. There may be a district committee on ordained ministry.**

1. The district committee on ordained ministry shall be amenable to the annual conference through the Board of Ordained Ministry, which shall assign one of its members to the district committee. All members shall be nominated annually by the district superintendent in consultation with the chairperson or executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry and approved by the annual conference. Interim vacancies shall be filled by the district superintendent. The committee shall be comprised of at least two professing members of local churches, the district superintendent, who may serve as the executive secretary and at least four other clergy in the district. The clergy shall include elders, and where possible, a deacon in full connection, women, a deacon or elder who is age 35 or younger, an associate member, and may include one local pastor who has completed the Course of Study. All persons named to the district committee on ordained ministry shall be members with vote. The district committee on ordained ministry shall provide orientation for new members, including education regarding the ministry and roles of all clergy and distribution of any available written

guidelines. At least two professing members of local churches shall be full participating members of the committee with vote, nominated annually by the district superintendent and approved by the annual conference.

2. The district committee on ordained ministry shall elect its officers at the first meeting following the annual conference session when the members are elected.

3. The committee shall maintain a list of all persons who have declared their candidacy for the ordained ministry and are pursuing candidacy studies with a candidacy mentor. A duplicate list shall be forwarded to the annual conference registrar for candidacy; such list being made current at least prior to each session of the annual conference.

4. The committee shall offer counsel to candidates regarding pre-theological studies.

5. The committee shall supervise all matters dealing with candidacy for the ordained ministry and with the license for local pastor.

6. The vote of the committee on matters of candidacy shall be by individual written ballot of the committee present. A three-fourths majority vote is required for certification. All other matters of candidacy shall be by a simple majority vote.

7. The committee shall maintain a service record and file on every local pastor and candidate for the ordained ministry. The records and files of the committee are kept on behalf of the annual conference and shall be maintained under guidelines provided by the General Council on Finance and Administration in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits.

8. The committee shall recommend to the Board of Ordained Ministry those persons who qualify for associate and provisional membership, for license or continuance as local pastors, and for restoration of credentials. All persons shall have been professing members of The United Methodist Church or a baptized participant of a recognized United Methodist campus ministry or other United Methodist ministry setting for a minimum of one (1) year.

9. The committee shall examine all persons who apply in writing for certification or renewal of certificate. Where there is evidence that their gifts, evidence of God's grace, and usefulness warrant and that

they are qualified under ¶¶ 315-319, and on recommendation of their charge conference or the conference Board of Ordained Ministry, the committee shall issue or renew their certificate.

10. The committee shall examine all persons who apply in writing to be certified as lay ministers. When there is evidence that their gifts, evidence of God's grace and usefulness, warrant and that they are qualified under ¶ 271, and on recommendation of their charge conference, the committee shall recommend their certification or recertification. The district committee shall report annually to the annual conference through the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry a roster of all persons certified as lay ministers.

11. All persons interviewed by the district committee shall be informed of decisions and recommendations as soon as possible, both orally and in writing.

## Church Property

### **¶ 2501. Requirement of the Trust Clause for All Property—**

1. All properties of United Methodist local churches and other United Methodist agencies and institutions are held, in trust, for the benefit of the entire denomination, and ownership and usage of church property is subject to the Discipline. This trust requirement is an essential element of the historic polity of The United Methodist Church or its predecessor denominations or communions and has been a part of the Discipline since 1797. It reflects the connectional structure of the Church by ensuring that the property will be used solely for purposes consonant with the mission of the entire denomination as set forth in the Discipline. The trust requirement is thus a fundamental expression of United Methodism whereby local churches and other agencies and institutions within the denomination are both held accountable to and benefit from their connection with the entire worldwide Church.

In consonance with the legal definition and self-understanding of The United Methodist Church (see ¶ 141), and with particular reference to its lack of capacity to hold title to property, The United Methodist Church is organized as a connectional structure, and titles to all real and personal, tangible and intangible property held at jurisdictional,

annual, or district conference levels, or by a local church or charge, or by an agency or institution of the Church, shall be held in trust for The United Methodist Church and subject to the provisions of its Discipline. Titles are not held by The United Methodist Church (see ¶ 807.1) or by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church, but instead by the incorporated conferences, agencies, or organizations of the denomination, or in the case of unincorporated bodies of the denomination, by boards of trustees established for the purpose of holding and administering real and personal, tangible and intangible property.

2. The trust is and always has been irrevocable, except as provided in the Discipline. Property can be released from the trust, transferred free of trust or subordinated to the interests of creditors and other third parties only to the extent authority is given by the Discipline.

3. Local churches and other United Methodist agencies and institutions may acquire, hold, maintain, improve, and sell property for purposes consistent with the mission of the Church, unless restricted or prevented by the Discipline.

4. In the Northern Europe Central Conference the title “The United Methodist Church” (UMC) is as follows:

In Estonia: Metodisti Kirik,

In Finland: Metodistkyrkan, and Metodistikirkko,

In Latvia: Apvienotā Metodistu Baznīca,

In Lithuania: Jungtinė Metodistų Bažnyčia

In Denmark: Metodistkirken,

In Norway: Metodistkirken,

In Sweden: Metodistkyrkan,

In Ukraine: Релігійне Управління Об’єднаної Методистської Церкви,

In Russia: Религиозная Организация «Объединенная Методистская Церковь».

The registration of the church in Belarus, Moldova, and Central Asia is pending.

5. On the Annual Conference level all documents regarding property, entry into the land register, pledge or mortgage deed shall be issued in the registered name, which is as follows:

In Estonia: Eesti Metodisti Kirik,

In Finland: Finlands svenska metodistkyrka, and Suomen Metodistikirkko,

In Latvia: Latvijas Apvienotā Metodistu Baznīca,

In Lithuania: Lietuvos Jungtinė Metodistų Bažnyčia

In Denmark: Metodistkirken i Danmark,

In Norway: Metodistkirken i Norge,

In Sweden: Metodistkyrkan i Sverige,

In Ukraine: Релігійне Управління Об'єднаної Методистської Церкви України,

(The United Methodist Church in Ukraine),

In Russia: Религиозная Организация «Российская Объединенная Методистская Церковь»

(Russia United Methodist Church).

The registration of the church in Belarus, Moldova, and Central Asia is pending.

6. On the local church or charge conference level the title shall be as follows:

In Estonia: Eesti Metodisti Kiriku x-town Kogudus (the name of the town in the correct genitive form)

In Finland: Metodistkyrkan in x-town, and Suomen Metodistikirkko, x-town seurakunta (the name of the town in the correct genitive form)

In Latvia: Latvijas Apvienotās Metodistu Baznīcas x-town's draudze,

In Lithuania: Jungtinė Metodistų Bažnyčia in x-town

In Denmark: Metodistkirken in x-town,

In Norway: Metodistkirken in x-town Menighet,

In Sweden: Metodistkyrkan in x-town,

In Ukraine: Релігійне Управління Об'єднаної Методистської Церкви in x-town

In Russia: Религиозная Организация «Объединенная Методистская Церковь in x-town».

The registration of the church in Belarus, Moldova, and Central Asia is pending.

7. The incorporated annual conferences in the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference and their legal predecessors are:

- a) Metodistkirken i Danmark
  - (1) Den Biskoppelige Methodist-Kirke (1850-1939)
- b) Eesti Metodisti Kirik (1940-)
  - (1) Eestima Piiskoplik Methodisti kogudus (1919-1935)
  - (2) Eesti Piiskoplik Metodistikirik (1935-1940)
- c) Suomen Metodistikirkko
  - (1) Suomen Piisallinen Metodistikirkko
- d) Finlands svenska metodistkyrka
  - (1) Metodistkyrkan i Finland, svenska avdelningen
  - (2) Metodist-Episkopalkyrkan i Finland, svenska avdelningen
- e) Latvijas Apvienotā Metodistu Baznīca (1991-)
  - (1) Latvijas Bīskaps Metodistu Baznīca (1921-1940)
- f) Lietuvos Jungtinė Metodistų Bažnyčia
- g) Metodistkirken i Norge
  - (1) Den Biskoppelige Methodist-Kirke (1850-1939)
- h) Metodistkyrkan i Sverige (1939-2012)
  - (1) Methodist-Episkopalkyrkan
- h) Религиозная Организация «Российская Объединенная Методистская Церковь» (Russia United Methodist Church)
- i) Релігійне Управління Об'єднаної Методистської Церкви України (The United Methodist Church in Ukraine)

8. A local church or charge may be incorporated separately while retaining its character as an integrated part of the annual conference.

# Episcopal Address

Knowing that “in God we all live, move and exist”, we welcome delegates and guests to the 2016 Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference in Fredrikstad, Norway.

We come together as United Methodists across 11 time zones representing a rich diversity of cultures and ministry contexts, bound together in connectional relationship eager to share Christ with the purpose of making disciples, through which the world may be transformed.

We particularly welcome bishop John Yambasu from Sierra Leone, who is representing the Council of Bishops. We welcome other bishops from Europe, Rosemarie Wenner from Germany and Patrick Streiff from Central and Southern Europe. We welcome our retired bishops, who have previously served in the Central Conference, Øystein Olsen and Hans Våxby, while Rüdiger Minor is unable to be here due to prior commitments.

We also welcome ecumenical friends, representatives from the Uniting Church in Sweden, as well as representatives from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Norway, the Baptist Union in Norway and the Norway Council of Churches.

The theme of our conference “In God we all live, move and exist” is a short sentence in a longer speech given to an assembly of philosophers and politicians in Athens. When Paul arrived in the city after a long voyage he walked into a religious, philosophical and political marketplace, where people not unlike many Northern Europeans and Eurasians today were hungry for the next new thing. While Paul was well acquainted with Greek culture and religion, he was not prepared for what he experienced in Athens, and he was, as we can be in our context, deeply distressed by a city flooded with idols. However, he soon caught himself and began to engage with the culture through conversations, debate and by paying attention to the life unfolding around him.

Having drawn quite a bit of attention Paul is taken to the council on Mars Hill to explain himself, no doubt expected to be ridiculed or even punished for his outrageous religious and philosophical claims.

Perhaps we would have advised keeping a low profile in such a situation, but Paul uses his best knowledge and rhetorical skills to deliver a strong polemic speech with frequent quotes from known philosophers to connect with the Athenians while not watering down the gospel, but speaking out against idolatry and pointing to judgement and resurrection.

The sentence “In Him we live, move and exist”, is both inclusive and exclusive. We are all included and contained in God, and yet this God, unknown and unnamed by the Athenians, is exclusively the one, and not one of many. For in him we live, meaning by him, by his originally forming of us, and continually sustaining us. We are constantly depending on Him, he is the original source of life, and he upholds us each moment. From him derives our strength to move, even our slightest movement and our very existence we owe to him.

That we live at all is his gift; that we have power to move is his gift; and so is our continued existence. Paul traces our existence in God from the lowest pulsation of life to the highest powers of action. We are wholly and entirely dependent on God.

This is Paul, the missionary, at his finest, moving with the Holy Spirit and intelligently, passionately, relevantly and directly communicating the good news of Christ in a hostile, skeptic and curious culture. Becoming a 21st century missional church in the Northern Europe and Eurasia context includes the adoption of Paul’s missionary postures, thinking, behavior, and practices in order to engage others with the gospel message. Missiologist Charles Van Engen states it well saying: “Mission is the people of God intentionally crossing barriers from church to non-church, faith to non-faith, to proclaim by word and deed the coming of the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ; this task is achieved by means of the church’s participation in God’s mission of reconciling people to God, to themselves, to each other, and to the world, and gathering them into the church through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit with a view to the transformation of the world as a sign of the coming of the Kingdom in Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

In prayer and reflection to craft an analyzing, discerning, encouraging and visionary Episcopal address for a church as diverse as our Central Conference presents quite a few challenges. We have decided to approach this by clearly labeling each section with the perspective, it is written from. We don’t presume to be able to address the fullness of complexity and variation that exists across the Central Conference



in the two episcopal areas, rather we prayerfully submit these words to you, hoping that the address will help us in our ongoing reflections on what it means to live, serve and be faithful as United Methodist Christians in this part of the world.

## Methodist identity - a Eurasia perspective

As many streams of religious traditions and cultural trends flow through our lives in Northern Europe and Eurasia, it is important to know who we are as United Methodists. I was very inspired by the new book “Nordic Perspective on Methodism” that was offered to us at the School of Congregational Development in Tallinn in September 2015. Building on the good work of our Nordic sisters and brothers, I would like to continue this important conversation and what it means to us today.

We have many challenges and streams of modern life that overwhelm our societies and often our churches. The world often imposes on us its worldly values such as individualism, materialism, greed and selfishness. Karl Marx’s socialist ideas failed us in Eurasia, as corruption and absence of freedom killed many good ideals. At the same time, we see that capitalism continues to swallow human lives as it did in the 19th century Europe, but with a more intelligent face this time. The “i” culture makes it almost a cult in our modern world when the needs of others are neglected. How do we as Methodists in Northern Europe and Eurasia continue to be a unique voice that brings hope and relevance? How do we keep our identity and build on it? What is our theology as Methodists?

Identity is characterized by our uniqueness, who we are as Methodists, what makes us Methodists. As a person from the Eurasian context, I find it important to start with a character of a Methodist.

Let me share some of my personal testimony of how I experienced the character of a Methodist when I first came to the UMC in Moscow. In 1992 I came to the Moscow UMC for the first time. It was a period of searching for God and the meaning of life for me. From the very beginning of my encounter with the people called Methodists, I was inspired by their simple and sincere hearts, radical hospitality and practical holiness.

Today, living more than twenty years as a Methodist, I see how these qualities of the first Methodist people in my life have shaped

my theology, worldview and my character. I greatly appreciate my Methodist sisters and brothers who have exemplified the love of Christ for me. I am grateful to God who continues to work on my Christian character, Methodist character, because "...I myself don't think I've reached it, but I do this one thing: I forget about the things behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me. The goal I pursue is the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)

Let us look into these qualities of the Methodist character. As we think about our identity as Methodists, let us consider these questions: Why is this important for us? What makes us Methodists? What distinguishes a Methodist from Christians of other denominations? How can we develop our uniqueness?

We shall look at the following aspects:

1. Simple and sincere fellowship
2. Radical hospitality
3. Practical holiness

### **Simple and sincere fellowship**

When Pope Francis was elected a few years ago one of his actions was widely discussed in the mass media. Pope Francis refused to use his bulletproof "Popemobile" and wanted to use the regular car of the middle class - Ford Focus. People were applauding him around the world. I was also glad for this fact, but at the same time I have experienced mixed feelings.

On the one hand, I was glad that Pope Francis sent a signal to his colleagues and all Christians to live in simplicity despite your high positions. The minister of any level is called to be the servant of the people, be simple and approachable to people, and not to shield him/herself from the people in an expensive automobile or in a mansion with high fence.

On the other hand, I was disappointed that the state of the Christian church today is such that this kind of action by the Pope is considered heroic.

When I came to the United Methodist Church for the first time in my life I was very impressed by the people. In spite of my negative expectations and mistrust, I met simple and sincere people. They were dressed simple, talked sincerely on different topics, shared meal

together in joy and simplicity of the heart. This was an inspiration to me to learn more about people called Methodists, who they are and who is their God.

I joined a small Bible study group, and every week I have discovered the character of Jesus Christ and his ministry to people. Jesus was always with people. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, advocated for the poor, visited the lonely. Most of his time he was with his disciples.

John Wesley implemented the gospel principles of serving people as he led the Methodist movement in England. Following Christ, he served uneducated people, helped workers, preached the gospel in the open air. His whole life John Wesley spent in simple and sincere fellowship with different kinds of people, inspiring them to follow Christ and grow in perfection every day.

Gospel stories of Jesus Christ's life, example of John Wesley and the actual life of Methodists have strongly shaped my understanding of the character of the Methodist. Methodist is the one who is simple and sincere in fellowship. It is easy to fellowship with this person and have a discussion. A Methodist inspires you to grow in love and perfection. It is easy to trust this person and pray together.

This understanding of the character of a Methodist was strongly shaped in me together with simple and sincere lives of the first Christians and apostles: "Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved." (Acts 2:46-47, CEB)

*Question for reflection: How do newcomers experience fellowship with us as Methodists when they meet us and make first steps to follow Christ with us?*

### **Radical hospitality**

Radical hospitality is a second quality of the character of the Methodist that I have abundantly experienced from my sisters and brothers in the congregation, when I began to learn Christian faith. My new friends invited me to be a guest in their homes. They shared much of their time with me and all the other new comers cared for our needs, listened to our stories. I felt as though I was a very honourable guest. It is not

a secret that many people do not feel much of the hospitality when they visit Moscow, and this city seems cold, busy and indifferent. But I have experienced just the opposite in the United Methodist Church. I have felt love, care and generosity. They truly treated me as their own brother. It was a radical hospitality - such hospitality when people do more for you than you expect or can imagine.

We see the practice of radical hospitality even from the Old Testament times. For example, Abraham extended hospitality to the three strangers. He prepared meal for them and spent time in fellowship with them. Also, when people harvested, they had a rule to leave part of the harvest on the field so that migrants and poor people could feed themselves. Hospitality always mindful of serving people. It is our attitude, our acts of mercy, our desire to understand and cover the needs of people.

In practice, radical hospitality can be expressed in the following actions:

- sacrifice of time
- food sharing
- providing a room for overnight stay
- ability to listen
- caring for the needs of people

Sacrifice of time is a rare thing in our modern life. Most people are tense because of multiple responsibilities and meetings in their calendar. In urban settings people try to do more, earn more, achieve more. In the midst of such a rhythm of life I am reminded of Moses's prayer: "Teach us to number our days so we can have a wise heart." (Psalm 90:12)

In Jesus's ministry a person and his/her needs were always a priority. When people encountered Jesus they were inspired to serve God and one another. Jesus sacrificed his time in order to extend hospitality to others. Also, he himself visited different people as a guest and had fellowship with them, served them. Time which we give to people is our hospitality in action. Without sacrifice of time it is impossible to serve people.

Food is something that unites people, no matter how different they might be. It is interesting to look at Jesus's ministry through the prism of when and with whom he had food. In times of Jesus, to sit at the same table and share food meant that you treat others as equals. Jesus

had fellowship with poor and rich, sick and healthy, powerful and outcasts of the society.

Common meal - at the same table - is a mark of the character of any Methodist. In the Bible, Kingdom of Heaven is often associated with a banquet. Therefore, our banquet - common meal and glorification of God - is a prototype of the Kingdom of Heaven. "Let your Kingdom come... on earth as it is in heaven".

"Then Jesus said to the person who had invited him, "When you host a lunch or dinner, don't invite your friends, your brothers and sisters, your relatives, or rich neighbors. If you do, they will invite you in return and that will be your reward. Instead, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. And you will be blessed because they can't repay you. Instead, you will be repaid when the just are resurrected." When one of the dinner guests heard Jesus' remarks, he said to Jesus, "Happy are those who will feast in God's kingdom." (Luke 14:12-15)

*Happy are the Methodists who invite people for lunch or dinner!*

Providing a room for overnight stay is an important part of hospitality. Almost every month I meet with refugees, migrant workers, travelers, international guests. All of them need a room for overnight stay. Jesus and his apostles were traveling preachers. They traveled light and relied on hospitality of the people, trusting God. It was a different time and a different world. Today we fence ourselves by many metal doors, security systems, locks and alarms. People in big cities are not always happy to receive the news about a distant relative who comes to stay for an uncertain number of days. There are many difficult stories on this topic.

The character of a Methodist is distinguished by radical hospitality which aspires to provide a room for overnight stay. It is an opportunity to serve people - prepare clean linen, a room and give a guest a possibility for a good night's sleep. When you care for a person in such a way, he or she is filled with grace.

I remember when all my childhood time we visited each other. My twenty cousins always asked their parents to stay overnight. In those times, the absence of a late night bus gave us much joy. We had the opportunity to have much time for fellowship and play. It was amazing grace!

Ability to listen is an important characteristic for every Methodist. Without it the hospitality will not be complete. It was ability to listen to my brothers and sisters in the church that helped me in the beginning of my spiritual journey to feel myself at home and sort out my thoughts and struggles of my soul. When you have the atmosphere of listening at home or in the church, every person finds comfort and understanding here. Jesus listened to people in order to understand their needs and to help them in their difficulties.

Caring for the needs of people has always characterized the Methodists. In the beginning of the twentieth century deaconess Anna Eklund helped the sick and poor people of Saint-Petersburg. She was pushed out of Russia by the government to return to her home in Finland because she was actively caring for the needs of people! Today we have sisters and brothers in our congregations who constantly help people - orphans, homeless, lonely, elderly, international students - all who have needs. Caring for the needs of people is part of the DNA for every Christian-Methodist.

*Question for reflection: On the scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate the hospitality of your church? Why? What can your church do to make it 1 or 2 points higher?*

### **Practical holiness**

From the very beginning the Methodist movement was characterized by believers who regularly and deeply studied the Bible and practiced its lessons in their everyday life. When John Wesley preached the gospel in England, there were many poor and sick people in the society. Workers were harshly exploited. Medical care was not accessible for most people. The task of the people called Methodists was not simply to study the Bible and participate in theological discussions, but to transform society and grow in perfection personally. That is practical holiness - when we study the Bible and apply it in everyday life. The word of God becomes flesh and is active through us, transforming this world.

“The underlying energy of the Wesleyan theological heritage stems from an emphasis upon practical divinity, the implementation of genuine Christianity in the lives of believers...The Wesleyan emphasis upon the Christian life—faith and love put into practice—has been

the hallmark of those traditions now incorporated into The United Methodist Church.”

My first year of Christian faith I began to study the Bible and followed examples of my sisters and brothers in the church. I became a part of the movement of the Holy Spirit. Together with sisters and brothers we learned God’s Word for us and then went into the world to serve people. We bought food and distributed it to homeless people, we prayed with them. We visited orphanages and played with orphans, cleaned floors and windows in the hospitals and comforted sick and lonely people there. All these things had a great impact on me. I realized that Methodists are people of practical holiness. These people do not care about their own status or achievements. They simply serve people in need and they do it every week.

Every week we meet people in need. Someone sees a television program about a child who needs a surgery. Others look through social networks and want to respond and help the elderly man who is so lonely. It seems that the number of people in need increases every time. And someone might give up. Others may start philosophical conversations about the world order and blame the government for all our troubles in the country. But a Methodist is someone who is filled with spiritual power which comes from God. He or she does practical things that help specific people. It is not a one-time thing and not a hobby which we do only when we feel like it. Practical holiness is in the character of the Methodist, in the attitude towards people. It is implemented every week, and it is what we do with joyful and thankful heart.

In today’s world, where many values and foundations are mixed up and confused, when pluralism and tolerance become more important than your uniqueness, it is necessary for us to realize once again who we are and what it means for us to be United Methodists. What newcomers see, feel and receive when they come to our church? What is our Methodist identity? How our character helps them to grow spiritually? I pray and hope that every week new people will come to our churches and be inspired by simple and sincere fellowship, experience radical hospitality and grow with us in practical holiness. May the Lord bless us!

*Question for reflection: How does your church exemplify practical holiness? What makes you proud about your church members?*

## Secularization – a Nordic & Baltic perspective

When I became a Christian in the summer of 1978, I knew my life would have to change. I had been flirting with Christianity for more than a year, going to the local youth group on a weekly basis, attending worship several times a month and enthusiastically going to youth camps. But I was living in two separate worlds almost as two different persons among my friends in Church and among my friends outside of the church.

During a youth camp I decided to follow Christ, which was the first step in bringing the two worlds together. I experienced a strong sense of Jesus' presence in my life, and steadily supported and encouraged by Christian friends I began to apply my Christian values in all areas of life, and I began to share my faith with others. I knew a change had happened, and though some made fun of me, I continued going to the parties and hanging out with my non-Christian friends, I just acted differently. Conversion to Christ was not only about faith, it was about breaking away from negative life patterns and beginning to live a new life with new values.

In the Baltic and Eurasia countries being a Christian for decades implied unpleasantness and a number of restrictions. Being a member of a free church like the Methodist Church in the Nordic countries was and is still perceived as being odd. You are not only a Christian, which is strange enough, you are even standing outside of the realm of the majority church.

Magnus Malm in his book on secularization<sup>2</sup> notes, that as long as the local church emphasized the radicalism of discipleship, people found support there and willingly suffered through the name-calling and marginalization that often came with being part of a free church like the Methodist Church.

But when the relationship with Christ dries out and is replaced by doctrinal and legalistic guidelines directing faith and behavior, it becomes harder and harder to move against the tide and increasingly difficult to perceive the consequences of the Christian life as anything but a burden.

“Then an ambition is born to be accepted at any price by the very society the movement once turned its back on, and the finest compliment from a long-time colleague becomes: Really, are you a Christian? I never imagined that. As little difference as possible is the goal. And the



culture of the free churches is more and more shaped by a longing for the recognition of the public culture than by the desire to be counter cultural for the sake of God's kingdom.”<sup>3</sup>

Another possible reaction is for the church to distance itself from society and to create a bubble of religious unreality, focusing on the inner Christian life and on a limited number of moral virtues mainly relating to sex and drugs. The church may be fervent in worship, the music and atmosphere may even be vibrant, however the Christian life has been reduced to an emotional relationship with Christ combined with a perception of discipleship reduced to a morally pure behavior while all other aspects of life are left untouched.

I am well aware of the fact, that the situation is different across the Central Conference. However, I urge us to be mindful of the fact that secularization is a powerful force that slowly and unnoticeably affects society as well as the church. It may be tempting to perceive secularization as a development in society happening to us as a result of materialism and the breakdown of morality. May I suggest that we take a hard look at ourselves first. Could Magnus Malm have a point in saying that it may be the church secularizing society, rather than society secularizing the church. Could it be that the dominant source of secularization is not opposition and materialism but rather the faith we don't practice? The prayers we don't pray? The Bible text we don't return to? The worship services we don't participate in? The many times we have neglected to listen to older and more experienced Christians? The opportunities we have missed to openly explain the faith and share, what it means to follow Christ?

According to our culture there is no absolute truth. Our understanding of God is subjective and cannot be described in absolute terms. An intellectually argued defense of the Christian faith becomes irrelevant. What counts is the personal experience and relationship with God. This dichotomy is foreign to our Methodist tradition. Wesley connected argument with trust, truth with purpose, doctrine with relationship, he found no contrast between the mind and the heart. In Wesleyan practice Scripture, tradition, experience and reason are the general sources of reflection on the Christian life and faith. Wesley was known as “a man of one book”, and in his understanding the Bible had a normative and primary authority. – Illustrated by tradition, meaning the combined experience of the Christians over time. Vitalized through experience. And assessed by reason. This Wesleyan Quadrilateral can help us, as

we explain, teach, preach, share and interpret the Christian faith in our time.

The temptation to follow the mainstream culture is as old as the Christian movement. Paul addresses this in several of his letters “Don’t be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.” (CEB Romans 12:2) The cure from conformation is transformation, is the renewing of our mind. Conformation is the wide path. Transformation is the narrow path, which is the path of discipleship.

The ongoing mission of the church is to lead people into this transformation process and as a community of faith to grow together in love and holiness as we embody the gospel in our everyday communal life. In other words, we make disciples of Jesus Christ, and through this we believe the world will be transformed. This implies that we continuously reflect on, articulate and show what it means to follow Christ in our present day and age.

*Question for reflection: What should we preach, teach and live to counter secularization within the church and in our society?*

## A World Wide Connection – a Nordic & Baltic perspective

The United Methodist Church is in a crisis. We are increasing the number of vital congregations, and we are bearing significant fruit in the focus areas, leadership, new places for new people, ministry with the poor and global health. In the last 10 years, the total membership of the denomination has grown by 24%. This doesn’t sound like crisis. And yet we are in a crisis.

The church finds itself in an extremely fragile, highly contested time. We are divided over our understanding of human sexuality, and we struggle to keep the unity of the church.

In a statement Bishop Bruce Ough, the president of the Council of Bishops, says concerning the dissonance between the decision in May of the General Conference to ask the Council of Bishops to form a Commission on a Way Forward and decisions later made by conferences and groups in the church: “ The landscape has changed dramatically. The reported declarations of non-compliance from several annual conferences, the intention to convene a Wesleyan Covenant

Association and the election of the Rev. Karen Oliveto as a bishop of the church have opened deep wounds and fissures within The United Methodist Church and fanned fears of schism.”<sup>4</sup>

While the tension is growing, and leaders in the United States are openly discussing, what the future of the United Methodist Church will look like, if we are not united anymore, let us be mindful of the fact, that even with nearly 60% of the membership of the United Methodist Church in the United States, we are still a World Wide connection, and decisions are still made by the General Conference. Even if some sort of division becomes a reality in the United States, we are still here, and we can make the decision to remain united in Northern Europe and Eurasia.

In 1786 John Wesley preached a sermon “On Schism” where he distinguishes between “separation” and “schism,” with separation referring to a break from a church to form another church, and schism referring to divisions within a church. According to Wesley schism in a scriptural context is the same as heresy, and separation can be just as heretical, if it is causeless.

“Yet, it must needs be, that offenses will come:” Yea, abundance of them will of necessity arise when a breach of this sort is made in any religious community; while they that leave it endeavour to justify themselves, by censuring those they separate from; and these on the other hand retort the charge, and strive to lay the blame on them. But how mightily does all this altercation grieve the Holy Spirit of God! How does it hinder his mild and gentle operations in the souls both of one and the other! Heresies and schisms (in the scriptural sense of those words) will, sooner or later, be the consequence; parties will be formed, on one and the other side, whereby the love of many will wax cold.”<sup>5</sup>

Leaders in the United Methodist Church may be tempted to consider some sort of separation as the better or easier way to release tension, rather than continuing the struggle to find some common ground to remaining united. For the United Methodist Church in Northern Europe and Eurasia, even with the diversity of positions on human sexuality present in some annual conferences and between annual conferences, as well as for the whole denomination, I believe a separation would be devastating not only organizationally but even more spiritually.

Jesus points us to an inseparable unity modeled by His own unity with the Father, a unity that will cause the world to believe. “I’m not praying only for them but also for those who believe in me because of their word. I pray they will be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. I pray that they also will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me. I’ve given them the glory that you gave me so that they can be one just as we are one. I’m in them and you are in me so that they will be made perfectly one. Then the world will know that you sent me and that you have loved them just as you loved me.” (CEB John 17:20-23)

In obedience to these words of Jesus I intent to do my utmost to serve Him for the unity of the church, and I invite you to join me.

*Question for reflection: How can you and your congregation contribute to the unity of the church?*

## Missional movement - a Eurasia perspective

Methodism is a missional movement. We experience this movement when we move in God and with God. We produce our best fruits when we move in God on the mission fields. John Wesley was in sync with God when he decided to risk and preach in the open field, when he served the poor and sick, when he wrote simple brochures about health for those who did not have access to medical care.

In our Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference we have a great historical example of mission work. I’ve been deeply moved by the story of sister Anna Eklund, by her faithfulness, her bravery and sacrificial heart in her ministry to God and neighbor. Deaconess Anna Eklund did not spare her energy, nor her health when she ministered to people who were dying by thousands from hunger and cholera in Saint-Petersburg, Russia in the 1920s. In winter time many people did not have shoes to keep their feet warm. Sister Anna did the impossible in order to organize help for the poor and sick people of Saint Petersburg. She gave away everything that she had in order to save lives of the people and to care for their souls. Tears come to your eyes when you read her letters because in them you feel the great power of God, hope and willingness to give one’s soul for the redemption of many.

When you study the life of an outstanding person, it is very important to see how their character and personality were formed.

Anna Eklund was born in Turku, Finland on May 25, 1867. While still a teenager she felt a call from God for ministry and received education as a deaconess at Bethany Center in Hamburg, Germany. Already at 19 years old, she was commissioned as deaconess at the Annual Mission Conference of Finland and Russia.

Upon arrival to the cemetery in Turku, Turun hautausmaa, which is located in the city just 5 kilometers from the center, you can find Anna Eklund's grave. The words on her grave stone say: she served the sick and suffering people in Russia from 1907 to 1930. This was her mission and she was faithful to the very end. In fact, Anna was in Saint Petersburg even in 1931 when Communist oppression on Christians turned from bad to worse. But Anna wrote from Saint Petersburg to her Bishop: "our position remains firm - to work for Russia; therefore, in spite of everything we will be beside our people".

Unfortunately, soon after that the local authorities threw Anna out of the country blaming her of doing harm in all the good deeds that she had done for the poor and sick, and for the children. I pray that every Methodist in the world could be "blamed" for such ministry to people.

On the back cover of the Journal of Mission Conference of Finland and Saint Petersburg 1908 are the words of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement:

«Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I are not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen, they alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven upon earth.»

I believe that Anna Eklund is one of these preachers of the gospel in Eurasia. Because of her faithfulness, brave and sacrificial heart, people of Saint Petersburg could experience Kingdom of Heaven upon earth.

«And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me». (Isaiah 6: 8)

Methodism is a missionary movement aimed at making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. What can be more honorable and meaningful than to respond to this calling of God and to become a part of this missionary movement? I am grateful to the United Methodists in Northern Europe and Eurasia, who devoted their lives to serving Christ and His Church. We continue our missionary movement to the East and West, North and South.

More than two hundred million Russian-speaking people in Eurasia do not practice religious life. At the same time the majority of them are at different stages of a spiritual quest in their lives. In many European countries the number of people whose childhood was not in the church is growing. Focus on mission and expansion of the missionary movement is one of the main characteristics of the Methodist Church.

To further expand our mission in Eurasia area, we are committed to train and deploy missionary teams and mission volunteers every year at the level of churches, districts and conferences. I challenge every local church to be brave and sacrificial and participate in mission work outside your district or annual conference during the next quadrennium.

We are part of the movement of the Holy Spirit and God challenges us today to go outside of our comfort zone and risk so that we can make disciples of Jesus Christ. The old paradigm of people automatically coming to church just because we exist does not work. The new paradigm of movement calls us to follow the footsteps of Jesus and his apostles who were always on the move, making disciples by inviting people into personal relationship with Jesus and experience practical holiness. God actively reveals God-self to us through emigrants, refugees, people of different races, cultures and languages, people with different religious backgrounds and system of values. I thank God for our churches who respond to God's challenge and move forward in its mission by making disciples in this new reality of our world.

Peace making and reconciliation are important part of our mission today. As we experience shock and insecurity caused by multiple terrorist attacks in several European countries, and war is still a reality in Ukraine, we as Methodists are called to be proactive and become messengers of hope. This mission work is theological and practical. We need to uncover our theology of peace making and reconciliation. Jesus is our Peace and because of Him we are reconciled with God and with each other. "Because all the fullness of God was pleased to live in him, and he reconciled all things to himself through him—whether things on earth or in the heavens. He brought peace through the blood of his cross." (Collosians 1:19-20) How can we, as Methodist movement in Northern Europe and Eurasia today, build peace between local Europeans and many immigrants and refugees? How can we build peace and reconciliation between Russians and Ukrainians? Can we lead our people in this ministry and mission?

The Bible gives us many examples of reconciliation and peace making between Jews, Christians, Samaritans, Gentiles, slaves and free, men and women. What can we learn from them? One thing is for sure - it is that God always has a triumph in God's mission. Sometimes because of us and sometimes in spite of us, God works in our world - through each of us individually and through our churches (in our strength and in our weakness) - God brings redemption and reconciliation which we all need today as never before. Let us encourage one another to move forward with faith and hope, become peace makers, help people to reconcile with God and with each other.

## Start and renew – a Nordic & Baltic perspective

We were waiting in a pub in Oxford. “We” were 3 Norwegian district superintendents and I in England to look at new approaches to be church, or as they say “Fresh Expressions of Church”. After a hectic weekend with several visits to different ministries and churches, we had taken the train to Oxford for a conversation with one of the thinkers behind “Fresh Expressions”.

I admit; I was surprised when a man with thin white hair entered the pub, came up to me and introduced himself: “Hello, I am Michael Moynagh, welcome to Oxford.” I had expected a young dynamic man, but soon we were at a table having tea and scones with a retiree telling us, why it is so urgently necessary for today's church to think out of the box in new missional ways. After less than 5 minutes in Rev. Dr. Michael Moynagh's company, I had been thoroughly reminded that new thinking, passion and whole hearted commitment to the kingdom of God has very little to do with age.

There are many similarities between the difficult situation of the church in Britain and the Church in Northern Europe, however, in Britain the Church of England along with the Methodist Church has decided to do something about it. “Fresh Expressions” is changing the whole understanding of what it means to be church in Britain, Michael Moynagh told us

## From religion-indifferent to religion-hostile

In spite of a relatively large membership in the majority churches in Northern Europe, the church touches a declining segment – the same

is true for the free churches. Alternative worship services, innovative children's ministries and edgy music programs may affect this, but it will not turn the development around. We live in a post-Christendom age, where very few look to the church for answers, and the ignorance of even the most basic Christian beliefs is almost total.

Today any kind of religious worship is under pressure, much due to the migration of people groups with a very distinct religious identity, which scares the indigenous population whose religious perception and Christian awareness is almost non-existent. Authorities, institutions and the media don't know what to do with people, who allow their lifestyle and decision-making to be directed by their religious values and beliefs. The only response is control, rules and restrictions in the freedom of religion - high schools ban religious gatherings of students, the use of religious symbols is restricted in public space, foreign preachers have to go through an extensive and complicated approval-process, to mention just a few examples. While the majority churches still enjoy a certain status, even their privileges are being reduced. The secular Northern European culture appears to be moving from religion-indifferent to religion-hostile with no real signs of improvement in the future.

### **A fresh look**

There are more than sufficient reasons for the church to whine, however, this is not the time for us to loose heart, but to think in new innovative ways. The United Methodist Church has a long history of searching for signs of God's mission at work in the world, and for developing or borrowing new innovative approaches to take part in His mission. - Just think of field preaching, small groups, Sunday schools, music ministries from hymns to revival songs to contemporary gospel music, the Alpha course, Natural Church Development, serenity worship, School of Congregational Development, the Timothy leadership program and much more.

Innovation is an ongoing calling from a God who continues to share his salvation, through his church to new generations. If we stop thinking in new ways about being church, we miss the opportunity for renewal, development and growth in all thinkable areas of the church now and in the long-term perspective. We simply freeze up in the past and present ways of doing ministry, and convulsively hold on to ways, that are not



effective anymore. And it will not help us to put guilt on each other for not trying hard enough or for not being faithful enough.

We don't need a new method or a new universal solution to save the church. What we need is a renewed understanding and appreciation of what Christ is already doing sharing his love and bringing about salvation through his church to the people of this world. This is where Fresh Expressions come into the picture.

## **Fresh Expressions of Church**

What are they doing with Fresh Expressions of church? The starting point is people. People with a sense of urge or even a calling to step outside of the comfort zone of the church. In the neighborhood they live in or move into they begin to listen and to learn. Much like Paul in the square of Athens they talk with people, they try to figure out what occupies the residents. They search for ways and approaches to love and serve the community and people living there – perhaps an area needs a clean-up, there may be a need for a cultural meeting place, youth may need help and protection on the streets at night, perhaps old and frail people need practical assistance, children and youth may need a drop-in centre, perhaps, perhaps, perhaps.... And slowly they build a network of people, slowly they build community. And slowly they begin to introduce Jesus and share his story. Perhaps they start an Alpha course or something similar. And even slower a faith community begins to take shape. It looks significantly different from church, as we know it. They are not first and foremost focused on having weekly worship services, as we recognize it from the established church. The relation with Jesus, the caring and tangible fellowship with others, ministry in the community and first and last people is at the heart of this Fresh Expression of church. This is church with head, heart and hands. And then they begin all over again.

To summarize, Fresh Expressions are forms of church that listen to people and enter their culture, serve outside the reach of the existing church, make discipleship a priority and intentionally form church.

Experience has shown that the fresh expressions of church often are developed in cooperation with an existing church. Some pastors and congregations are courageous and open enough to set members free to step outside the walls of the church and to experiment with new ways of being church. Some pastors and congregations are even willing to

support new initiatives with prayer, encouragement and money. It may be an abandoned church, that's made available. It may be a cooperation between two or more denominations in a city.

I know, we have clergy and local churches with this kind of courage, and that God is calling people in our churches to step out of their comfort zones

### **What's wrong with the existing church?**

Nothing. The existing church should not be taken out of the equation. The existing church, classic or contemporary, served by dedicated and able clergy and good and committed laity, who with a vibrant faith is involved in the community and in the people living there, will have a significant role to play in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of Northern Europe and of the world. Churches like that, and we have several, are making a difference in people's lives and in their communities week after week. They come in all sizes. They are in small towns and in large cities. Some have been vital for years, others have been revitalized in recent years. They are served by young, middle aged and old pastors, male and female.

I visited one of these churches on a Monday evening to meet with the pastor. There was a choir practice going on in the sanctuary, and it turned out, they were welcoming new people to become part of the choir. – I guess they thought, I was one of them, though I was probably a bit old. On my way into the church I met 3 different persons, who all were saying things like – “Great that you are here, this is a wonderful church”, “Hello, good to see you, I really enjoy to be part of the fellowship in this church”. “There is so much going on here. It means so much to me to be part of this church.” When I came inside, I saw the pastor greeting people at the door, saying hello, small talking, smiling, laughing. People put on a name tag, they were talking to each other. I don't know, if an atmosphere can be smiling, but that's how I would characterize the atmosphere in that church “smiling”, a warm and welcoming atmosphere, shaped by people who love their faith community.

Reflecting on the healthy and vital churches I have visited in the episcopal area in the past quadrennium, I want to point to some characteristics I have noticed they have in common:

- a. They engage in need oriented mission. They focus on people, particularly on those who don't know Jesus . They continuously look for new diaconal ways to reach out into the community, and they engage in mission outside of the country. Their mission focus is reflected in their budget.
- b. They have a warm, welcoming and caring atmosphere. They love people, they see people and they care, and this is modelled by the pastor and the leadership.
- c. They emphasize discipleship in some kind of small group setting. They use a variety of different approaches helping people to grow together in discipleship, Alpha courses, prayer ministries, prayer groups, bible groups, mentoring programs, teaching opportunities and more.
- d. They value and emphasize children and youth, which is reflected in their worship services, in their ministry and in their budget.
- e. They have passionate worship. The style of worship may be diverse but the passion is the same. The resources available vary but there is always an involvement of several people in the worship service.
- f. They unashamedly teach financial stewardship, and they connect it with discipleship.

These are in no way groundbreaking observations, but merely what characterizes good and solid Methodist ministry in the local church. Vital ministry like this is the backbone of our denomination.

*Question for reflection: What characterizes your local church?*

### **It will take more**

In spite of all the qualities of healthy existing churches, I am convinced that the existing church is not enough. The majority churches in Northern Europe have lost their missional strength decades ago and are only at the verge of realizing and beginning to deal with it, while they still struggle with large groups of clergy, theologians and other church people who are quite satisfied with the current situation. We may be reluctant to realize it, but we are affected by the perceptions in the majority church.

Let me be very clear, we cannot be happy with the current state of the Christian church in our countries, and if we believe, it will do with a few adjustments and some renewal of the existing church, I believe we are fooling ourselves. As Hans Växby and I said four years ago, “we are in need of renovation, not redecoration”, which implies new ways of thinking.

We will need more churches, and we will need all kinds of churches to reach all kinds of people. In the past 6-7 years we have started several new churches and faith communities. While they all have their unique story, they began with a vision and a call from God to one or several persons, and almost all of them were started from another church. Theologian Eddie Gibbs says: “Old churches must not simply stand as monuments to the past but as spiritual grandparents that have invested in the future by passing on their life to others and releasing their offspring to form new congregations. Church planting needs to be given priority by old-line denominations.”<sup>6</sup> I agree with Gibbs’ perception; I am also mindful of the fact, that starting a new church is a challenging and demanding process, and we certainly have made some mistakes along the way. Nevertheless, we have also seen significant growth in new faith communities, and we have by the grace of God experienced that it is possible even for the United Methodist Church in Northern Europe to start new churches when we dare to experiment and leave our comfort zone.

An old professor in Oxford reminded me of this when he with great fervor told us, “God is doing a new thing.” I believe we are experiencing some of it.

*Question for reflection: How does your local church engage in mission? What possibilities do you see to start a new faith community from your local church?*

## Migration – a Nordic & Baltic perspective

“Europe is experiencing a refugee crises” is a statement we have heard frequently in the past year, as by the end of 2015 the EU received a total of over 1.2 million first-time asylum claims. This rhetoric however seems to ignore the fact, that while receiving 1.2 million asylum seekers certainly is a challenge, the ones experiencing crisis are the refugees.

According to the United Nations' refugee agency (UNHCR)<sup>7</sup> there are 65.3 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, out of those there are 21.3 refugees and 10 million stateless people. Out of the refugees world wide 54% come from Syria (4.9 mill), Afghanistan (2.7 mill) and Somalia (1.1 mill). The vast majority of refugees continue to be hosted by countries in the Middle East such as Turkey (2.5 mill), Pakistan (1.6 mill), Lebanon (1.1 mill).

Every single day nearly 34,000 people are forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution. Over half of them are under the age of 18, in other words they are children and teenagers.

Each of them has a name. Each of them is someone's son or daughter or father or mother. Each of them has a story. They are never ever just a crowd, a wave, a flood or a problem – each of them is loved and known by the God who made himself known in Jesus Christ, who said: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father." (NRSV Matt.10:29)

Massive movements of people have taken place throughout the history of the planet due to factors like climate change, famine, war, persecution and even the hope of a better and more prosperous future.

Famine made Jacob take his family, the Israelites, to Egypt, and several years later oppression and persecution made the people leave. This shaped the understanding "You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (NRSV Deut.10:19) Or as the Common English Bible puts it: "That means you must also love immigrants because you were immigrants in Egypt."

War took God's people away in exile in Babylon. Persecution made Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt with their little son Jesus. Multiple times in the early and later history of the church, persecution made Christians flee to other countries and regions which in turn often led to mission and expansion of the church. In the hope and search of better opportunities for their future people from Northern Europe and Eurasia migrated to America in great numbers in the 19th and early 20th century. Several of these migrants later brought Methodism back to their home countries.

We tend to neglect and forget our own history and spiritual heritage, and allow public opinion to inform and shape our perceptions. At a time when xenophobia, islamophobia and plain racism are surfacing on social media and printed media, and even in public debates on radio

and television among politicians and other influencers in our societies, Methodists have a special calling to remind ourselves and our societies of the biblical message of hospitality, kindness and love. Furthermore, we have an obligation to speak truth to power, when governments to protect our wealth cut foreign development aid or re-direct it to cover domestic expenses related to receiving refugees. Likewise there appears to be growing need for us to openly point out and oppose prejudice and racism that dehumanizes our fellow human beings.

### **New opportunities**

A couple of weeks ago I received the following text message:” Dear bishop. I just have to share this. Good things are happening. This evening we had almost 60 new international students in our church café. In the last 3 worship services just about one third of them have been present. They listen very attentively. I prayed with one of them last Sunday, she wanted an encounter with Jesus. Most of them are Buddhist or without any religion. We have never had this many new contacts at one time, God really has sent us a “wave”. I hope this encourages you! Tomorrow evening I will go to another city, there we will have a meeting with interpretation to both Farsi and Arabic. God is at work. Be blessed!”

The face of ministry is changing. While 10 years ago our churches were ethnically homogenous, today they are becoming increasingly multicultural and multiethnic. More and more churches are offering worship experiences in multiple languages or they offer translation. This change comes significantly slower in the Baltic countries, however even in Tallinn, Estonia we are working on starting an international church.

We are in touch with a growing number of migrants with a Muslim background, and several of them have been baptized and converted to Christianity. A guide is being developed to assist clergy and local churches in respectful ministry with Muslims who are considering to convert to Christianity.

Several of our churches in the Nordic countries have actively reached out to refugees and migrants by simple acts of hospitality and goodness, opening their churches, offering language and culture courses, participating in community programs with refugees and migrants, offering friendship and creating meeting points. Churches have started

ministries in asylum centers, others make international pot-lucks and cultural gatherings. They also say that once the initial excitement has passed, it can be hard work for a church to remain committed to this kind of demanding ministry, and yet building relationships and being in ministry with brothers and sisters in need is what Christ has called us to.

*Question for reflection: In which ways is migration affecting your community, and how does your local church welcome and engage in ministry with refugees?*

## Connection in the central conference – a Eurasia perspective

God blesses us with the wonderful gift of a connectional church. Sisters and brothers from our countries can experience and share love, learning, and richness of life. Along with effective communication, connectional UMC helps us celebrate our gifts and graces with a new level of richness and abundance.

In the Episcopal greetings of the Book of Discipline we read about connectionalism and interdependence:

“This book of covenant... affirms the conciliar principle and connectionalism as distinctive marks of United Methodist ecclesiology, makes clear the global character of the Church’s mission, and declares interdependence with other Christian bodies both in spirit and cooperation.”

Furthermore, paragraph 125 emphasizes our connectional covenant that helps us build mutual support and accountability which are so vital to our interactive relationships as disciples of Jesus Christ in God’s mission:

*¶ 125. United Methodists throughout the world are bound together in a connectional covenant in which we support and hold each other accountable for faithful discipleship and mission. Integrally holding connectional unity and local freedom, we seek to proclaim and embody the gospel in ways responsible to our specific cultural and social context while maintaining “a vital web of interactive relationships” (¶ 132)... Our worldwide connectional relationship is one of the ways we carry out our missional calling beyond national and regional boundaries. For our connectionalism to become a living practice, we need to carry the worldwide nature of The*

*United Methodist Church deep into the life and mission of our local congregations. Only when we commit ourselves to interdependent worldwide partnerships in prayer, mission, and worship can connectionalism as the Wesleyan ecclesial vision be fully embodied. Guided by the Holy Spirit, United Methodist churches throughout the world are called afresh into a covenant of mutual commitment based on shared mission, equity, and hospitality.*

We live in a time of great opportunities! It was a great blessing for Eurasian pastors and leaders to experience the School of Congregational Development in Tallin, Estonia in September 2015 along with our sisters and brothers from the Nordic and Baltic countries. We were blessed to have Bishop Christian Alsted in our Moscow Seminary for a course on Christian missions. His inspirational teaching and challenge to our students helps us to be the church in mission. I am very grateful to our seminary in Tallinn for inviting me to teach students from Baltic countries about church leadership. Furthermore, we thank God for the fruitful relationships between sisters and brothers from Finland and Northwest Russia Annual Conference. We also thank our sisters and brothers from the Baltic countries for their missionary work in Russia and their visits to us. And we are especially grateful to Ullas Tankler from GBGM who continues to build our good connectional ties and make us feel united in our mission. These are just a few examples of celebrating connectional UMC.

Building on positive experience of this quadrennium, let me suggest the following steps that can help our connection become stronger in the next four years:

1. Send mission teams to help start new churches and encourage existing congregations
2. Be more intentional in prayer for each other across the Central Conference
3. Invite pastors, professors and lay leaders across annual conferences and Episcopal areas to share their experience
4. Improve communication and exchange of information about plans to visit each other's conferences and Episcopal areas
5. Help young people build stronger relationships by visiting camps and retreats outside their own annual conference and Episcopal area



6. Use social media to share information about fruitful ministries, disciple making and events

7.... please, suggest more ideas.

*Question for reflection: What can we do as United Methodists in Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference can do to build on our connectional nature of the church? How can we help each other to be more committed in our mission?*

## Conclusion

As we live, move and exist in God, how are we to grow as mission movement in our countries? How do we continue on Apostle Paul's courage, creativity and purpose-driven gospel sharing when we encounter secularism and hostility in our own contexts? We pray that as United Methodists in Northern Europe and Eurasia we will continue to grow in hope, creativity and courage.

People need hope. In today's world the Christian message of God's forgiving love and grace is relevant as never before. People are tired of wars, displacement and insecurity. Even in so called developed countries people struggle to find meaning in life and a reason to continue with their lives. Hope is what we as United Methodists bring to people as we feed the migrants, encourage the orphans, feed the poor, educate children and youth. Hope is what we multiply when we worship Jesus Christ every Sunday in our churches and homes. Hope is what transforms a sinner into a joyful servant of God. Let us continue to grow in hope and to share this hope with our neighbors!

Creativity is God's gift. We are born with it. Look at the children and how they can imagine new things with their toys. God has created us with amazing potential for creativity. With our creativity we can try new things, practice fresh expressions, strengthen our connection in ways that have never been possible before. Let us continue to encourage one another in our creative ways and affirm our God's given gifts in each other. It is amazing what God can do through a church that is creative!

Courage is what characterized the apostles of Jesus Christ. Courage was characteristic of the early Methodists who traveled on horses to the unknown territories. The world needs United Methodists people who are crazy enough to challenge the status quo and go into risky

mission. Let us continue the mission movement with hope, creativity and courage as we live, move and exist in God. May God bless us all! Amen.

*Prayerfully submitted*

*Eduard Khegay*

*Bishop of the Eurasia Area*

*Bishop Christian Alsted*

*Bishop of the Nordic & Baltic Area*

## Notes

1. Charles Van Engen, *Missions on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1997).
2. Magnus Malm, *Som om Gud inte finns*, 2015, 109
3. Magnus Malm, *Som om Gud inte finns*, 2015, 110
4. Statement from the Council of Bishops Executive Committee, bishop Bruce Ough, 25. July 2016
5. John Wesley, *Sermon 75 On Schism*, 15 <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-75-on-schism/>
6. Eddie Gibbs, *Church Next*, 2000, 73
7. <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>

# Laity Address

## A Eurasia Perspective

“For in Him we live and move and have our being”

I was born in Christian family in small village Kamyantsya, that is few minutes from Hungarian and Slovakian border. Wonderful village with a small creek running aside of the road, beautiful trees, mountains that surrounds the village from all around, people that know each other and greet you with the words “ Glory to Jesus” - a perfect place on Earth before you go to Heaven.

When I was a kid my parents always took me to church on Sunday morning and sometimes I was upset with this as all of my friends could sleep longer on Sunday when my sister and I had to wake up early to get ready for the church. I didn't realize that church will play such a significant role in my life and obedience to my parents will bear wonderful fruits.

My grandfather was faithful to God during Soviet Union time and Methodist church in Kamyanytsa continued to exist during persecution. Durability of Pastor Ivan Vuksta and my grandfather along with other church members of his age strengthened my faith. Still today we have older people in our church that had gone through many persecutions and stayed close to God. When you look into their faces you see the Love of God and you really can feel the warmth of their souls.

When I grow up I always had a desire to do more for God, to be used more for His Kingdom. Thus I became Sunday school teacher at the age of 13 and in a few years I was engaged in youth ministry. Till this time I serve to young generation of our church, and that also keeps me younger

“For in Him we live and move and have our being”. We all probably spent a lot of time contemplating on this verse, as it is a theme of our Central Conference. What does this verse mean to you and me personally, do we really understand what does it say about? When I was a child I had many dreams and one of them was to speak English, I mean not to learn English but to speak, because I did not really want to spent time studying language, I thought that God will give me a gift

of English and one day I will wake up in the morning speaking English fluently, but God had a different plan. Nevertheless, at the beginning of practicing my English with native speakers there were words that I did not understand and I was too shy to confess that I don't get them. Most of the time I got the point of what people were talking about, but also there were times when people asked me something and were expecting to get a reply but instead of that I just nodded my head confirming that I understood them and kept smiling with no reaction to their question or request. Now for sure I am ashamed for those cases. Recently we had youth summer camp for the young people from Ukraine and the theme of the camp was parable about Sower and different types of the soil. One of the types was soil at the path, which means we hear the word of God but as we do not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart.

Thus what it means for us to live in Him and move in Him and have our being?

I will not be able to answer this question for you, but I will share my feelings about it. To live in someone probably means to have the same flesh, blood, heart. We know that Jesus was the one without sin, if we are the same body with Him our main goal is to be without sin. Jesus said that He is the vine, and we are the branches and if we remain in Him we will bear much fruit, apart from Him we can do nothing. To be the part of the vine means to have the same juice running in our branches.

We, Methodists, help millions, and at the General Conference I have received a T-shirt with print on it: "United we help millions. What's next?" I would say: how about to help ourselves? Often time we focus so much on bearing fruits by helping others, doing ministries, fighting for the rights of people and these things are very much needed and important, BUT what about our living in God? Do we still have His blood running in our veins? God says to us in Psalm 46:10 "Be still, and know that I am God". As I serve in church for many years, I used to do a lot of ministries, and I have a plan for the year ahead, what kind of camps we are going to have, conferences, meetings, celebrations, there are so many events, so that the whole year turns to be very busy. When time comes to fulfil all these plans I am running with the whole head into it, and I can honestly confess that there is no free time to "be still" and to link to my very being, my God. I am too much busy doing ministry for God that I have no time for God Himself. He says that

time spent with Him has crucial importance for my life. Nowadays we strive a lot for unity of our church, but have we ever thought that our Global unity depends on our personal unity with God? Without it we will struggle trying to be really united church. But if we all have true God inside of us He will unite our hearts.

Every day when we wake up, one of the very first things we do - we dress up. God wants us to “Put Him on” and “wear Him” throughout the days and it means to have His thoughts and mind, to look like Him, so that when other people look at us they could see the image of God in us.

The United Methodist Church along with other churches is called to be a bride of Jesus.

The imagery and symbolism of marriage is applied to Christ and the body of believers known as the church. The church is comprised of those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and have received eternal life. Christ, the Bridegroom, has sacrificially and lovingly chosen the church to be His bride. Just as there was a betrothal period in biblical times during which the bride and groom were separated until the wedding, so is the bride of Christ separated from her Bridegroom during the church age. Her responsibility during the betrothal period is to be faithful to Him. Church is also compared with the hospital, where all who are seek and weary, tired and lost may come and find a shelter. When we visit the hospital, we pursue the only goal – to recover, not just to visit it and remain the same. Those lost, seek, weary and tired that come to the church need also to be transformed into a bride of Christ. At the second coming of Christ, the church will be united with the Bridegroom and the official “wedding ceremony” will take place and, with it, the eternal union of Christ and His bride will be actualized.

Meanwhile we are placed on Earth to be the light of Jesus Christ and do good deeds so that others seeing them may glorify our Father who is in heaven. God gives us many opportunities for ministry in our areas. When we live out the word of God others may read it through our lives. Someone said:” Preach the gospel at all times and use words if necessary”.

Central Asia District of UMC is the youngest district in Eurasia. It consists of 14 congregations in two countries Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. From the beginning creation and development of strong

ministry with young people was our priority. For this purpose, we started to conduct annual evangelism camp which gathered together up to 100 people each year – 50% of them are believers and the other half are unbelievers who didn't attend church before and have never heard about Jesus Christ. We've had wonderful fruits of this camp each time – people who committed their lives to our Lord. Now almost all our churches have youth ministry and several years ago we started doing annual Youth Forum for young leaders of our churches to inspire and equip them for ministry. Besides official district programs our youth regularly makes visits to each other, has sport programs, helps in work with children, participates in social ministry and does mission together during the year.

We have good and fast growing ministry with international students in Bishkek, capital of Kyrgyzstan, where people with different background come to faith in Jesus. But our main joy is many young local pastors and elders who serve in different locations and many young students at Centre of Church Leadership who decided fully commit their lives to ministry. Young people are very active in evangelism.

The hard part of our ministry in Central Asia District is the fact that we have very strict laws on religious affairs and very big distance between the churches.

The church has many ministries, holding its carriage in the needs of society and church purposes. “Youth to Jesus”, organization of young people in Lviv, Ukraine, has taken a unique position in the Body of Christ, where in accessible form and outside the church walls Gospel is preached to those who do not dare to cross the threshold of the church but is open for contact in an informal atmosphere. A kind of organization became a buffer zone between the world and the church also allows people who just started their walk with Jesus to decide a part of which church they want to be. One of the strong sides of “Youth to Jesus” is the fact that we allow people to participate in all ministries we have and then they may decide with their vocation. It can be involving in such activities as English club, small group, work with orphanages, worship, preaching, or come up with some new creative ministries.

At this stage of the service in Lviv, Ukraine we faced with such problems as the traditional desire of all Christians to stay with what they have achieved. To move from the motion into a steel structure, where you can comfortably watch stability.

Imagine a train hurtling at full speed. Suddenly it is disconnected from the mains. What happens to it from the perspective of someone sitting in the train? At first, nothing. The train continues to move by the inertia, but slower and slower. However, the speed reduction is very little due to the great mass of the train; it stretches in time, which is almost not perceived by the consciousness. Yet at some point, a passenger suddenly realizes that the rhythm of the wheels changed, it became much more slowly; and this train will soon stop at all. The church is like this big massive train, and it may happen to us that we took a very good start and move with a high speed, we all are people sitting in the cars of the train. But what if our train is moving only by inertia? What if we are no longer connected to the mains? It is our responsibility to check this out, and fix it if it is needed.

Dear believers in Jesus Christ, dear bride of Christ, we wait with great anticipation for the day when we will be united with our Bridegroom. Until then, we remain faithful to Him. We all have to live in Him and move and have our being in Him and with all the redeemed of the Lord proclaim: "Come, Lord Jesus!"

*Vaselyna Babych*

## A Nordic & Baltic Perspective

*Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike?*

*May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion?*

*Without all doubt, we may.*

John Wesley, in his sermon "The Catholic spirit"

I

I have many fond memories from growing up in the southern part of Norway, in a town called Flekkefjord. I remember playing soccer with my friends in the park right by our house, running around with the other kids who grew up in the same street as I did. I remember the smell of summer rain when we stood down at the docks fishing. I recall the sound of all the cars passing by, as we were climbing the enormous tree across the street from the church. I remember how we knew everyone we met when we were taking a walk downtown. It was a good life growing up in this little town.

Luckily, I remember going to church, too. Or “Metodisten”, as it was often referred to. One of the things I remember the best from my childhood in “Metodisten” is attending Sunday School. The Sunday School teachers taught us about Jesus, the prophets of the Old Testament, the Bible and much more. They taught us that the Gospel was about loving and caring – even for those who did not deserve our love and caring. They taught us that the Good News was about unconditional love from Jesus Christ to all humankind. In summary, it is fair to say they taught us the same things that Sunday Schools all across the United Methodist Church in Norway did.

When I became a teenager, I was proud of being a part of church with a real care for the world and the people who live in it. I learned that there were many cool examples of how John Wesley and the people called Methodists had worked to make the world a better place.

As a student in Kristiansand, I had the pleasure of attending a UMC congregation whose pastor was really keen on reaching out to new people with the message of God’s unconditional love. I do not think I will ever reach his level of commitment, but he inspired me to talk more about God’s love to people I met in my life. Kristiansand was also the place where I first experienced and realized that the people called Methodists were not of one mind in all questions. However, this was not a negative thing for our work or our fellowship. We had good dialogues about our different opinions on many different topics: human sexuality, our responsibility for our planet, how to understand different passages in the Bible and much more. No matter what topic we talked about, I never experienced that anyone thought less of me when I was expressing my opinions and beliefs. One of the elderly in that congregation even said that our disagreement on certain issues was a good thing, since it forced him to really think things through and to study the Scripture.

## II

There are many social justice issues throughout history where the people called Methodists have been in the forefront, fighting the good cause. The fight for the abolition of slavery is one example; the fight for women’s liberation is another. This year we are fortunate enough to be able to celebrate the 60th anniversary for the ordination of female clergy in The United Methodist Church. The long and painful struggle fought by the faithful, visionary and brave Methodist women, and



some men, paid off at the General Conference in Minneapolis in 1956. These brave women sacrificed a lot, just to make sure that you and I could inherit a stronger and more inclusive church. A church where equality is fundamental.

However, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that there is equality between the genders as soon as the organizational and disciplinary obstacles are removed. Even though one may say that the battle was won 60 years ago, we still see that there is a long way ahead – even in our Central Conference. I'm truly thankful for belonging to a church that has been in the forefront in the fight for gender equality. But we should be wary of simply praising ourselves for our previous victories, as there is still much work to be done when it comes to gender equality. For example, we have yet to see a female bishop in our Central Conference. Neither has there been a long line of female district super intendants in any of the Annual Conferences in this Central Conference, even though we have seen a few in both Latvia and Russia. For my own Annual Conference, I must sadly admit that we have only had one female district superintendent, and that was early in the nineties. Moreover, for our laity in all the different annual conferences: the average female worker earns less than a male worker in a similar job. One can find many saddening examples of inequality both within our church and in our society. The struggle was not just a one-time fight, won once and for all in Minneapolis. It is our job – yours and mine, clergy and lay – to honor the brave Methodist women who fought for us, to continue their fight, both within the UMC and in the societies where we live our daily lives.

Returning to the topic of ordination of women within the UMC, there is one aspect in particular that fascinates, and sometimes frightens me: It is 60 years since we changed the Book of Discipline, but still we are not of one mind in this question. The disrespect some of our female colleagues experience from some laity and clergy members of The United Methodist Church is unworthy, especially since The United Methodist Church so clearly is a Church where gender is irrelevant when it comes to a person's ability to live out their calling from God.

### III

As Christians, we sometimes have a tendency to overcomplicate questions that should be held simple. In our transition from being a

Methodist Movement to becoming a Methodist Church, we have complicated many things – both organizational and theological.

In all Sunday schools I have attended – both as a child, as an uncle and as a dad – they have kept their teachings simple. Some might say too simple, but I am not sure that is entirely true. Their teaching is not false: It is just easy to understand and to get a grasp of. The main mission of the modern Sunday schools is to teach the essence of Christianity: God’s unconditional love for all human beings.

I have heard many pastors and many wise lay preachers preach in such a manner that you have difficulties with really understanding their message. The older I get, the more I grow fond of what is written in Luke 18:17: “Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it”. In a society so fixated on growing up that we almost go from toddlers to teenagers in one giant leap, maybe we should try to hold on to childhood and all that comes with it. If not all, then at least some aspects of it.

In our different Annual Conferences, we all sing different songs that in essence is quite like the English song “Jesus loves me!”. The way I see it, these types of songs sum up what we want to teach our young ones: The Bible tells us that Jesus loves us. End of story. No questions asked.

*Jesus loves me! This I know,  
For the Bible tells me so;  
Little ones to Him belong,  
They are weak but He is strong.  
Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me!  
The Bible tells me so.*

#### IV

By now, I think many of you will say that I am keeping it too simple and you might be wondering how we should deal with the difficult questions. You might even wonder how I can make up my mind in difficult questions, when all I seem to care about here is a simple message of God’s love for all. But I say, let us keep it simple.

Let us not overcomplicate things.

Let us stay true to the essence.

Let us not be fooled to focus only on minor details.

Even John Wesley struggled with people being of different minds within the same church. In his sermon “The Catholic Spirit”, Wesley talks about people being of different minds, but still of one heart. And even though he stresses the point of unity, he also says: “Hold you fast that which you believe is most acceptable to God, and I will do the same.”. For some, it might seem as a contradiction – especially when we start talking about social justice and our fight for equal rights.

For me, social justice and the fight for equal rights is an essential part of being a Methodist, whether it be for female leaders in our church, for LGBTQ people or against racism. For others, it is not. For United Methodists, there are many topics on which we do not totally agree on all details. Examples include the status of LGBTQ people within the United Methodist Church and society as a whole, baptism or our role as caretakers for a green but wounded world. Nonetheless, we stay united. We are a global church covering hundreds of different cultures. Our differences are natural and nothing to be afraid of. We are of the same heart and acknowledge that our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world is easier done when we stay united and work united as one body for Christ. A good example of our united strength is the spectacular results of the campaign “Imagine no Malaria”.

To sum this up; In his sermon “The Catholic Spirit”, John Wesley says that we all should stay true to what we believe is correct, even if others of same heart do not share your point of view. And this is important! It is in our Methodist core, our theological DNA, to use the Methodist Quadrilateral to interpret Methodism and not just accept a set of rules and teachings. The Methodist Quadrilateral is a method of theological reflection that embraces, but also encourages, people of same heart to have different opinions. It is utopian, and somewhat naïve, to think that I will get the same answer as you in all questions when we use Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience to find out what religion and Methodism is to oneself.

V

The reason why we are here in Fredrikstad today is that we are of one heart.

The reason why we all go to the same churches each Sunday (and the other days of the week too) is that we are of one heart.

The reason why we stick together as a United Methodist Church, a church who wants to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, is that we are of one heart.

We are not, and will never be, of one mind. Nevertheless, we have the choice to stay together. We can choose to stay together because we are of one heart and because our mission is greater than our differences.

In closing, I would like once more to congratulate the United Methodist Church and the women of the United Methodist Church with the 60th Anniversary of the ordination of Women. This is a fundamental celebration, and we will use this as motivation:

As long as it is needed, we will continue our fight for equal rights.

And even though the road ahead of us may be bumpy and sometimes unpleasant, we must remember our mission: To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Therefore, we will continue together.

As long as it is needed, we will continue to fight for what we believe is right.

As long as it is needed, we will stay a United Methodist Church.

*Audun Westad*

# Report of the Central Conference Council

In God we live, move and exist. The God of love and transformation moves through our societies with some wonderful changes and tough challenges. We live in a time when the need for peace, security and clarity of mission and vision is so great that we need each other as never before. Our United Methodist brothers and sisters have experienced war in Ukraine since 2014. The Nordic countries as most of Western Europe is at the historic time of challenge and opportunity for how we can love our neighbors when they come to our country in large numbers. Russia is moving back to the Soviet-like laws that restrict the religious freedom. Our own United Methodist global body is experiencing many challenges around the issue of human sexuality as we are trying to figure out how we can stay united and at the same time move forward. We need God in whom we live, move and exist so that in the midst of these challenges we can continue to be filled with hope and fulfil our mission and vision.

## **Conflict**

Our central conference has experienced dramatic changes since we last met due to the acts of war in eastern Ukraine. In spite of suffering and much uncertainty caused by violence and war the United Methodist Church in Ukraine continues its ministry. We have two churches in the Eastern Ukraine, in Lugansk and Krasnoarmeisk near Donetsk. The bombing of Lugansk was felt by many of our United Methodist people. One bomb fell in the garden of the neighbouring house next to our church building and damaged both the neighbour's house and the church.

The congregation in Lugansk which consists of 65 people became refugees and left the city. Only three elderly member of Lugansk UMC decided to stay in the city. A few members have now returned to Lugansk even though it is still dangerous and uncertain to live there. Ten members of Lugansk UMC moved to the Chelyabinsk region where they are given shelter, food and physical and spiritual support by our church in Satka. Our members of UMC in Sochi and Voronezh, Kiev and Uzhgorod minister to refugees from Eastern Ukraine who come to the Sochi and Voronezh region in the Southern Russia as well as moving to Kiev and Uzhgorod, Western Ukraine. During the crisis, the bishops sent out information about the development, and the annual

conferences in the Nordic and Baltic area were encouraged to pray and to offer financial support.

### **A World Wide Connection**

In a serious crisis like this, we experience what it means to be a worldwide connection. UMCOR has provided significant help to Ukrainian refugees in Southern Russia and to members of Lugansk UMC who became refugees (documented and undocumented) within Ukraine and Russia.

The Germany Central Conference and the South and Central Europe Central Conference has sent financial support, and all the annual conferences in the Nordic and Baltic area have contributed with a total of approximately 15.000 EURO either through gifts or local church offerings. We thank God for the generosity of our sisters and brothers throughout the connection.

### **Churches moved to Another Provisional Annual Conference**

The Ukraine Annual Conference voted in April 2015 to transfer two churches in Crimea (Sevastopol and Kerch) to South Russia Annual Conference. Rev. Irina Mitina from South Russia has become a district superintendent for churches in Sevastopol and Kerch. The name of Northern Caucasus district was changed to the South District which now includes Crimea. Delegates from Kerch UMC were able to participate at the South Russia Annual Conference and share their burden and hope. The need for prayer support and wisdom from God remains as the church works on strengthening the connection throughout the Eurasia area.

### **Celebrations in Ukraine**

As of today, the situation in Ukraine is still difficult. People suffer economically. But in the midst of this struggling situation, we as United Methodists are determined to work on unity and make every possible effort to peace building. One of the encouraging development we have is our ministry in Lugansk UMC, Eastern Ukraine. Our newly appointed pastor Alexandr Shevchenko continues to minister to the people of Lugansk and to study at our Seminary in Moscow. As a medical doctor he can help people with their physical and spiritual

needs. This spring and summer the leaders from Ukraine and South Russia have continued their conversation about Lugansk UMC. After much prayer and discussion, the consensus was reached between Ukraine and Moldova Provisional Annual Conference and South Russia Provisional Annual Conference that Lugansk UMC would join South Russia Provisional Annual Conference. This would help our church to better experience the connectional nature of our church and be encouraged and supervised by the district superintendent of the South district (South Russia). Lugansk UMC received warm welcome at the South Russia Provisional Annual Conference session in June 2016.

Another joyful experience has been the Consecration of our new church building in Sredne, Uzhgorod region, Western Ukraine on April, 2016. The ministry with Roma people in this region is growing and people are very open for the good news of Jesus Christ. I want to thank all of our European and American partners who helped us to make this dream a reality. Thanks be to God for this church and for our connection!

Let us continue to pray for the people of Ukraine as they struggle in their daily life.

### **General Agencies**

We have several of our leaders serving in general agencies doing an excellent job in bringing the Northern European or Eurasian perspective into the conversation and the work of the agencies. The area groups receive reports from of our representatives and help to pass on information and build relations. Several agencies have done work in our annual conferences, and we continue to benefit from support through seminars, the Advance and through missionaries assigned to annual conferences.

### **The Nordic and Baltic area group**

In the Nordic and Baltic area group an effort has been made to build relationships between local churches across the episcopal area to strengthen the connection. There is a growing exchange of resources and experiences on a local church level as well as on the conference level. This is particularly true when it comes to youth ministry, where connections between Lithuania and Norway, and Latvia and Denmark are becoming increasingly fruitful. An important factor in strengthening

the connection is the School of Congregational Development, which in 2015 in Tallinn for the first time included the whole episcopal area.

A subcommittee of the area group is behind the publishing of a new series of books entitled “Nordic Perspectives on Methodism”. The purpose of this series is as the title indicates to stimulate Wesleyan theological thinking and writing in the Nordic context. The first book entitled “What is Methodist Identity Today?” came out in 2015 and is already sold out. The second book focuses on “diaconia”, and it will come out in connection with the Central Conference.

### **The first bishop from Eurasia**

The 2012 Central Conference will be remembered for electing the first indigenous bishop for the Eurasia Episcopal area, as Eduard Khegay was elected in the first ballot. The Central Conference celebrated the ministry of highly respected and loved bishop Hans Växby, who has served in the Eurasia Area since 2005 and before then served in the Nordic and Baltic area from 1989 to 2001. Bishop Khegay was consecrated on Sunday 21st October 2012 and a few months later on the 15th December installed in Moscow.

### **Sweden**

The 2012 Central Conference marked the dissolution of the relationship between the Annual Conference in Sweden and the United Methodist Church, after the merger of the United Methodist Church, the Baptist Union and the Mission Covenant Church to form a new Affiliated United Church “Equmeniakyrken” and in English “The Uniting Church in Sweden”.

Two local churches, 12 pastors (8 retired) and a total of 86 members have transferred to the Finland Swedish Provisional Annual Conference, and the 2012 Central Conference decided to expand the Finland Swedish conference to include Sweden. An agreement to transfer a fair share of the assets from the former Annual Conference in Sweden to the Methodists, who decided to join the Finland Swedish Provisional Conference, was finalized in the spring of 2014. The ministry in Sweden continues through two small congregations and a few small faith communities.



## **Strong relationship with the Uniting Church in Sweden**

Several dialogue-meetings have taken place between leadership of the Uniting Church in Sweden and the United Methodist Church represented by rev. Knut Refsdal, rev. Øyvind Helliesen and Bishop Christian Alsted. The bilateral dialogue following the 2012 Central Conference was concluded in the fall of 2014, and after a mutual approval process an agreement of full communion was signed at the Council of Bishops meeting 1st May 2015 in Berlin by church leader Lasse Svensson and the president of the Council of Bishops Warner H Brown Jr. At a joint worship service on Sunday 25th October 2015 in Malmö, Sweden the same agreement was signed in the Northern Europe and Eurasia context by church leader Lasse Svensson and bishop Christian Alsted. Finally, the agreement was ratified at the 2016 General Conference.

As part of the agreement there will be United Methodist delegates in the annual conference of the Uniting Church in Sweden, and there will be delegates from the Uniting Church in Sweden participating in the General Conference and in our Central Conference, these delegates will all have vote and no vote.

To strengthen the ties between the Uniting Church in Sweden and the United Methodist Church internationally a group of 7 leaders from the Uniting Church in Sweden was introduced to major UMC boards and agencies, as bishop Christian Alsted led them on a journey to New York, Nashville and Washington DC. Important contacts were made and relationship was built for the future on a very successful trip.

We also joyfully note that the Uniting Church in Sweden has become member of the European Methodist Council and of the World Methodist Council.

In August this year an invitation from the Uniting Church in Sweden to host the 22nd World Methodist Conference in Gothenburg in 2021 was accepted by the World Methodist Council. The annual conferences in Norway and Denmark have promised to support the Uniting Church in Sweden in this endeavor. Having the World Methodist Conference in Northern Europe offers us a unique opportunity to experience the world wide Methodist connection of more than 82 million Methodists, Wesleyans and Uniting Church Christians. The invitation emphasizes the commitment of the Uniting Church in Sweden to maintain and develop their relationship to the Methodist tradition.

## **Human sexuality**

Since 1972 the United Methodist Church has debated homosexuality. Across the denomination there several different understandings of how the church should be in ministry with homosexuals, there are sincere and loving Christians of genuine faith who are convinced that the church should retain its current position, while there are other Christians just as sincere and loving and genuine in their faith who are convinced the church must change its current position.

There are deep divisions in the church about human sexuality, but the 2016 General Conference showed that there are options other than restructuring. We do not desire to split the church, and we seek unity for the sake of our mission and witness. For the first time, a General Conference appealed to the Council of Bishops to lead legislatively as well as spiritually, a responsibility that has been reserved for the body. The council humbly accepted this challenge to find a way forward and the body affirmed their proposal.

The Council of Bishops will lead a process to help the church move forward. The General Conference postponed any changes in our positions on human sexuality, and the Council of Bishops will create a Commission for A Way Forward to examine and possibly revise sections of church law regarding human sexuality. The Commission will include representation from every region of the UMC and from different perspectives.

When we gather for Central Conference the work of the Commission for A Way Forward has started and we may have received the first report from their work. It is yet to be determined whether there will be a special session of the General Conference.

Due to the process, that is initiated, no changes were made to the Book of Discipline regarding our official positions on matters of human sexuality. Since General Conference the tension has increased further as the Western Jurisdictional Conference in the US elected and consecrated an openly Lesbian elder as bishop, and as the South Central Jurisdiction following requested a review by the Judicial Council of whether the election, consecration and assignment violates church law.

Resolutions on the agenda of the Central Conference address Human Sexuality and particularly the current situation. We know that there are highly diverse positions across the Central Conference, and yet we expect that we can be in Christian Conferencing with each other

listening carefully to the different perspectives, learn from each other and share our insights and viewpoints in a civil and respectful way, that reflects, who we are and seeks the unity of the church.

### **The Northern Europe and Eurasia Book of Discipline**

The 2012 Northern Europe and Eurasia supplement to the Book of Discipline was published in the summer of 2013. It includes a reading guide and the paragraphs that have been adapted. The supplement also includes a historical statement, the Episcopal and Laity addresses, the minutes of the Central Conference and a directory. This new way of combining the official journal of the Central Conference with the adapted paragraphs of the Book of Discipline that constitute the Northern Europe and Eurasia Book of Discipline has become a valuable resource to the church, and we plan to continue to use this format.

### **Finances**

Financially the Central Conference Fund has been prepared for the decline in income due to the United Methodist Church in Sweden leaving the connection. To reduce cost we decided to have one less meeting of the full council in the coming quadrennium, and the presidium only meet on conference calls. The gap between meetings has however made it harder to build community between the council members of the two episcopal areas. For the coming quadrennium we have budgeted for a full council meeting every year, this does however reduce the funds we have available for other activities throughout the central conference.

The Central Conference Fund had a small surplus in 2014, and the central conference council decided to allocate part of the surplus to support travel to the 2016 Central Conference for the Baltic and Eurasia delegates. The Central Conference Fund had a small deficit in 2015, mainly due to decline in apportionments from some of the annual conferences.

The Central Conference Council decided to use funds from the reserves to support travel to the 2016 Central Conference for the Baltic and Eurasia delegates.

The Central Conference will discuss the budget for the coming quadrennium and make decisions regarding the funding of the meetings of the council and of the 2020 Central Conference.

## **Europe**

We are building stronger relations between the Methodist churches in Europe, and in this the European Methodist Council has a key role. We have much to learn from each other as we share many of the same challenges. In this quadrennium we have had two joint meetings with the European commission on mission ECOM, where we have discussed the mission document from the World Council of Churches and at the latest joint meeting in the fall of 2016 the challenges and opportunities the new refugee and migrant situation present to us.

At this Central Conference an agreement between the Methodist, Wesleyan and Uniting churches in Europe will be presented for approval. This agreement of full communion will formalize and regulate our relationship on a European level and make it easier to transfer members and clergy between the different denominations in Europe.

Ecumenically we are represented in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (the Leuenberg Fellowship) with rev. Jørgen Thaarup representing all the Methodist churches in Europe on the council.

We have decided to prioritize to have a representative at the General Assembly of the Council of European Churches. Bishop Christian Alsted serves in this position. He was also elected to be one of the delegates from the United Methodist Church to the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

## **Global Apportionments**

The General Council on Finance and Administration presented a new apportionment formula based on membership and each country's gross domestic product where all annual conferences in the central conferences will pay into the Episcopal Fund as well as the General Administration Fund. This new formula was approved at the 2016 General Conference. The goal is that all annual conferences pay apportionments on an equal level. Calculations show that we are currently paying more than the new formula will require.

In light of the low membership of our central conference, and the proposed addition of Episcopal areas in Africa, the central conference council strongly recommends, that we continue to use our current formula for apportionments as long as the apportionment with this formula is higher than the GCFA formula – only the 2,5% of all expenses for clergy salaries are to cover our contribution to both the Episcopal Fund and to the General Administration Fund. And further that we ask GCFA to clearly show in their reports, at what level we are paying our apportionments – for all conferences this will be above 100%, for some approximately 250%

### **A World Wide Book of Discipline**

The General Conference charged the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters with the task to bring a proposal for a General Book of Discipline, which will contain all of the present parts 1 to 5 and a significantly reduced part 6 only giving the basic theological principles, values and organizational guidelines. Parts 1 to 6 can only be changed by General Conference. Each central conference will then develop its own part 7 with paragraphs specifying the guideline given in part 6. The 2020 General Conference will set aside adequate time during the first three days of its session for plenary consideration and disciplinary action.

### **Thank you**

Thank you to the members of the central conference council who have served in the past quadrennium and done a competent and committed work in leading the ministry of the Central Conference and developing our connection. May the loving and transforming God through the Holy Spirit bless us and give us strength to continue our journey of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the sake of the world.

*The Central Conference Council*

*Bishop Eduard Kheday*

*Bishop Christian Alsted*



# Resolutions

## A Way Forward

Whereas at General Conference in Portland 2016, the Council of Bishops were asked to lead our church through discussions of how our church shall continue together, united as one church, even though we are of different minds when it comes to questions regarding human sexuality and the Book of Discipline.

Whereas The Council of Bishops presented “An Offering for a Way Forward”, which was accepted by the General Conference, where it was said that they will form a new commission, who will work on the single issue of human sexuality for the next couple of years.

Whereas The General Conference urged supported the statement from The Council of Bishops that included the wish to ”live in grace with one another – including ways to avoid further complaints, trials and harm while we uphold the Discipline.”

Therefore, be it resolved that the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference sends the following greeting to the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church:

We, the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference, greet you in the name of the risen Lord.

We would like to extend our thanks and gratitude for your leadership for us both at the General Conference in Portland, in the daily lives of our church, and Especially for “A way forward”. This is a powerful statement, and we stand behind you in the difficult times ahead for our church.

In the aftermath of General Conference, we are saddened see that our church still is divided in questions regarding to human sexuality, and that steps that further the divisions in our church have been taken at several levels of our church. We will hold you, the Council of Bishops and the new commission, in our prayers.

Nonetheless, it is with hope, eagerness and expectation we look forward to seeing the results this new “Commission on Human Sexuality” will present for the next General Conference. We believe that anything is possible through Christian Conferencing and works of the Holy Spirit.

In addition, we would like to encourage all United Methodists in our denomination to show respect for the process you, The Council of Bishops, has laid before us, and whom the majority of the General Conference has approved on our behalf.

*Approved by the Central Conference 2016*

## Climate change

The natural world is a loving gift from God, the creator and sustainer, who has entrusted it to us for his glory and to the good of all life on earth now and in generations to come. The image of God in us (Gen.1:27) is reflected in our abilities, responsibilities and integrity, and in the power of the Holy Spirit we are called as God's co-workers in dialogue and covenant with Him to live and serve for the good of creation.

We confess that we have turned our backs on our responsibilities in neglect, selfishness and pride. And yet Christ's redeeming and restoring work through His death and resurrection continues in face of death and devastation embracing all of creation. We have learned that God's vision for His world is of peace and not disaster offering us a future filled with hope. (Jer. 29:11 CEB) This vision has a present and a future in the promise of a new heaven and a new earth. (Rev. 21:1-8 CEB)

Human induced climate change is a widely recognized fact caused by the emission of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gasses, for which the strong economies of this world carry the vast responsibility.

The average temperature of the globe by the end of the 21st century is estimated to have increased by 4 degrees Celsius which will result in sea level rise, shrinking glaciers, extreme weather, droughts, flooding which will dramatically affect the sustainability of human life in many areas of the world.

The current development is threatening the lives and livelihoods of many, particularly in the poor and vulnerable countries and regions on the globe and is estimated to put 20 percent more people at risk of hunger by 2050 due to the changing climate. (according to the World Food Program of the UN)

The sustainability of life today and in the future presupposes the sustainability of the world we have inherited and will pass on to the



new generations, and as this sustainability is seriously threatened, so is the future of our children, youth and coming generations.

Climate change produced by humans presents an even deeper ethical and spiritual issue than simply caring for God's creation. We are challenged with a divine prophetic calling to counter social and ecological needs and injustice, realizing that we cannot help the world and ask others to change their ways until we change our own ways of living.

Therefore, be it resolved that as a Central Conference

- We call on members, local churches, institutions and agencies to make a purposeful effort to learn about human production and release of greenhouse gasses to evaluate their lifestyle and to identify areas where reduction in production and emission of greenhouse gasses can be made such as the use of better insulation, heating, electricity, cars, air-travel and more.
- We ask pastors and lay-speakers to preach and teach on the care for God's creation as part of our discipleship.
- We strongly encourage that when designing new church buildings and facilities or when making major re-constructions every effort should be made to make the building energy neutral through the use of solar panels, wind energy, geothermal heating, heat pumps, better insulation or other relevant means and technologies.
- We call on local churches, institutions, boards, committees and annual conferences to make every effort to significantly reduce air travelling and seriously and purposefully explore alternative means of conducting meetings and consultations through the use of communication technology, and when possible use energy and CO2 efficient means of travel like trains and busses.
- We call on members and local churches to make attempts to educate others outside their church community on the need to take action on these issues and to partner with others who are of the same mind.

Be it further resolved

- That we call on our parliaments and governments to require reductions in greenhouse emissions using the most efficient and cost-effective means.

*Approved by the Central Conference 2016*

## Migration – I was a Stranger

The history of Methodism in continental Europe is strongly linked to the great transatlantic migration several generations ago. In our history, we count people fleeing from poverty and conflicts, people with wounds on soul and body after fighting as ethnic and religious minorities. We count people who know what it means to cross cultural boundaries and who have the knowledge of integration and fellow citizenship, both as the newcomer and as the one who can welcome another human being.

Once again, migration is a challenge for the European nations. The recent migration is a result of war in Syria and its neighbouring countries and conflicts in other areas of Africa and Asia. Several of the areas from where people flee are areas where European nations are militarily involved. Poverty and bad living conditions in the homeland are other reasons why people flee from life-threatening situations.

Most refugees and migrants are refugees and migrants in their own country or in neighbouring countries (Internally Displaced Persons). Only a small portion of the total number of refugees and migrants are so desperate that they cross several borders and find their ways to European countries. However, the numbers are large enough to challenge the European people. We have seen how governments and politicians in most European countries are more focused on limiting the number of refugees or even on finding the best way to return the newcomers, instead of focusing on a way to help as many as possible. The European countries and the upcoming extreme political voices have been passionate advocates for strong protection of our own welfare and fortune by building high boundaries against newcomers. Furthermore, they disrespect laws about human rights and residency and build up inhuman systems of not taking care of the newcomers.

The United Methodist Churches in Northern, Baltic and Eurasian countries do not agree with the hostile policy against refugees and migrants who come to your countries. We find this policy non compatible with the judgment of Christ Jesus of the Nations when he says: “I was a stranger and you did not welcome me.” And all recent political decisions of self-protection and explanations of not doing what we have resources to do echo the question of bad excuses: “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?” In our appeal against the hostile attitude of both politicians and groups of people in our countries

we lift up the judgement of Christ Jesus when he ends his appeal to us: “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.”

Instead of focusing the challenges for the European countries on coping with the numbers of newcomers in our countries and the challenge of integration, we will focus on the positive opportunities to build up multi-cultural societies, citizen- and fellow-ship within our countries. We should do as the Bible constantly empowers us to do and open our doors to strangers: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” Especially our attention is to people of culture, ethnicity and religion different from us.

The Central Conference of the United Methodist Church in Northern and Baltic Europe and in Eurasia, gathered in Fredrikstad, Norway, October 19-23, 2016, have discussed and shared information about the current situation of migration in Europe. We are concerned about the human crises for the thousands of people fleeing from their homes and roots. It is like the punishment of Cain, who was driven from his home in fear: “I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me.”

The Central Conference appeals to our churches in the European Countries:

- to speak against the hostile policy with regard to refugees and migration in our countries,
- to be an advocate for the refugees and migrants in our countries and help them to integrate and participate in the social life,
- to empower the local churches to open the doors for newcomers in the neighbourhood of the church and establish a kind of activities that make the Methodist church a local meeting place for newcomers and newcomers and native people,
- to empower our children and youth work to invite newcomers in the neighbourhood of the church to participate in activities free of charge,
- to commit the local Methodist churches to have at least one annual worship service dealing with the migration theme,
- to help the local Methodist churches to see that the situation of migration probably will be a permanent order of the world caused by

the many conflicts and terror actions in the world, and caused by the breakdown of the balance of nature in the shadow of increasing climate changes.

- to help the local Methodist churches to see the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic congregation as a fortune and possibility and not as a burden or limitation.

*Approved by the Central Conference 2016*

## Sexual Abuse

Whereas many kinds of violence and abuse are addressed both in the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church and in the Book of Resolutions. (Book of Discipline)

Whereas abuse within family or other close relations are hidden and covered in shame and feelings of guilt.

Whereas many of our societies experience that rape is a relevant danger, especially for women, and too often without consequences for the abuser.

The Social Principles state: “We encourage the Church to provide a safe environment, counsel, and support for the victim.”

A congregation or a small group can be such an open and safe environment where the victim can find support, and where God’s love and healing are possible.

A crucial point in doing this is to speak about and address violence and abuse. To acknowledge that such abuse takes place, to be clear that the victim is not to blame, to create environments where the stories of the victims can be told, and to actively work against such kinds of abuse is a part of the ministry of the Church.

As the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference, gathered in Fredrikstad October 2016, we encourage

- all congregations to talk about such abuse to create a safe environment, to support the victims and to prevent abuse to happen.

- all annual conferences to provide seminars etc. on sexual abuse to pastors, deacons and others giving pastoral counselling in the church and who receive the victims in the counselling-room.

- the cabinets in our church to be in front in addressing the issues of violence and abuse.

*Approved by the Central Conference 2016*



# Minutes

## Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference

The 2016 – Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference met from October 19th – 23rd in Fredrikstad, Norway. The United Methodist Church in Norway hosted the conference. The Opening worship service was held in PetriKirken, Kjølberg. The Sunday worship service was held at The Cathedral of Fredrikstad (Domkirken) The conference sessions took place at Scandic City Hotel.

The conference began on Wednesday, October 19 with an opening worship service at PetriKirken. Bishop Eduard Khegay gave the sermon with the theme, “In God we live, move and exist – proclaiming good news”. The scripture was from Luke 4: 14 -30. Worship leaders were Rev. Øyvind Heliessen and Rev. Svein Veland. Offering for the local churches.

At the morning worship with communion on October 20 Bishop Rosemarie Wenner (Germany) preached the sermon with the theme “In God we live, move and exist – in the midst of fear and hostility”. The scripture was Luke 6: 27-38. Worship leader was Rev. Gunta Grina-Sologuba, (Latvia). Offering for seminar for migrant church leaders.

Delegates were invited to an event with a local touch at the United Methodist Church, Fredrikstad in the evening of October 19.

At the morning service with communion on Friday, October 21, Bishop John Yambasu delivered the sermon with the theme, “In God we live, move and exist – among the marginalized”. Worship leader was Rev. Hilde Marie Øgreid Movafagh (Norway). The scripture was Lukas 7: 36 -50. The offering for Sierra Leone was 1412 Euro.

At the morning worship with communion on Saturday, October 22, Bishop Patrick Streiff (South and Central Europe) delivered the sermon with the theme, «In God we live, move and exist offering healing and hope”. The worship leader was Rev. Yulia Starodubets (Russia)-. The scriptures were from 2 Corinthians 8-11 and Luke 8: 40-56. The offering for Ukraine was 827 Euro.

The morning worship on Sunday, October 23, Bishop Christian Alsted (Nordic and Baltic area) held the sermon with the theme, “In God we live, move and exist – moving into the future”. The scripture was Luke 13: 6-17. The service was held at the Cathedral of Fredrikstad.

The offering was for Funds for Mission in Europe.

The Northern Europe and Eurasia central conference was concluded with lunch at the Cathedral of Fredrikstad.

The 2016 Sessions of The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference gathered at the Scandic City hotel, Fredrikstad, Norway with the following agenda:

## Agenda

1.1 Central Conference Members and Guests

1.2 Plan of organization and Rules of Order

1.3 Focus groups

1.4 Christian Conferencing

1.5 Agenda. The agenda was unanimously approved.

## 1. Opening

a. Rollcall

b. Quorum and setting the bar of the conference

c. Chairs: Bishop Eduard, Khegay, bishop Christian Alsted, bishop John Yambasu and Bishop Patrick Streiff

d. Election of other officers:

i. Secretary: Ole Birch

ii. Assistant secretary: Johanna Lundereng

e. Elections

i. Committee to approve the minutes:

ii. Tellers:

f. Presentation of guests- greetings given throughout conference

g. Plan of organization and Rules of order

h. Approval of agenda

i. Election of officers of the Focus groups

i. Focus Group

1. Chair: Thomas Risager

2. Secretary: Sarah Tiainen



- ii. Focus Group
  - 1. Chair: Ullas Tankler
  - 2. Secretary: Sergei Nikolaev
- iii. Focus Group
  - 1. Chair: Monica Lundgren
  - 2. Secretary: Mark Nelson
- iv. Focus Group
  - 1. Chair: Audun Westad
  - 2. Secretary: Anne-Karin Rolfsen

## 2. Addresses

- a. The Laity Address- Vaselyna Babych and Audun Westad
- b. The Episcopal Address – bishop Eduard Kheday and bishop Christian Alsted

New Book in the series “Nordic perspectives on Methodism” was presented by Hilde Marie Øgreid Movafagh. Social aspects and diaconia are the focus in this book.

## 3. Episcopal Election

- a. Presentation for the Episcopacy
- b. Closing of the nomination process
- c. Episcopal election

## 4. Christian Conferencing in Focus Groups

## 5. Reporting from the Focus Groups

- a. The Episcopal Address – debate based on reports from the Focus Groups
- b. The Laity Address – debate based on reports from the Focus Groups
- c. Report Focus Group A
  - Addresses:
    - 1. The Episcopal Address (primary focus)

2. The laity Address (secondary focus)

Reports:

3. 3.2 Personal Report Bishop Christian Alsted

4. 3.5 N&B Committee on Episcopacy

5. 3.12 Episcopal Fund Nordic and Baltic

6. 3.14 Nordic and Baltic Area Fund

7. 3.17 N Means Wesleyan Theology

8. 3.18 Auditing reports N&B

Resolutions:

9. 4.2.2.4 Resolution on Migration

10. 4.2.2.5 Resolution on Abuse

d. Report Focus Group B

Addresses:

1. The Episcopal Address (Primary focus)

2. The Laity Address (Secondary focus)

Reports:

3. 3.1 Personal report Bishop Eduard Khegay

4. 3.4 Eur. Committee on Episcopacy

5. 3.9 European Methodist Council

6. 3.13. Episcopal Fund Eurasia

7. 3.15 Area fund Eurasia

8. 3.19 Auditing Report Eurasia Petition

Non-disciplinary petition

9. 4.2.1.3. EMC Community Agreement

Resolution

10. 4.2.2.3 Resolution on Climate

e. Report Focus group C

Addresses:

1. The Laity address (primary focus)

2. The Episcopal address (secondary focus)

Reports:

- 3. 3.3 Report CC Council
- 4. 3.6 Reports from the Annual Conferences
- 5. 3.7 Statistical reports
- 6. 3.8 EBDAC
- 7. 3.10 EMC e-academy
- 8.3.11 Report General Conference
- 9.3.16 NE & Eurasia Central Conference Fund
- 10. 3.20 Budget Plan Central Conference Fund
- Non-disciplinary petitions
- 11. 4.2.1.1 up-to-date records of membership
- 12. 4.2.1.2 For Denmark Annual Conference to continue as an annual conference

f. Report Focus Group D

Addresses:

- 1. The Laity address (primary focus)
- 2. The Episcopal address (secondary focus)

Reports:

- 3. 4.1.1. § Membership of the Northern Europe and Eurasia Conference Council
- 4. 4.1.2 Introduction
- 5. 4.1.3 § 405 Election and Consecration of bishops
- 6. 4.1.4 § 418 Limitation on years of service
- 7. 4.1.5 § Composition
- 8. 4.1.6 § 547 Conference agencies
- 9. 4.1.7 § 549 NE & Eurasia CCC
- 10. 4.1.8 § Church property
- 11. 4.1.9 § 551 Other central conference work
- 12. 4.1.10 § 552 Apportionments to the Episcopal Fund and the General Administration Fund
- 13. 4.1.11 § 635 Conference board of ordained ministry
- 14. 4.1.12 Educational standards
- 15. 4.1.13 § 267 Certified lay speaker
- 16. 4.1.14 Addition to the historical statement

Resolutions:

17. 4.2.2.1 Resolution: Greeting to the Council of Bishops

18. 4.2.2.2 Resolution: Resolution to express an opinion on an episcopal election in the Western Jurisdiction

6. Elections

7. The site for 2021 Central Conference Tallinn, Estonia

8. Other matters

Thursday, October 20, 2016

**10.00 a.m.**

RE. 1. Opening

Bishop Eduard Khegay opened the conference and welcomed delegates and guests from around the world.

### **Agenda Item 1.a – Roll Call**

The assistant to Bishop Christian Alsted, Kirsten Hastrup, took the roll call. (See copy of the roll call agenda 1.1) It was determined that the Central Conference was duly called in accordance to § 542, 2 in NEEBod, and had a quorum. The bar of the conference was set to be chairs at round tables. All guests were seated in the back. Bishop Alsted and Khegay chaired the conference; they expressed appreciation at having Bishop Yambasu and Bishop Streiff chairing parts of the conference.

The Central Conference elected Ole Birch from Denmark as secretary and Johanna Lundereng from Norway as assistant to the secretary.

Committee to approve the minutes: Hilde Marie Øgreid Movafagh, Jørgen Thaarup, Meeli Tankler, and Bishop Alsted.

Members of the Central Conference Council (CCC) that are not delegates were elected as tellers: Elena Chudinova, William Lovelace, and Gita Medne.

### **Agenda item 1.f – presentation of guests**

Bishop Alsted introduced our guests. The dean of the Fredrikstad Cathedral Jon Albert Ihlebæk greeted the Central Conference.

Greetings from official guests took place throughout the conference. Among the guests were; Rev. Terje Ådne, the general secretary of the Baptist Union and President of the Council of Churches in Norway, Bishop J. Yambasu from Sierra Leone, Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, Germany and Bishop Patrick Streiff, Central and Southern Europe, bishop emer. Hans Våxby, vice-president elect Mrs. Jill Baker, United Kingdom, rev. Olle Alkholm and rev. Charlotte Thaarup, the Uniting Church in Sweden . Bishop Øystein Olsen was unable to join us at the Central Conference because of illness and the conference was united in prayer for his well-being.

### **Agenda Item 1.g – Plan of organization and rules of order**

Bishop Christian Alsted presented the plan of Organization and rules of Order. This is document 1.2 of the conference documents. Ole Birch presented two amendments from the CCC.

- Proposal to delete option i under point 7b, “Business procedure”. “To dismiss the motion” because it has the same effect as option iv “to reject a motion”.
- Second amendment on point 9b – “The conclusion of the debate”. “Before the conclusion of a debate the presiding officer shall restate the motion and opportunity for amendments must be given” The sentence fragment after the word “motion” is suggested deleted.

Both amendments were approved.

The rules of order were unanimously approved, as amended.

### **Agenda Item 1.i – Focus Groups**

Bishop Christian Alsted explained the principles and roots of Christian Conferencing as taught by John Wesley.

Bishop Khegay asked for approval of the four proposed Focus Groups.

Sergei Kim wanted to nominate another person to chair focus group D, but he was unable to bring another name.

As chairs and secretaries, the following were elected:  
Focus Group A: Thomas Risager, Chair, Sarah Tiainen, Secretary.  
Focus Group B: Ullas Tankler, Chair, Sergei Nikolaev, Secretary.  
Focus Group C: Monica Lundgren, Chair, Mark Nelson, Secretary.  
Focus Group D: Audun Westad, Chair, Anne-Karin Rolfsen, Secretary.

## **Re. 2 – Addresses.**

Bishop Khegay chaired this session.

### **Agenda item 2.a- The Laity Address**

Vaselyna Babych and Audun Westad presented the laity address. The address was assigned as primary focus for groups C and D and secondary focus for groups A and B.

Hilde Marie Øgreid Movafagh presented the second book in the series, “Nordic perspectives on Methodism – Social holiness, Diaconia & present Challenges in our World Today”. The authors that were present gave a short summary of their articles. The book was available for purchase at the conference.

## **Thursday, October 20, 2016**

### **1.00 p.m.**

Bishop John Yambasu chaired this session.

### **Agenda item 2.b -The Episcopal Address**

Bishop Eduard Khegay and Bishop Christian Alsted presented the Episcopal address. The address was assigned as primary focus to groups A and B, secondary focus for groups C and D.

Bishop John Yambasu led the conference in prayer for the bishops.

A video from Denmark’s annual conference was shown.

Bishop Rosemarie Wenner officially greeted the Central Conference on behalf of the German Central Conference. She invited everyone to the European Methodist Festival, which will be held May 10 – 13, 2018 at Cuxhaven in Bremen, Germany.

Ole Birch presented the concept of “Speed Debating” as a method for discussing the addresses. Ten topics hosted at 10 different tables. The session allowed for visiting five tables and guests were welcome to participate. Migration, the financial situation of the CC, LGBTQ people in the UMC, missional church/church development, Methodist Identity, ministry with children and young people, ethics in ministry, climate change, connectionalism and church unity, and the post-Christian society were the topics to discuss.

No reports were written, as the purpose was to raise our level of understanding in preparation for the focus groups.

## **Thursday, October 20, 4:45 p.m.**

Bishop Khegay presented a brochure about early Methodists in Eurasia chronicling the lives of Ivan Vasilievich Vuksta, Anna Eklund and Yonghuk. It is available for a cost of 2 euros. In addition, a free pamphlet about the vision of the UMC in Eurasia for 2016-2022 was available at the back of the conference room.

Re. 3 – Episcopal Election Bishop Khegay welcomed Bishop Patrick Streiff.

Bishop Patrick Streiff of central and southern Europe Central Conference presided over the next part of the session. He started by leading the conference in prayer. Chair of the episcopacy committee, Berit Westad was called forward to present the nominees. Then Leif Jacobsen and Elena Kitaeva prayed for leadership and blessings over the election process. Berit Westad informed about the nomination process. Bishop Christian Alsted was the only nominee for the election and he has accepted the nomination. The election took place on Saturday morning. Bishop Streiff asked if there were any other nominations in this plenary. There were none.

### **Agenda Item 3.a – Presentation of candidates for the Episcopacy**

Bishop Alsted presented himself and his vision for the Nordic and Baltic episcopal area.

Bishop Streiff opened for questions or remarks at the conclusion of Bishop Alsted's presentation. There were none.

Bishop Khegay resumed leadership of the session. Information about the evening program was given.

The Uniting Church in Sweden, represented by Olle Alkholm, greeted the Central Conference. He invited everyone to the next World Methodist Conference to be held in Gothenburg in 2021.

Jill Baker, representing the British Methodist conference and our 'mother church' greeted the Central Conference.

Friday, October 21, 2016

**10.00 a.m.**

### **Agenda Item 3.b – Closing of the nomination process**

Bishop Streiff presided at the session. He asked again if there were any other nominations.

There were none. The nomination was closed and the election was opened.

### **Agenda Item 3.c – Episcopal election**

Instructions on the voting procedure were given. There were 64 delegates, and thus it would take 42 votes to elect a new bishop. In the first ballot, there were 62 ballots for Christian Alsted, one invalid and one blank. Bishop Streiff announced the election of Christian Alsted.

The episcopal committee prayed individually for Bishop Christian Alsted and his family. Bishop Streiff congratulated Bishop Alsted and thanked his wife especially for all her support. Bishop Alsted thanked the Central Conference and asked for prayer, for discernment, grace and courage as we move forward.

A video from the Central Russian annual conference was shown.

President of the Council of Churches in Norway and the general secretary for the Baptist Union, Terje Ådne, greeted the Conference.

Bishop Yambasu, who has led inter-faith communities in the fight against Ebola in Sierre Leone, gave us insight into the struggle they experienced. An offering was given for the continued work in Sierra Leone. The offering came to a total of 1412 Euros.

A video from the Division of Ministry for Young People was shown. Representing our Central Conference in the ministry are Maria Thaarup Antorini, Andreas Fjodorov and Yulia Starodubets.

It was announced that a book about contemplative prayer written by Hilde Sanden-Bjønness would be published the following week.

Jørgen Thaarup presented his new book on the theology of John Wesley and the Danish, Lutheran theologian, Grundtvig. The book was available for purchase at the conference.

Room assignments for the focus groups were announced. The focus groups commenced directly after lunch from 1.00 p.m. until 5.15 p.m.

There was a short break from 5.15 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.



## **Re 5 – Reporting from the Focus Groups**

Bishop Khegay presided over the session. From 5.30 p.m. – 6.30 p.m.

A video from the Finland (S) annual conference was shown.

### **5.a Report from focus groups on the episcopal address**

Motion to receive with the following recommendation was adopted.

1. To receive the address with the recommendation to send the part on Methodist Identity to all the local churches in the episcopal area, as well as points of characteristics from page 18, for discussion. We also want to ask the bishop if he thinks that it would be a good idea to add something specifically about music and the different musical profiles in relation to worship (point e on page 18).

2. The episcopal address was received and referred to the Central Conference Council.

A video from the South Russia annual conference was shown.

Bishop Hans Vaxby led us in prayer as we concluded the session for the evening.

Saturday, October 22, 2016

### **10.00 a.m.**

Bishop Alsted presided over the session.

Jon Løvland opened by leading us in song, “Open Hearts, Open minds, Open Doors”.

### **5.b. The Laity address**

On recommendation from the focus groups, the laity address was received with the following recommendations.

- That the address be sent to the annual conferences for study with the following recommended highlights:
- Vaselyna’s train image as an excellent reminder that we have to remain connected with God on a personal level as the foundation for all that we do.
- The challenge of our conferences to recognize the differences that exist between us while still respecting each other and working together in such a way that we can move forward in our mission.

- To encourage teaching in all our congregations that the essence of Christianity is God's love that inevitably must lead us in the process of sanctification which is the key to solutions of equality and the unity of the church.
- That the annual conferences seek ways to be relevant and active in their communities and speak up against injustice.
- That the annual conferences focus on gender issues and woman leadership in the church.

RESULT: The Central Conference voted in to receive the laity address. The recommendations were voted en block and added to the report.

The conference decided that the CC secretary could make editorial changes in the recommendations to make them more easily understood.

Bishop Khegay took over chair of the session.

### **5.c Report from focus group A**

Petition 3.2 Personal Report Bishop Christian Alsted. Motion to receive. Received.

Petition 3.5 N & B Committee on Episcopacy Motion to receive. Received.

Petition 3.12 Episcopal Fund Nordic & Baltic Motion to approve. Approved.

Petition 3.14 Nordic & Baltic Area Fund Motion to approve. Approved.

Petition 3.17 Nordic Means Wesleyan Theology Motion to approve. Approved.

Report 3.18 Auditing Reports N & B Resolution Motion to receive the report and add to the minutes. Approved and added to the minutes.

Petition 4.2.2.5 Resolution on Abuse. Motion to adopt. Adopted.

Petition 4.2.2.5 – Migration Resolution. Motion to adopt. Adopted.

### **5.d Report from focus groups B**

3.1 Personal report Eduard Khegay. Motion to receive. Received.

3.4 Eurasia Committee on Episcopacy. Motion to receive. Received.

3.9 European Methodist Council. Motion to receive. Received.

3.13 Episcopal Fund, Eurasia. Motion to refer to CCC Referred. 3.15 Auditing report Eurasia. Motion to refer to CCC. Referred.

As all necessary documentation wasn't available the Central Conference Council was given the authority to review the financial report and auditing report of the Eurasia Episcopal Fund and to make a final approval. 4.2.1.3 Motion to adopt the agreement of The Community of Methodist and Wesleyan Churches in Europe. Adopted. (By accident, two groups prepared this motion and came to the same conclusion.)

4.2.2.3 Resolution on Climate Change. Motion to adopt. Adopted.

Recommendation: To adopt the resolution and refer it to annual conferences for further contextualization and implementation.

4.2.2.4 Motion to adopt resolution with recommendation. Adopted.

“To speak against the hostile policy of inhuman restrictions of with regard to refugees and migration in our countries”

A video from the Finnish Annual Conference was shown.

Bishop Khegay took over as chair.

### **5.e Report from focus group C**

4.2.1.1. Records of membership. Motion to reject the petition. Petition rejected.

4.2.1.2 Continuation of the Danish annual conference. Motion to adopt the petition. Adopted.

3.10 E-academy. Motion to receive the report with recommendations. Received.

Recommendation: that future reports have more details about participants from our central conference, both teachers and students.

3.8 European Board of Alcohol and drug concerns. Motion to receive with recommendation. Received.

Recommendation: that the report together with additional material be sent to the Central Conference Council with the hope that they will find the means for EBDAC to continue their work.

The additional materials will be uploaded, but not included in the minutes.

### **Bishop Alsted took over as chair on this matter – 3.3.**

3.3 Central Conference Council Report.

Questions were raised with regard to the transfer of local churches from one annual conference to another.

Motion to refer the question to the Central Conference Council for discussion and treatment later in the day. Referred.

The conference broke early for lunch. The Central Conference Council met to discuss questions raised in the plenary on calendar item 3.3 regarding the transfer of local churches from the Ukraine Moldova Provisional Annual Conference to the South Russia Provisional Annual Conference.

Saturday, October 22, 2016

1.00 p.m.

Bishop Alsted presiding.

Church advisor from Norway, Jon Løvland, made an inspirational presentation about passing on church leadership to the next generation.

### **Focus Group C (continued)**

#### 3.3 Central Conference Council Report (continued).

Motion from CCC on transferring local churches between annual conferences: For the next quadrennium the CC authorizes bishop Eduard Khegay with the consent of the Ukraine and Moldova provisional annual conference and the South Russia provisional annual conference and with the consent of the Central Conference Council to transfer local churches between the Ukraine and Moldova provisional annual conference and the South Russia provisional annual conference. Such changes must be reported to the Central Conference and they are interim until approved by the CC. Transfers made in 2012-2016 quadrennium are considered as interim.

Motion adopted.

Motion to receive the report. Received.

Bishop Khegay presiding.

3.6 Reports: Annual/provisional/district conferences. Motion to receive the annual conference reports with recommendation en block. Received.

Recommendation: to use a few photos and videos at the next central conference.

3.7 Statistical reports. Motion to receive the report. Received.

3.14 Nordic and Baltic Area Fund. Motion to approve. Approved.

3.20 Central Conference Fund. Motion to approve the budget with recommendations. Approved.

That if future budgets have a deficit, an explanation from where those funds will be taken.

That future budgets show totals also in Euros based on a projected exchange rate.

Bishop Alsted presiding.

Patrick Streiff delivered his greeting from the Central and Southern Europe Central Conference.

## **5.f Report from focus group D**

Bishop Alsted presiding.

4.2.2.1 To the Council of Bishops Resolution. Resolution adopted as amended by the plenary. Amendment to the seventh paragraph to the original resolution.

And that steps that further the divisions in our church have been taken at several jurisdictional Conferences in the United States levels of our church.

4.2.2.2 Resolution to express an opinion on an episcopal election in the Western Jurisdiction. Motion to reject. Rejected.

4.1.1 § 612 2 Membership annual conference council. Motion to adopt as amended. Adopted.

Amendments: Diversity is important for the annual conference council and its members should mirror the annual and district conference in regards to age , gender, geography and congregational affiliation

The conference council shall should have equal numbers of clergy and lay members

4.1.2 Introduction to the NEECC BoD supplement. Motion to adopt. Adopted.

4.1.3 § 405 Election and Consecration of Bishops. Motion to adopt with amendments. Adopted.

Consecration - of bishops takes place at the session of the conference at which election occurs or at a place and time designated by the conference. The consecration service may include bishops from other jurisdictional and central conferences. At least one elder and one lay shall participate in the consecration. It is strongly urged that the consecration service also include representatives from other Christian communions, particularly those with whom we have a formal agreement, that includes the mutual recognition of ministry and ordination. At least one representative from the laity must participate in the consecration. (see ¶¶ 124, 427.2, 1901 6, 105, 127, 131).

4.1.4

§ 418 Limitations on Years of Service. Motion to adopt the following amendment from the focus group. Adopted.

Annual Conferences can decide which of the following two rules concerning limits of years of service they want to follow

1. This is the current wording

The normal term for a district superintendent shall be up to six years, but this may be extended to no more than up to eight years at the discretion of the bishop, in consultation with the cabinet and the district committee on superintendency.

No superintendent shall serve for more than eight years in any consecutive eleven years. No elder shall serve as district superintendent more than fourteen years. In addition, consideration shall be given to the nature of superintendency as described in ¶ 401.

2.

The normal term for a district superintendent shall be up to six years, but this may be extended to no more than up to ten years at the discretion of the bishop, in consultation with the cabinet and the district committee on superintendency.

No superintendent shall serve for more than ten years in any consecutive thirteen years. No elder shall serve as district superintendent more than eighteen years. In addition, consideration shall be given to the nature of superintendency as described in ¶ 401.

4.1.5 § 541 Composition. Motion to adopt. Adopted.

4.1.6 § 547 Conference Agencies. Motion to refer to the Central Conference Council, and ask the council to consult with the Children and Youth organizations and bring a new petition in 2021.Referred.

4.1.7 § 549 Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Council. Motion to adopt. Adopted.

4.1.8 Church Property (All Titles- In Trust)

§ 2501 Requirement of the Trust Clause for All Property. Motion to refer to Central Conference Council to ensure that all former names of the the annual conferences are correct and then include in the supplement to the 2016 Book of Discipline.. Referred.

4.1.9 § 551 Other Central Conference Work. Motion to refer to Central Conference, with the same rationale as 4.1.6.Referred.

4.1.10

§ 552 Apportionment into the Episcopal Fund and General Administration Fund. Motion to adopt. Adopted.

4.1.11

§ 635 General board of Ordained Ministry. Motion to adopt with following amendment. Adopted.

(Starting at line 7.)

The board membership shall when possible include both men and women and if possible ethnic persons minorities, attention should be paid to the demographic constituents of the conference, when possible at least one ordained clergyperson in the retired relationship, at least one ordained clergyperson in extension ministry, and when possible at least one young adult clergyperson in full connection age 35 or younger, and a district superintendent named by the bishop to represent the cabinet. Two-thirds of the members who are elders shall be graduates of seminaries listed by the University Senate.

4.1.12 Educational Standards Motion to adopt. Adopted.

Motion concerning 4.1.13

§ 267 Certified Lay Speaker. Motion to adopt. Adopted.

4.1.14

Addition to the Historical Statement. Motion to refer to Central Conference to ensure that all historical data and informtions are correct

and then to include in the 2016 supplement of the Book of Discipline. Referred.

Bishop Khegay presiding.

## **6. Other elections. Kirsten Hastrup presented the nominations.**

### **6.1 Central Conference Council 1.2**

Central Russia: Sergei Pugachev (lay)

Denmark: Clergy: Ole Birch Lay: Maria Thaarup Antorini Substitutes: , Jørgen Thaarup (1), Bettina Pedersen (2)

East Russia & Central Asia: Yulia Starodubets (cl) Estonia: Meeli Tankler (lay) & Taavi Hollmann (cl) Finland-F: Pasi Runonen (cl, sick leave) Jori Brander (cl) Finland-S: Leif-Göte Björklund (cl).

Latvia: Edgars Sneiders (cl) Gunta Grina-Sologuba (cl, substitute)

Lithuania: William H. Lovelace (cl) North-West Russia: Elena Kitaeva (lay)

Norway: Clergy: Steinar Hjerpsseth & Hilde Marie Ø Movafagh Lay: Per-Endre Bjørnevik, Johanna Lundereng Substitutes: Ingerid Hoggen (1), Svein Veland (2), Aart Huurnink (3), Stephanie Buadu (4) South Russia: Elena Melnikova (cl)

Ukraine & Moldova: Vasylyna Babych (lay)

Council elected.

### **6.2 The NEECC Youth Council from AC,**

See petitions 4.1.6 and 4.1.8

Estonia: Grete Lepa

Finland-F: Säde Loponen (lay)

Finland-S: Jennie McCrea, Hanna Wiik (substitute)

Latvia: Anna Dobele Lithuania: Andrew Erbele (cl), Laurijana Zimacké (substitute)

Norway: Kristin Tvedt

South Russia: Natalia Smirnova (cl)

Council elected.



### **6.3 Representatives to the European Methodist Council**

Natalia Prokhorova (Eurasia)

Meeli Tankler (Estonia)

Jørgen Thaarup (Denmark)

Øyvind Helliesen (Norway)

Substitute: Marketta Jussila (Finland- F)

Council members elected.

### **6.4 Funds for mission in Europe**

Øyvind Aske elected.

### **6.5 NEECC Judicial Court**

Denmark: Ove Sørensen (cl,)

Finland-F: Jan-Markus Jeromaa (cl) Finland-S: Leif-Göte Björklund (cl)

Lithuania: Remigijus Matulaitis (cl), Jolita Pieciaitė-Erbele (substitute)

Norway: Steinar Hjørpseth (cl), (substitute: Ivar Granum)

Northwest Russia: Andrei Khen Su Kim (cl).

### **6.6 NEECC Committee on Investigation**

Central Russia: Sergei Kim (lay)

Denmark: Ove Sørensen (cl)

Finland-F: Jori Brander (cl)

Norway: Jon-Erik Bråthen (cl)

Committee elected.

### **6.7 European Board on Alcohol and Drug Concerns**

Ole Martin Andreassen was elected. Referred to CCC to determine an additional representative.

### **6.8 European Lay Seminar**

Vigdis Merete Rønning was elected.

### **6.9 World Methodist Council**

Bishop Christian Alsted (funded by the Central Conference Council)

Jørgen Thaarup (Denmark)

Bishop Eduard Khegay (Russia)

Øyvind Helliesen (Norway)

Council member elected

### **6.10 Conference on European Churches**

Bishop Christian Alsted elected.

6.11 Already elected to GBGM Øyvind Aske

Ole Birch already elected to the Connectional Table.

### **7.0 The 2021 NEECC Site**

February or March 2021 in Tallinn, Estonia. Approved.

Bishop Khegay expressed appreciation to the secretaries Ole Birch and Johanna Lundereng, and to Kirsten Hastrup for their work in preparation and during the conference.

Bishop Eduard Khegay closed the central conference in prayer.

Bishop Khegay declared that the 2016 Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference was closed.

Approved 28th November 2016

*Secretaries: Ole Birch and Johanna Lundereng*

*Presiding bishops: Christian Alsted and Eduard Khegay*

*Persons to check the minutes:*

*Hilde Marie Øgred Movafagh*

*Meeli Tankler*

*Jørgen Thaarup*

*Christian Alsted.*

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- (B): Nominated by the bishops elected by the Central Conference.
- (C): Nominated by the Annual Conferences and elected by the Central Conference
- (D): Nominated by the Central Conference Council elected by the Central Conference
- (E) : Nominated by the annual conferences elected by the Central Conference Council
- (F): Elected by the annual conferences

The way the election has been made is indicated in the directory.

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### **European Commission on Mission (F):**

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### **European Lay Seminar (D):**

Vigdis Merete Rønning (Norway). vmr@metodistkirken.no

### **The European Methodist Youth Council (EMYC):**

Secretary Frøydis Grinna. froydis.grinna@metodistkirken.no

(elected by EMYC)

The annual conference Youth and Children's organizations elect their own representatives.

### **European Board on Alcohol and Drug Concerns (D)**

Martin Andreassen (Norway).

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### **The Conference of European Churches (D):**

Bishop Christian Alsted, office@umc-ne.org

### **The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe:**

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