



# THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

NORTHERN EUROPE AND EURASIA CENTRAL CONFERENCE

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Minutes - Nordic & Baltic Area Group Meeting 29 March, 13 – 17.30, 2019 at Betaniahjemmet, Copenhagen.

Item	Minutes
1	<p><b>Opening and approval of the agenda:</b></p> <p>Christian Alsted read Ephesians 4. Where Paul calls the church to unity. He reflected on the challenge to us. What must we do to preserve the unity?</p>
2	<p><b>Minutes meeting: March, 2018</b></p> <p><b>Minutes where approved.</b></p>
3	<p><b>Work in subcommittees:</b></p> <p><b>a. Agenda – <u>Continued Education</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wesley Forum</li><li>• Educational tour: in the footprints of John Wesley</li><li>• From last meeting: For the minutes: Jørgen Thaarup's travel to Oxford and Roar Fotland, see Ezra</li></ul> <p><b>b. Agenda – <u>Development of the connection in the Episcopal Area:</u></b></p> <p><b>c. Agenda – <u>International and Ecumenical Representation</u></b></p>
4	<p><b>Reporting from Subcommittees</b></p> <p>a. Continued Education</p> <p>Wesley forum. Decision: we decided to close down the Wesley forum as a separate website and moved the content to Nordic website</p> <p>Educational trip to England (in the footsteps of Wesley) Decision: we are approving Jorgen Thaarup and Roar Fotland to lead the tour.</p> <p>Applications for support for Jorgen Thaarup travel to Oxford and Roar Fotland conference in Africa. Decision: we approve applications from Jorgen Thaarup and Roar Fotland.</p> <p>Book project update. Only 3 abstracts, only 2 writers. In addition there are some practical articles. The book project has somewhat changed. There is a plan to publish on Amazon and print some copies for the School of Congregational Development.</p> <p>Clergy gathering. Clergy gathering will not take place this fall because of the SoCD.</p>



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	<p>Gathering on preaching for clergy and lay preachers. Decision: we need to find dates early. By next time have a plan how to proceed.</p> <p>LeadHUB GBHEM information. GBHEM has a LeadHUB in Europe, it has been working for about 2 years in Germany. Meeli is going to be the contact person for our area.</p> <p>b. Development of the connection in the Episcopal Area The survey we made this fall is of no use as it is today – it is unknown , only 11 responders. We need to find new ways of marketing it – directly to pastors -churches – social media. Share information on camps through bishop’s office – start with the youth camps. Encourage youth leaders in each country to send information to the bishop’s office for sending forward.</p> <p>c. International and Ecumenical Representation Nothing to report.</p>
5	<p><b>Approval of Financial reports:</b></p> <p>a. Episcopal Fund <b>We received the auditor’s report. The report was approved.</b></p> <p>b. Area Fund <b>We received the auditor’s report. The report was approved.</b></p> <p>c. Nordic Theological Means <b>We received the auditor’s report. The report was approved.</b></p>
6	<p><b>Coffee</b></p>
7	<p><b>Reactions to the General Conference</b></p> <p>Implications of decisions made at the GC 2019 on the Nordic &amp; Baltic Area.</p> <p>Christian Alsted shared his: “Proposal for a roundtable process for the Nordic and Baltic episcopal area leading towards the Central Conference 2021”. (See attachment 1) We had a long conversation about it. We made a few amendments to the text.</p> <p><b>The amended proposal was approved.</b></p> <p>Christian Alsted shared a proposal for a statement from the Area Group about the roundtable process. We amended this statement. (See attachment 2)</p> <p><b>The amended statement was approved.</b></p>



Item	Minutes
<b>8.</b>	<b>Whistle-blower Policy</b> The proposal for a new policy has been available on EZRA. We did some smaller changes to the text and considered the connotations of the word whistle-blower in different countries. <b>The Whistle-blower policy was approved.</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Other Matters – SoCD</b> Posponed to the next day’s meeting of the Central Conference Council. <b>Adjourn</b> <b>Dinner</b>



## **Attachment 1 – A Roundtable Process**

A Roundtable Process for the Nordic and Baltic Episcopal Area Leading towards the Central Conference 2021

The Nordic and Baltic episcopal area is diverse in a number of different ways including our understanding of human sexuality and of how to be in ministry with all people. In spite of our diversities and differences, we have managed to be in a committed relationship in one church for more than 100 years. We have built relationships and friendships, we have shared and exchanged ministries, we have supported each other, and we have worshipped and prayed together.

The unity of the United Methodist Church has been under a great deal of stress for some time. The recent called session of the General Conference decided to support the so-called “traditional plan”; however, the conference was not able to come to a broad based decision, which would be a challenge no matter what the outcome would have been. While many had hoped that the called session of General Conference would give us a stronger sense of unity, the reality after the conference is that we are even more divided and polarized.

The many reactions to the decisions of General Conference across the world indicate that it will be very difficult for us to remain together as one church in the future. Several responses and statements in the Nordic and Baltic countries point to a similar division, and there is little doubt that our future as a denomination will be significantly different from what we know today.

In light of the current situation and as we quickly approach the General Conference 2020 and 2021 Central Conference, we find it responsible and prudent to reflect and plan proactively for the future.

Therefore, we have decided to form a roundtable to bring together key influencers and leaders from each annual conference in the episcopal area, with the purpose of seeking a foundation for the future of the Nordic and Baltic episcopal area that includes as much unity and as much missional strength as possible.

### **Roundtable for the Nordic and Baltic Episcopal Area**

Recognizing that there are different processes in annual conferences and in the global church, we wish to setup a roundtable. The roundtable is intended to bring together influencers and leaders from each annual conference in the episcopal area, with the purpose of seeking a foundation for the future of the Nordic and Baltic episcopal area that includes as much unity and as much missional strength as possible.



Desired outcome: A consensus on one proposal for the future of the Nordic and Baltic area to be brought to the Nordic and Baltic area group early in the fall of 2020, to enable the area group to recommend this proposal to the 2021 Central Conference.

Composition: Each conference will have half of the number of delegates they are entitled to send to the Central Conference. (DK 3, EE 3, SF 2-3, FF 2-3, Lat 1, Lit 1, N 8-9). Bishop Christian Alsted will facilitate the process.

It is the responsibility of each annual conference council to ensure that their group of participants represents the theological positions in the annual conference, and furthermore that their group of participants is diverse.

Meetings: Three face to face meetings (fall 2019, spring 2020 and fall 2020) and 3-4 online meetings.

Funding: Each conference will pay the accommodation costs. The area fund will pay for meals and travels.

**Unanimous decision on 29 March 2019 in Copenhagen by the Nordic and Baltic Area Group of the Council of the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference**



## **Attachment 2: Statement to the church in the Nordic and Baltic Area.**

The Area Group of the Council of the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference meeting on 29-30. March in Copenhagen has issued this statement to the church in the Nordic and Baltic episcopal area.

We greet you with words from Paul's letter to the Colossians:

*And over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. The peace of Christ must control your hearts—a peace into which you were called in one body. And be thankful people. (Col.3:14-15)*

During our time together we have engaged in worship, prayer and Christian conferencing to reflect on the implications of the decisions of the called session of General Conference and to discern our way into the future.

The Nordic and Baltic episcopal area is diverse in a number of different ways including our understanding of human sexuality and of how to be in ministry with all people. In spite of our diversities and differences, we have managed to be in a committed relationship in one church for more than 100 years. We have built relationships and friendships, we have shared and exchanged ministries, we have supported each other, and we have worshipped and prayed together.

The unity of the United Methodist Church has been under a great deal of stress for some time. The recent called session of the General Conference decided to support the Traditional Plan, however, the conference was not able come to a broad based decision. While many had hoped the called session of General Conference would give us a stronger sense of unity, the reality after the conference is that we are even more divided and polarized.

The many reactions to the decisions of General Conference across the world indicate that it will be very difficult for us to remain together as one denomination in the future. Several responses and statements in the Nordic and Baltic countries point to a similar division.

In light of the current situation and as we quickly approach the General Conference 2020 and the 2021 Central Conference, we have discerned to move forward proactively and form a roundtable. The roundtable will bring together influencers and leaders from each annual conference in the episcopal area, with the purpose of seeking a foundation for the future of the Nordic and Baltic episcopal area that includes as much unity and as much missional strength as possible.

Recognizing there are different processes going on in annual conferences and in the global church, the desired outcome of the roundtable is a consensus on one proposal for the future of the Nordic and Baltic area. The proposal should be brought to the Nordic and



Baltic area group early in the fall of 2020, to enable the area group to recommend it to the 2021 Central Conference.

The roundtable will be composed of half of the number of delegates each annual conference is entitled to send to the Central Conference. It will be the responsibility of each annual conference council to ensure that their group of participants represents the theological positions present in the annual conference, and furthermore that their group of participants is as diverse as possible. Bishop Christian Alsted will facilitate the roundtable, and Kirsten Hastrup will act as secretary.

We would like to remind all of us that during a tense period with deep disagreement, we run the risk of ruining relationships that will be difficult to restore. We wish to encourage all of us to remember to care for each other and to be careful with one another. This is a time for prayer, fellowship and conversation, and we urge all us to think carefully before we make a comment or an update on social media, and to avoid saying anything that can be perceived as offensive or polarizing. Christ still calls us to love each other and to share His love with all people.

The founder of Methodism, John Wesley, many years ago created three simple rules, known, as “The General Rules, and they are highly relevant in the current situation. They are first “Do no harm”, second “Do good”, and finally “remain in God’s love by making use of the means of grace”. We will continue to worship, to pray, to share communion and to be in conversation with each other. – This is how we put on Christ’s love, which is the perfect bond of unity!

**Unanimously decided on 29. March 2019 in Copenhagen by the Nordic and Baltic Area Group of the Council of the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference**