



# THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

NORTHERN EUROPE AND EURASIA CENTRAL CONFERENCE

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## Minutes - Nordic & Baltic Area Group Meeting, October 2017

Chair: Bishop Christian Alsted

Secretary: Rev. Ole Birch (DK)

Members present: Maria Thaarup Antorini, lay (DK). Hilde Marie Movafagh, Clergy (N). Steinar Hjerpseth, clergy (N). Remigijus Matulaitis, clergy, (LIT) Taavi Hollman, clergy (EST) Meeli Tankler, lay (EST) Leif Göte Björklund, clergy (FIN) (S) Jori Brander, Clergy (FIN) (F) Per Endre Bjørnevik, lay, (N) Edgars Sneiders, clergy, (LV)

Members absent: Johanna Lundereng, lay, (N)

Friday October 6, 14:00 at Jerusalemskirken

Saturday October 7, 09:00 - 17:00 at Betaniahjemmet

Item	Agenda
1	<p><b>Opening and approval of the agenda:</b></p> <p>The meeting started with coffee and conversation.</p> <p>Christian Alsted called the meeting to order and drew our attention to a blessing from Indonesia coming out of the experience of the tsunami of 2004. We sang "Be Thou my Vision" and 2. Chron. 20 "The Prayer of King Jehoshaphat" was read. Christian Alsted reflected on fear and on what it can do to us. Fear will make us enemies in this difficult time of our church. Our focus should on the message that the battle is not ours. Prayer.</p> <p>Christian Alsted went through the agenda, the practicalities and the working hours of the meeting.</p> <p>The new representative for Lithuania Remigijus Matulaitis was introduced.</p> <p><b>We decided to send a letter to Bill Lovelace, thanking him for his service in this council.</b></p> <p>We introduced ourselves.</p> <p><b>The Agenda was approved.</b></p>
2	<p><b>Minutes meeting: March, 2017</b></p> <p><b>The minutes were approved.</b></p> <p><b>Proposal from Christian Alsted: In the future, if there are no reactions to the minutes within three weeks after they have been sent out, we consider them approved.</b></p> <p><b>Approved.</b></p>
3	<p><b>Work in subcommittees:</b></p> <p><b>Agenda – <u>Continued Education</u></b></p> <p>Please see appendix 3a</p>



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	<p><b><u>Agenda – Development of the connection in the Episcopal Area:</u></b> Please see appendix 3b</p> <p><b><u>Agenda – International and Ecumenical Representation:</u></b> a. reports from representatives in agencies and councils. Please see reports 3.c</p>
4	<p><b>Reports &amp; Action Items from the Subcommittees</b></p> <p><b>Subcommittee – Continued Education</b></p> <p>1. Applications for funding from the Nordic Theological Fund We had three applications.</p> <p><b>The committee proposes to support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Young pastor’s gathering in Tallinn in March 2018 full amount (20 000 DKK) <b>Approved</b></li><li>• Freeman Awuah studies in Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary (tuition and travel) full amount (1140 euros) <b>Approved</b></li><li>• Helene Benedikte Granum-Aanestad a study trip to Greece: half of the asked support, 6495 NOK <b>Approved</b></li></ul> <p>We must look at a revision of the guidelines for these grants.</p> <p><b>Proposal: The office will work with the subcommittee on a proposal for our next meeting.</b> <b>Approved</b></p> <p>Christian Alsted gave information on a conference on mission taking place in Africa; he is trying to get Roar Fotland into this conference.</p> <p><b>Proposal: That we preapprove an application for travel and participation to this.</b> <b>Approved</b></p> <p>2. Book-project NPM We plan to publish it by School of Congregational Development in September 2019 Theme: We ask the full council to decide between two topics: Pastoral Care and Counselling (including Sanctification and Healing) or Ministry with Children and Young People. <b>Approved: A book on Children and youth ministry in 2019, and a book on Pastoral care Counselling in spring 2021.</b> Editing: Hilde Maria is willing to be co-editor; she will propose Rebekka Steinvig</p>



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	<p>or Christina Kjaer Preisler or Lars Erik Nordby (depending on the topic) to be a co-editor.</p> <p>Format: An e-book or some other electronic format</p> <p>Designer: Kathrine Holm has designed the first two books; she did it for free the first time; we paid her 600 euros second time as the work was almost doubled; she was not ready to continue but we ask whether she is willing if we pay her about 2000 euros for her work.</p> <p><b>3. Continuous education for pastors</b></p> <p>An event: gathering in the church, recommended places to stay (participants will take care of this themselves), some meals together and some in restaurants.</p> <p>Michael Lodahl (creation and environmental care) – for clergy, mid-January 2019 in Copenhagen</p> <p>Dottie Escobedo- Frank (creative preaching – could include lay preachers) mid-January 2020 3 days in Oslo</p> <p>Students included in both events.</p> <p>Bishop’s proposal: Riga is a good place, easy flight connections and relatively inexpensive accommodation.</p> <p>No decision was made.</p> <p>Submitted by Meeli Tankler</p> <p><b>Sub-committee: Development of the Connection in the Episcopal Area</b></p> <p><b>Nordic and Baltic Facebook site</b></p> <p>We have the Nordic Baltic FB site called United Methodist church the Nordic and Baltic area. Kirsten is the administrator. It is for sharing news, there are some stories from the US. This FB site helps us to promote our small church. In the wider connection we are not so small as one could feel in one country.</p> <p>Decisions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Picture and few lines (in English) from different countries would be good to be sent to Kirsten for posting on this FB site.</li><li>2. Be ambassadors asking your FB friends to like the page.</li></ol> <p><b>Sharing information.</b></p> <p>If the particular country is organizing youth event or some other kind of festivals or camps it is important to be open for the visitors from other countries as well. Establish a channel how to advertise the events from different countries. We should make people know about the different activities what are going on in the area.</p> <p>Questionnaire from Johanna:</p> <p>What type of activity (where you would welcome Methodists from the Episcopal</p>



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	<p>Area and which would be suitable for the visitors) is your congregation/annual conference planning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Summerfest</li><li>Pilgrimage</li><li>Christmas/Easter activity</li><li>Other trips</li><li>Other</li></ul> <p>Targeted Age group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Children</li><li>Youth</li><li>Young adults</li><li>Adults</li><li>Everyone</li></ul> <p>Cost?</p> <p>Address for activity?</p> <p>Are there families nearby that are willing to host overnight guests?</p> <p>Contact person for signing up?</p> <p>Contact person sends this information to Kirsten Hastrup for publication on-line and on Facebook.</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:office@umc-ne.org">office@umc-ne.org</a></p> <p>Decision: send this information to the church magazines and headquarters</p> <p><b>The possibilities to consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Possibility: Travelling together to Germany (Staunen) to the Methodist Festival in May 2018 by bus from Finland through Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania</li><li>• Sharing Camp grounds information (Estonia-Camp Gideon, Sweden-Framnas, Latvia-Camp Wesley, Finland – Jumijärvi)</li></ul> <p><b>Possible “Pilgrimage” project</b></p> <p>In order to promote connections we would like to see if there is any interest in opening our homes and churches for visiting Methodists within the conference. We are thinking that this is a good way to get to know each other and, at the same time, a cheap way for young people to travel. The idea is that the host congregation or family provides a place to sleep. It does not have to be a bedroom, but a place for a sleeping bag and access to a toilet. We will be sending out a survey and need to access key persons that can forward the survey to the congregations in their annual conference.</p> <p>Norway            Johanna Lundereng <a href="mailto:johanna.lundereng@metodistkirken.no">johanna.lundereng@metodistkirken.no</a> Denmark        Kirsten Hastrup</p>



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	<p>Finland: Jori Brander Russia: Estonia: Taavi Hollman <a href="mailto:taavi.hollman@gmail.com">taavi.hollman@gmail.com</a> Lithuania: Remigijus Matulaitis Latvia: Edgars Sneidars</p> <p>Suggested questions for a survey: Would your congregation be willing to host guests for overnight stays? Are there families in your congregation that would be interested in hosting overnight guests? What sort of accommodations could you provide? Is there access to a large room for several people with sleeping bags? How many people could stay there? Is there access to a toilet? Is there access to a shower? Are there people wanting to establish a cross-cultural fellowship? Would the accommodations be available?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Year-round</li><li>• Summer</li><li>• Winter</li><li>• Spring</li><li>• Fall</li></ul> <p>Who would be the contact person?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Name</li><li>• Email</li><li>• Telephone</li></ul> <p><b>Friendship Congregations</b></p> <p>Is your congregation interested in establishing a friendship with a congregation in another annual conference? What type of activity would be of interest?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pray for each other</li><li>• Visit each other physically</li><li>• Take trips together</li><li>• Other</li></ul> <p>From March 2017 we had the following information:</p> <p><b>Appendix 1</b></p> <p><b>The present (2015 fall) connections list looks the following:</b></p> <p>Östersund (Sweden) Liepa (Latvia Latvian)</p>



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	<p>Grankulla (Finland Swedish) R�pina (Estonia) Tistedal (Norway) Haapalu (Estonia) Arhus (Denmark) Latvia general Molde (Norway) and Birzhai (Lithuania) Borg� (Finland Swedish) Sakussaare/Viitna (Estonia) Turku (Finland Finnish) Vilnius (Lithuania) Helsinki (Finland Swedish) Kunda (Estonia) Gr�nerlokka Oslo (Norway) Riga 1st (Latvia) Timothy project (Norway Annual Conference) Lithuania district UMW (women) (Norway) women in Estonia and Ukraine Drammen (Norway) Pilviskiai (Lithuania) Malm� Stadionkyrkan - Tallinn Estonian (Estonia)</p> <p><i>wants to get friendship connection:</i></p> <p>Kuopio (Finland) Oulu (Finland) Pirkkala (Finland Finish) Lax� (Sweden)</p> <p><b>Information received and affirmed</b></p> <p><b>Sub Committee International and Ecumenical Representation</b></p> <p>1.The chair Ole Birch opened the meeting with prayers. Leif-G�te Bj�rklund was elected secretary of the subcommittee.</p> <p>2.Reporting.</p> <p>A. The Status of the Reports. The fact that the reports have different status was highlighted. There is a difference in how people have been elected to the positions in boards and commissions. In some cases they have been elected by us, sometimes by the General Conference.</p> <p>B. Should we differentiate between the reports? In all cases regardless of how people have been elected, we should get information about what is going on in different sections of our church. We must, however, also note that many issues discussed in international circles are either not relevant in our context or they might be confidential. Anyway, we have an abundance of reports this time. Nevertheless some reports are still missing. Very few reports on the future, the vast majority of reports talk about what has taken place. We have sent out a matrix, and some of the reporters have followed our guidelines. The preferred format is: 1. One sheet of paper, 2. Reports should be sent to us by September 1<sup>st</sup>, 3. They should include a few questions about how the matters can be relevant to us in our context.</p> <p>C. What to do in cases when we have not received any reports? We send a reminder to the persons concerned and ask for the reports. We ought to have two different types of standard letters as reminders depending on how the people have been elected. In the Central Conference we are interested in knowing what is going on. Moves and perspectives that have an influence on our work should be underscored. We want to bring</p>



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	<p>this matter to our plenary.</p> <p>3. We dealt with the received reports one by one:</p> <p>3.C.3. Report from GCFA. Written by Per-Endre Björnevik. Matters we brought up from the report: How to solve the economic implications for the extraordinary General Conference has been a major concern for GCFA. Ezra has been introduced as a working tool. No questions from our side in relation to the report.</p> <p><b>Proposal: To receive to report with thanks and add it to the minutes. Approved</b></p> <p>3.C.1. General Commission on Status and Role of Women. Written by Berit Westad. No questions. Recommendation to use the resources and materials of the commission. Discussion about the situation for female pastors in Latvia. We noted that there is a general struggle in Northern Europe to keep up the rights for women as influences from conservative Islamic circles grow. We received the report with thanks. We express our support for all women in pastoral work.</p> <p><b>Proposal: To receive to report with thanks and add it to the minutes. Approved</b></p> <p>3.C.2. GBGM. Written by Öyvind Aske. The mission statement mentioned. The move to Georgia has had legal consequences.</p> <p><b>Proposal: To receive to report with thanks and add it to the minutes. Approved</b></p> <p>3.C.13. GBHEM. Written by bishop Eduard Khegay. The report contains a good mix of impressions and factual information. Suggestions about theological hubs around the world. Our comment: Why should there be one in Stockholm? Can anyone supplement the information that is given in this report regarding this text passage: "There are several hubs around the world. For us in Europe the plan is to have LEaD Hub Europe: in Reutligen, Germany and Stockholm, Sweden. So far I do not have information about them, but trust that our episcopal leaders or educational leaders can share information with us in the future."</p> <p><b>Proposal: To receive to report with thanks and add it to the minutes. Approved</b></p> <p>3.C.8. GBCS. Written by Kari S Hay. In the report there is a recommendation to "rethink church". Our comment was that in the Norwegian context there is already another ongoing process initiated by the cabinet. We cannot start this kind of a process as central conference council. But ministry with the poor could be a theme for the next Central Conference. The churches (particularly in the Baltics) are involved in diaconal ministries without talking about it. And ministries initiated by us are going on in the Third World. There is no actual proposal (or structure of a proposal) in the report. What about producing videos about ministry with the poor? Could that inspire us? It is easy nowadays to make these video clips. We could have a list of relevant projects going on. The young ones could be asked to produce this video. Maybe we should ask Kari what she is actually aiming at? Our comments concerning her three</p>



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	<p>suggestions: 1. Through our four areas of church we are actually already "rethinking church". 2. We answer that it is not within our capacity to fulfil this. But we will help her to find these. 3. There are ministries functioning among the poor, e.g. among refugees and alcohol abusers. There is food distribution going on &amp;c.</p> <p><b>Proposal: To receive to report with thanks and add it to the minutes.</b> <b>Approved</b></p> <p>3.C.9. Connectional table. Written by Ole Birch. The matters we brought up from the report for discussion: 1. We are in the middle of a process concerning the General Book of Discipline. 3. US structure. Should we say anything? There are no concrete proposals yet. We highlighted that it was a very unique opportunity to host the meeting of the Connectional table in Norway last May. The "Church without a Center"-presentation was interesting.</p> <p><b>Proposal: To receive to report with thanks and add it to the minutes.</b> <b>Approved</b></p> <p>3.C.4. Africa University. Written by J�rger Thaarup (elected by GBHEM). We reflected on the fact that students of Theology are still the smallest group. Over 25 years an average of 400 students have taken their exams per year. No recommendations.</p> <p><b>Proposal: To receive to report with thanks and add it to the minutes.</b> <b>Approved</b></p> <p>3.C.6. Theological funds. Written by Thomas Risager. We noted that there must a correction of one of the lines in the text. The second sentence in the report should read: "Each year the commission has awarded 1 million USD in grants to educational institutions all over the Central conferences".</p> <p><b>Proposal: To receive to report with thanks and add it to the minutes.</b> <b>Approved</b></p> <p>3.C.11. UMC men. Written by Tarmo Lilleoja. Interesting mention of an Estonian car tour to other countries.</p> <p><b>Proposal: To receive to report with thanks and add it to the minutes.</b> <b>Approved</b></p> <p>3.C.5. European Methodist Council. Written by J�rger Thaarup. Methodist festival in Cuxhaven ought to be well advertised.</p> <p><b>Proposal: To receive to report with thanks and add it to the minutes.</b> <b>Approved</b></p> <p>3.C.12. ECOM. Written by Mark Lewis. The report was received with thanks and added to the minutes.</p> <p><b>Proposal: To receive to report with thanks and add it to the minutes.</b> <b>Approved</b></p> <p>3.C.7. Community of Protestant Churches in Europe to EMC. Written by J�rger Thaarup and Lothar P�ll. The hymn competition was mentioned.</p> <p><b>Proposal: To receive to report with thanks and add it to the minutes.</b> <b>Approved</b></p>



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	<p>3.C.10. British Methodist Annual Conference. Written by Jørgen Thaarup.</p> <p><b>Proposal: To receive to report with thanks and add it to the minutes.</b>  <b>Approved</b></p> <p>A final question from the chair. Does this format work? We noted that we have got much better reports this time. There should be a focus on the future in the reports. We should express our thanks to all those who have sent us reports, in a greater number than ever before. We want an emphasis on what is relevant in our context.</p>
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference Youth Council &amp; European Methodist Youth Council (NEECCYC &amp; EMYC)</b></p> <p>Kirsten Hastrup gave background information on this issue.</p> <p><b>Proposal: To transfer the account from the old NEECCYC into the Central Conference Fund.</b>  <b>Approved</b></p> <p><b>Proposal: To restart the NEECCYC with the bishops office taking care of the accounts in the future.</b>  <b>Approved</b></p> <p><b>Proposal: That the NEECCYC meet every year in connection with the yearly EMYC meeting.</b>  <b>Approved</b></p> <p><b>Proposal: A proposed budget according to the document 5.1.</b>  <b>Approved</b></p> <p>The youth leader ask for guidelines for the future work of the NEECCYC. What do we want them to do?</p> <p><b>Proposal: The office will meet online with talk with the NEECCYC to convey decisions.</b></p> <p>Some leading words for what the NEECCYC could be doing in the future, could be relations, connections and regional. They will talk about this and about the further issues raised in the letter from the young people.  <b>Approved</b></p> <p>We have 12 places at The Global Young Peoples Convocation I South Africa in 2018. We recommend that we send one per annual Conference. NEECCYC will handle the issue of finances and selection.</p>
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>Committee on Episcopacy</b></p> <p>Chair: Per-Endre Bjørnevik</p> <p><b>a. Bishop's personal report</b>          Christian Alsted presented his personal report. A few questions for the bishop where asked and answered.</p> <p><b>The report was received with thanks.</b></p> <p><b>Proposal by Ole Birch: That we elect three people to consider the</b></p>



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	<p><b>format of the work of the Committee on Episcopacy.</b></p> <p>Guiding principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That we should speak to the bishop on his ministry.</li> <li>2. That there should be information gathered regularly from key people on the ministry of the bishop.</li> <li>3. That the focus of the meeting should be               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. The priorities of the bishop.</li> <li>II. The effectiveness of the bishop.</li> <li>III. The wellbeing of the bishop.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p><b>Approved</b></p> <p>Meeli Tankler, Hilde Marie Movafagh and Ole Birch were elected. (Hilde Marie Movafagh will convene the group)</p> <p>The group reports back at the spring meeting</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>b. Office report</b> Kirsten Hastrup presented the office report</li> <li><b>c. Budget for the Episcopal Fund</b> (approved by email and sent to GCFA September 2017)</li> </ol>
7	<p><b>Ezra</b></p> <p>Introduction Kirsten Hastrup</p> <p>Document handling and sharing within the Nordic and Baltic Area Group. A short introduction to the EZRA system provided by GCFA</p>
8	<p><b>Baltic Pastors' Salary and Pension Support Fund</b></p> <p>Kirsten Hastrup gave an orientation on the status and the budget of the fund according to document.</p> <p><b>The budget was approved.</b></p>
9	<p><b>Orientations from the Bishop</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. European Cabinet Focus on future of UMC in Europe and on church development</li> <li>b. School of Congregational Development 2019 in Tallinn. Preparations for the SCD are on their way.</li> <li>c. EBDAC, Christian Alsted gave an historical orientation of the work of the European Board of Drugs and Alcohol Concerns. The European bishops will work with EBDAC aiming for the work to continue in some manner.</li> <li>d. The Methodist Festival in Cuxhaven in the spring of 2018.</li> </ol>
10	<p><b>Representation:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Conference of European Churches Assembly in June 2018, Christian Alsted is not able to go. Sub could be from</li> </ol>



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	<p>CCC or a DS. Hilde Marie Øgreid Movafagh might be going. Leif Göte Björklund is interested.</p> <p><b>Proposal: To give Christian Alsted the authority to find a substitute.</b>  <b>Approved.</b></p> <p>b. World Methodist Council</p> <p>First week of July 2018 in Soul, Korea. Christian might have problems going. He will come back.</p>
11	<p><b>World Methodist conference 2021 in Gothenburg</b></p> <p>Orientation, no news.</p>
12	<p><b>Commission on a Way Forward</b></p> <p>Orientation and conversation</p>
13	<p><b>The Future of the Episcopal Area and Central Conference</b></p> <p>Orientation and conversation.</p>
	<p>After the meeting was closed Maria Thaarup Antorini and Steiner Hjerpseth, who are leaving the council, were thanked for their work.</p> <p>On Friday evening, we gathered for worship and communion in the sanctuary of The Jerusalem Church lead by Maria Thaarup Antorini and Ole Birch. Ole Birch preached on Matt. 21, 33-46 and spoke about Jesus also being a man of conflict.</p> <p>On Saturday morning, Jori Brander led us in devotion and prayer. He read Ex. 32, 31-32. Moses offering his life for his people. Message: Prayer changes us.</p>