



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

NORTHERN EUROPE AND EURASIA CENTRAL CONFERENCE

Minutes - Nordic & Baltic Area Group Meeting, November 11 – 12 at Cabinn Metro, Copenhagen.

Thursday start 14:30 21:30 including dinner.

Friday 8:30 – 12, Reception 15 – 17 at Jerusalemskirken

Present: Ingull Grefslie (NO), Hilde Marie Ørgried Movafagh (NO), Per-Endre Bjørnevik (NO), Svein Veland (NO), Ole Birch (DK), Meeli Tankler (EE), Bettina Pedersen (DK), Leif Göte Björklund (FS), Remigijus Matulaitis (LT).

Christian Alsted, Kirsten Hastrup.

Present online: Edgars Snieders (LV) Robert Tserenkov (EE)

Absent: Jori Brander (FF)

Minutes by Ole Birch.

Item	Minutes
	<p>Opening of the meeting and approval of the agenda.</p> <p>Edgars Snieders shared about the lockdown that Latvia is in right now.</p> <p>Christian Alsted reflected on the difficult situation of our churches, that the prolonged pandemic has put them in. He read Rom. 12 and the message focused on love. It is so easy to blame each other in difficult times, but now is time to bless each other.</p> <p>He led us in prayer.</p> <p>CA presented the program for our two-day meeting.</p> <p>The agenda was approved.</p>
1	<p>Work in subcommittees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Agenda – <u>Continued Education</u>b. Agenda – <u>Development of the connection in the Episcopal Area:</u>c. Agenda – <u>International and Ecumenical Representation</u>
2	<p>Reporting from Subcommittees</p> <p>Subcommittee: Continued education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Nordic Perspectives on Methodism<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The next book: We have already decided that the fourth book will be on pastoral care and counselling, and the work to ask for proposals has already started. Our editor of the third book is no longer a member of the UMC, and Hilde Marie is willing to be the editor. The person who did the design-work is still on board.b. The future of the book series We have people who are able to write articles, but it is a big work to inspire and encourage them actually to do so. There is also a need of mentoring during the



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	<p>writing-process to meet the level of published material that we aim for. Then there is editing, proof-reading, designing, printing, promoting, selling. The third book was mainly digital but did not sell much. We believe it is a right priority. The bishop also affirms that it is important work, and we need to publish our own material, and that the book series is a good way of doing so if we have the human resources needed to do it. The bishop will contact Abingdon and suggest a kind of co-operation. We shall also contact the GBHEM about this project. Our proposal is that the working group is still the entity who owns the book series and manages it, but that the actual work would be outsourced to the seminaries.</p> <p>2. Planned events on continued education</p> <p>Area Cabinet has discussed the need for continued education and proposed that in every 4 years UMC seminary in Oslo and every 4 years the UMC seminary in Tallinn will put together the course for continued education for clergy in the area. Costs will be covered by the CC fund Nordic Theological Means, and the main responsibility would be on seminaries.</p> <p>Action Items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Applications for theological means<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Application Oord (attachment 1.a.2. ca. 10.000 NOK) –Proposal to support. Approvedb. Application female leaders – as this research project is valuable for the UMC in Norway we propose to support with up to 20 000 NOK in the same amount as the Methodist church in Norway will contribute. Approved2. Proposal about continued education: in every second year either UMC seminary in Oslo or the UMC seminary in Tallinn will put together the course for continued education for clergy in the whole area. Costs will be covered by the CC fund Nordic Theological Means, and the main responsibility on organizing would be on seminaries. <p>The proposal was approved.</p> <p>Subcommittee: Development of the connection.</p> <p>We started with a conversation about the overall connections in the Area. It seems like there were more connections across the borders “in the old days” like friendship congregations, visiting each other, youthwork, etc.</p> <p>SoCD 2019 was a good starting point for connections in the youth work, but a lot faded away with Corona. It has to be restarted and therefore the group strongly recommends a new SoCD when possible.</p> <p>The Danish and Norwegian youth organizations cooperate on easter camp where a group of Norwegians visited Denmark and New Year Camp 2021/22 where a group of Danish will visit Norway. The committee wants to support and encourage this kind of cooperation.</p>



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	<p>We talked about sharing knowledge and best practice. Congregations from Norway want to visit MSA (The Danish Social/Diaconal work) and learn from them.</p> <p>We talked about various ways of using online media to strengthen the connections:</p> <p>Right now, a group of young pastors from the area meet once a month on zoom for a read along of the book "Parenting as a church leader".</p> <p>The group recommends webinars about online communication for the whole area and online presence of the bishop, for instance in connection with a Sunday Service to explain the situation of the church (maybe with possibility to ask questions).</p> <p>Kirsten informed about the focus on online communication at the episcopal office. We have been working with a communication specialist with an aim to enhance our communication at our facebook site. We will share best practice and positive stories about Children's ministry during this Autumn and Winter, and in 2022 the theme will be Fresh Expression.</p> <p>Action items:</p> <p>Proposal: The group will come up with a text to encourage local churches to find a partner congregation in our area.</p> <p>The Proposal was approved.</p> <p>Subcommittee: International and Ecumenical Representation</p> <p>Reports from various representatives.</p> <p>1c1 Community of Protestant Churches, Jørgen Thaarup.</p> <p>Received and added to the minutes.</p> <p>1c2 Connectional Table, Ole Birch.</p> <p>Received and added to the minutes.</p> <p>1c3 Commission on the status and role of women, Berit Westad.</p> <p>Received and added to the minutes.</p> <p>1c4 GCUMM, Tarmo Lilleoja.</p> <p>Received and added to the minutes.</p> <p>1c5 Africa University. A report about a very serious situation.</p> <p>Received and added to the minutes.</p>



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	<p>1c6 GCFA. Pen-Endre Bjørnevik. Church finances are changing dramatically. There is a conversation on the future of episcopal salaries. Technical solutions for an online GC are not available.</p> <p>Received and added to the minutes.</p> <p>1c9 UMCOM, Karl Anders Ellingsen.</p> <p>Received and added to the minutes</p>
3	<p>Communication in the episcopal area</p> <p>Kirsten Hastrup gave an orientation on her work with using social media on behalf the episcopal office. The office is working with the Communication Bureau “Hello Church”.</p>
4	<p>Committee on Episcopacy</p> <p>Evaluation of the Episcopal Ministry (Per-Endre/Ole Birch)</p> <p>Conclusion:</p> <p>The Committee on Episcopacy has conducted its quadrennial evaluation of the Episcopal ministry and concludes that we have a highly skilled bishop that serves us well in all of the areas relevant for a bishop. We have given him feedback on the responses from the Episcopal Ministry Survey and had a fruitful conversation about it.</p> <p>Proposal: For the next meeting Per-Endre Bjørnevik og Ole Birch propose that the committee takes time to study the documents concerning the episcopal ministry adopted in 1995 and 1999 by the Committee on Episcopacy.</p> <p>The proposal was approved.</p>
5	<p>UMC now and in the future</p> <p>a. Conversation with the European Bishops</p> <p>For this item Bishop Patrick Streiff, Bishop Edward Khegay and Bishop Harald Rückert joined our meeting via internet.</p> <p>They each gave a briefing on the situation in their Central Conference especially regarding the effects of the pandemic and the prospects of a split in the UMC and answered a few questions. After this the three bishops left the meeting and we continued.</p> <p>b. General Conference: What are the implications of further postponement?</p> <p>Se attached PowerPoint presentation be Christian Alsted.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. at General Church level. Orientation by Christian Alsted.2. at Central Conference level. Orientation by Christian Alsted. <p>Conversation on the possibility of having a Central Conference even if the General Conference is postponed again.</p>



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	<p>Proposal by Ole Birch: That we investigate the implications of having a CC in 2023 whether the GC 2022 go ahead or not.</p> <p>The proposal was approved.</p> <p>Who will do it? Leif Göte Björklund, Ole Birch, Christian Alsted, Meeli Tankler.</p> <p>Approved</p> <p>c. Methodism in Europe</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review of documents from European Bishops. Se attachment.2. Statement from 3 European Bishops. Se attachment.3. Current conversations in the Nordic & Baltic Area <p>CA shared his experiences and perspectives on the situation in the different parts of the area. He warned against creating hostile images of those we disagree with.</p> <p>CA gave an orientation on the different proceedings that must be followed in case a annual conference or a charge conference wishes to leave the UMC.</p> <p>d. Central Conference</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Planning Planning has been on pause during Covid 19, but some work on a framework was done before that. Our meeting in March will set the direction for further planning.2. Potential future implications Many aspects need to be taken into consideration to find a path to leave each other in a friendly way. Before the next ordinary Central Conference we must work on preparing the conferences sessions so that the CC can make the appropriate decisions concerning episcopal elections and future organization of the CC, knowing that some AC may wish to leave.3. Episcopal elections Postponed till our next meeting
6	<p>Matters of Orientation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Course of study – the project is moving forward. Area cabinet will have a proposal ready in the spring of 2022.b. School of Congregational Development- We hope for a School in the fall 2023 in Tallinn if the GC takes place in 2022.c. Round Table – CA will hold online-meetings with the group. He is planning for a face to face meeting after the General Conference.d. Vaccine Equity – documents from The Connectional Table and The European Commission



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	<p>on Mission.</p> <p>CA gave an orientation about the proposal of the Connectional Table to make vaccine equity a missional priority. The Council of Bishops has supported the proposal unanimously. The European Commission on Mission has spoken about it, as has the Ecumenical Council of Norway.</p> <p>https://www.umnews.org/en/news/covid-19-vaccination-named-missional-priority</p> <p>e. Migration: EU's safeguarding of borders. Remigijus Matulaitis and Edgars Snieders gave an orientation on the situation in Lithuania.</p> <p>f. Green church – climate change Orientation on change of travel policies.</p>
7	<p>Other Matters</p> <p>Next meeting: Proposal: 24 – 25 March 2022, Full Council meeting in Tallinn.</p> <p>Approved.</p> <p>Meeli Tankler led us in a closing prayer.</p>