



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

NORTHERN EUROPE AND EURASIA CENTRAL CONFERENCE

Minutes - Nordic & Baltic Area Group Meeting 2019

October 4, at 13:00 – October 5 at 16:00 at "Refugium Smidstrup Strand"

Item	Minutes
1	Lunch
2	<p>Opening and approval of agenda and minutes from last meeting.</p> <p>CA shared thoughts on Zachariah and Paul on holding society accountable to the gospel. He reminded us of our Social Creed that goes all the way back to 1908. He also told us how the Methodist building in Washington is a symbol of the church holding the lawmakers accountable to the gospel. He challenged us to hold on to this basic Methodist tradition and praxis. CA lead us in prayer for the world, the church and our meeting.</p> <p>The agenda was approved.</p> <p>The minutes of the area group meeting March 29, 2019 were approved.</p> <p>The minutes of the central conference council meeting March 30, 2019 were approved.</p>
3	<p>Work in subcommittees:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">Agenda – <u>Continued Education</u> Applications to the Nordic Theological MeansAgenda – <u>Development of the connection in the Episcopal Area:</u> Please see separate agendaAgenda – <u>International and Ecumenical Representation:</u> reports from representatives in agencies and councils.
4	<p>Reports & Action Items from the Subcommittees</p> <p>Subcommittee: Continued Education</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">Nordic Perspectives on Methodism – Book-project<ol style="list-style-type: none">Update on book 3, released in Tallinn in september<p>We sold much less books than we were hoping. It might have been due to the relatively high price.</p>responses from committee: <p>We are proud that the project has continued, and especially grateful to Hilde Marie for being «the engine» of the whole project.</p> <p>We are concerned that in this book we had only female writers; one man was interviewed – we ask whether it is characteristic to the topic about children and youth?</p>



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	<p>It was a good opportunity to release the book about the younger generation at the SoCD where many young people were present.</p> <p>Good development is the e-book format that allows to spread the good material. The distribution is still a problem. We can propose DS-s to buy copies of this book and give to youth workers. E.g. Lithuania has educational funds for this kind of activities. Bishop will make this proposal.</p> <p>We shall look around for best printing prices in the area for the next book. Remigijus will ask in Lithuania.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">c. Plans for book 4, to be released in Tallinn in March 2021</p> <p>The topic will be pastoral care, and some people already have shown interest in contributing. More specific guidelines will be ready by the end of the year 2020.</p> <p>2. Seminar on preaching for clergy and lay preachers January 2021</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a. Update from Robert, Karen and Remigijus: there has been a discussion about the place (Tallinn or Riga?), and participants: pastors and lay preachers. Robert, Remigijus and Meeli will discuss the place.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">b. To find a date DS-s will discuss with each other at their area cabinet meeting</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">c. To invite one key note speaker from outside the area, and have several workshops by people from the area. Hilde Marie will suggest some names for keynote speaker, Karen will work on workshop ideas.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">d. Financial issues: maybe different fees for different areas like it was at the SoCD. It would be possible to cover speakers's expenses from Nordic Theological Means.</p> <p>3. Application for Nordic Theological Fund</p> <p>Proposal: The Area group support the application from UMC seminary in Norway, and ask to inquire for possibilities to livestream the lectures for pastors in other countries.</p> <p>The proposal was approved.</p> <p>Proposal: The Area group support the application from Jorgen Thaarup for reprinting the book for lay preachers' education in half of asked amount (5000) because it is on the edge of the guidelines for the fund. We would expect that the sale of the book would create a possibility for reprints.</p> <p>Counter proposal by Per-Endre Bjørnevig: To grant up to 10.000 to the project and ask Jørgen Thaarup to find other financing if he can.</p> <p>Per-Åndre Bjørneviks proposal was approved.</p> <p>4. New plans: we shall propose book 5 with a bit broader content, (e.g. What is the church?) in 2023.</p> <p>We shall have a skype meeting in January to follow up.</p>



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	<p data-bbox="352 427 1441 461">Subcommittee: Development of the connection in the Episcopal Area:</p> <p data-bbox="352 483 1441 589">The survey trying to connect Methodists to different events and summer activities did not give the response or results we were looking for. We concluded that it better to start with a small event that we can manage.</p> <p data-bbox="352 618 1070 647">NORTH NORWAY INSPIRATIONAL WEEKEND – Invite Finland</p> <p data-bbox="352 676 1441 1133">The North Norway Inspirational weekend is held every 3rd weekend in September. The congregations in North Norway and North Finland can feel quite isolated, and this weekend could help make connections between the 2 annual conferences. The district superintendents for these areas are members of the subcommittee and can follow up the plans directly. It looks like the Inspirational weekend will be in Tromsø I 2020. The plan for the time being is to invite all the congregations from Finland. They could arrive on Wednesday and stay in homes. We would arrange trips or hikes in the nature. The Inspirational Weekend would start on Friday as usual. A while ago the Finnish conference had Serenity services but not so much now. Many congregations in Northern Norway have success with Serenity Services and could give lectures and share ideas to get this revived. The Finnish conference has had focus on prayer and contemplative prayer. They could teach on this subject and share their experiences.</p> <p data-bbox="352 1164 820 1193">THE WORLD METHODIST CONFERENCE</p> <p data-bbox="352 1223 1441 1442">We discussed the relatively low participation at SOCD which is a wonderful opportunity to network with other Methodists and be inspired. We feel that the event wasn't emphasized enough in Norway, for example. It was business-as-usual in the weekends prior to and after SoCD and many said they didn't have time. Also, there was a focus on sending groups from congregations, but some people would have liked to participate if they had known there were others there on their own. What can we learn from this?</p> <ol data-bbox="400 1473 1441 2029" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="400 1473 1441 1621">1. We need to prioritize the next big event which is in Sweden in August 2021. Encourage people to not plan other meetings or trips around this time. This is a once-in-a-lifetime event. We want as many as possible to look at this as THE EVENT for 2021.<li data-bbox="400 1653 1441 1800">2. Posters should be made already this winter. The program does not have to be final but time, theme, costs should be made known. The logo is finished. The planning committee could provide enough details or make a sample poster with space for information important for the local communities and in the appropriate language.<li data-bbox="400 1832 1441 1980">3. The costs look to be about 400 Euro for the registration fee. Could we set aside money for "scholarships" to help cover the costs of this and transportation? 'Application form and criteria for scholarship should be generated from the bishop's office.<li data-bbox="400 2011 1441 2029">4. Group participation should be a priority. Traveling together by chartered bus



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	<p>would create a cohesive group even before the event. If an annual conference sets aside money for event they could apply for matching funds from the central conference.</p> <p>5. There is already a Facebook page for the conference. Each conference should do what they can share the page and updates as they come.</p> <p>6. Methodist Women have their own conference the week before. Could we encourage the Methodist Women in Norway to start a scholarship or sponsor some participants?</p> <p>PROPOSALS:</p> <p>1. Proposal of intent: To set aside money for individual scholarships for The World Methodist Conference 2021 in the 2021 budget. Scholarships can also be awarded to a conference that wants to charter transport for larger groups.</p> <p>The proposal was approved</p> <p>2. Allocate money to cover the costs of making and printing posters, postal costs. Etc. If an annual conference has routines for sending information in the mail, this poster should be included. This should happen in January 2020.</p> <p>The Proposal was approved.</p> <p>Subcommittee: International and Ecumenical Representation</p> <p>3.1 Report from GCSRW Berit Westad</p> <p>We propose that the candidates for a seat on this board in the next term are asked to work on an adaptation of the survey on sexual harassment put together by GCSRW.</p> <p>Proposal: To receive and add to the minutes.</p> <p>The proposal was approved</p> <p>3.2 Africa University – Jørgen Thaarup</p> <p>We note with gladness that the effectiveness and educational level of the staff has improved.</p> <p>Proposal: To receive and add to the minutes.</p> <p>The proposal was approved</p> <p>3.3 UMCOM – Karl Anders Ellingsen</p> <p>UMCOM wants to merge with GCFA. Their budget is being cut in the next Quadrennium.</p> <p>Proposal: To receive and add to the minutes.</p> <p>The proposal was approved</p> <p>3.4 ECOM – Mark Lewis</p> <p>Proposal: To ask ML if the issue of antisemitism is part of their conversation and to add the report to the minutes. Sarah Tiainen offers to do the asking.</p>



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	<p>Proposal: To receive and add to the minutes. The proposal was approved</p>
	<p>3.5 GCOMM - Tarmo Lilleoja Proposal: To receive and add to the minutes. The proposal was approved</p>
	<p>3.6 GCFA – Per-Endre Bjørnevig Attention to pt. 3.1 “decrease the first quarter of 2020 episcopal office payment by fifty percent”, this is now a decision by GCFA. We have questions about the cost numbers of bishops in the US as compared to Europe as presented to Per-Endre by GCFA staff. CA gave an explanation on why the GCFA thinks the apportionments will come out with a lower amount this year. Proposal: To receive and add to the minutes and continue the conversation under our agenda point: budget. The proposal was approved</p>
	<p>3.7 The Connectional Table – Ole Birch Proposal: To receive and add to the minutes. The proposal was approved</p>
	<p>3.8 Standing Com. - Jørgen Thaarup No proposal for a General Book of Discipline will come to the GC. Proposal: To receive and add to the minutes. The proposal was approved</p>
	<p>3.9 Theological Educational Fund – Thomas Risager Proposal: To receive and add to the minutes. The proposal was approved</p>
	<p>3.11 GBGM – Øivind Aske Proposal: To receive and add to the minutes. The proposal was approved</p>
	<p>3.12 GBCS Kari S. Hay Concerning Karis question: “Why does the CCC ask for proposals if we have no capacity to lift a specific task?” There is a need to clarify to the people reporting to us what they can expect the Central Conference Council to do with the proposals and ideas they send to us. Proposal: The subcommittee will present a revised template for the reporting at the next area group meeting. The proposal was approved.</p>
	<p>Proposal: To receive and add to the minutes. The proposal was approved</p>
	<p>3.13 EMC – Jørgen Thaarup Proposal: To receive and add to the minutes. The proposal was approved</p>



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	<p>We have not received any report from:</p> <p>The division on Ministries with Young People - Yulia Starodubets European Methodist Youth Council – Stefanie Buadu NEECCYC – Stefanie Buadu (note from Kirsten: this report was received after our meeting and will be presented at the next Area Group Meeting) Commission on the General Conference – Audun Vestad The Conference of European Churches – Leif Göte Björklund (note from Kirsten: There has been no meetings at the CEC since the last report from Leif-Göte, and thus nothing to report)</p>
5	<p>The future of the UMC Nordic and Baltic</p> <p>Bishop Alsted gave a report regarding the ongoing processes for a way forward for the UMC. He told us about his involvement in the initiative by some African bishops to gather the leaders of the different progressive, moderate and conservative groups in the US. This process is ongoing with several meetings including a professional mediator.</p> <p>The bishop gave a briefing on the different plans that have emerged after the called session and reported on the changes in what delegates have been elected to Jurisdictional Conference and General Conference. He will send a more detailed description of the main plans to the members of the council. The actual petitions and the legislative language is not known, so we do not know the real content yet.</p> <p>The Bishop briefed us on the different statements made by African and Philippine bishops and shared at statement made by three of the European bishops (Christian Alsted, Harald Ruckert and Patrick Streiff).</p> <p>We looked at the timetable for the different processes around this issue from now until the Central Conference.</p> <p>Saturday morning CA asked again if there were any further comments to the position paper of the European bishop. Some new opinions and ideas about our situation were shared.</p> <p>Evening devotion</p> <p>Bishops Christian Alsted led us in reflexions on 2. Kor. 5, 16-21 about the ministry of reconciliation.</p>
6 Saturday	<p>Sarah Tiainen led us in the morning Devotion with Lectio Divina on 2. Cor. 5, 18-24 and communion.</p> <p>Committee on Episcopacy Chair: Per-Endre Bjørnevik</p> <p>Office report and budget. The original budget, without the reductions presented. The reductions by GCFA, was presented they are around 200.000 D. Kr. (27.000 Euros) reduction of office allowance and housing. The reduction comes because of declining</p>



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	<p>apportionments in the US.</p> <p>Proposals:</p> <p>We amended the presented budget for 2020 not to contain any increase in the bishops' salary.</p> <p>We approved the budget and for 2020, we will cover the deficit from our reserves. For 2021, we will reduce our contributions for the episcopal Fund to cover the deficit. We cannot reduce salaries, nor housing allowance, and we cannot function with a smaller office.</p> <p>The 2021 budget proposal will be presented at the spring meeting 2020.</p> <p>Episcopal election (attach procedures from CC 2016)</p> <p>Per-Endre Bjørnevik presented the survey among the annual conferences on the issue of making a temporary change to the discipline to make it possible to re-elect Christian Alsted for bishop for another four years. The survey gave a clear result; the majority of the annual conferences support this.</p> <p>Proposal: Hilde Marie Øgreid Movafagh will prepare a petition to this end at our next meeting.</p> <p>The proposal was adopted.</p> <p>Presentation of the Bishop's personal report and days of presence. Christian Alsted pointed to the part of the report where he speaks about his decision not to reveal his personal position on the question of human sexuality in order to be able to lead in all his conferences.</p> <p>The Bishop and his assistant left the room.</p> <p>We had a good conversation about the bishop's ministry; followed by a good conversation with the bishop. We support the decision by the bishop not to reveal his position on human sexuality.</p>
7	<p>Central Conference 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Final version of the guidelines for planning of Central Conference. The new guidelines were approved with a few additions. See document. Proposal: To save money we recommend to the full council that the CC starts on Thursday afternoon. The proposal was approved.b. The future of the Northern European and Eurasia CC The fall meeting 2020 will be a full council meeting. Here we must talk about the result of the spring general conference and prepare petitions for the CC 2021. We will alert the Committee on the BoD to their task of coming up with proposals for adaptations to the BoD to the central conference.



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	<p style="color: red;">Secretary's note: After our meeting we realised that such a committee has not existed since we stopped translating the BoD into Nordic languages a number of Central Conferences ago. This work has instead been done by the bishops.</p>
8	<p>Orientation from the Bishop</p> <p>a. European Cabinet Meeting held in December 2018. New meeting planned for December 2019 to develop relationship and work on the theme "Leading in times of deep crisis". Visiting speakers from England and Ireland.</p> <p>b. School of Congregational Development 2019 in Tallinn The evaluation will be made by the area cabinet in December. A survey is on its way from all the participants. It looks positive.</p> <p>c. World Methodist Conference 2021 in Gothenburg. We were informed about this yesterday. The participation fee will be 400\$ (50\$ for young people).</p> <p>Proposal: We will nominate the Methodists in Italy and their partners in their ministry for boat refugees in the Mediterranean Sea for the Methodist Peace Prize. Ole Birch and the Copenhagen office will develop a nomination and try to build a coalition behind to nomination.</p> <p>Proposal was approved.</p> <p>Proposal: We need to create a committee on the Northern Europe and Eurasia Book of Discipline, 3 people and one of the bishops. They must prepare the adaptive work of the Central Conference. Each of us must ask our Annual Conference Councils for proposals, and we will put together the committee in the spring meeting.</p> <p>The proposal was approved.</p> <p style="color: red;">Secretary's note: After our meeting we realised that such a committee has not existed since we stopped translation the BoD into Nordic languages several Central Conferences ago. This work has instead been done by the bishops.</p>
9	<p>Representation: Conference of European Churches Nothing to report.</p>
10	<p>Other matters Nothing to report</p>
11	<p>Coffee</p>
12	<p>Departure</p>