



THE NORTHERN EUROPE AND EURASIA CENTRAL CONFERENCE  
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
THE CENTRAL CONFERENCE COUNCIL

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Copenhagen 4. May 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**THE UKRAINE MOLDOVA PROVISIONAL AC MOVED FROM EURASIA TO THE NORDIC AND BALTIC AREA**

In an extra session the 30<sup>th</sup> of April the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference by a 98% majority vote decided to temporarily and with immediate effect move the Ukraine Moldova Provisional Annual Conference from the Eurasia to the Nordic and Baltic Episcopal Area.

The extra session was called online in response to the war in Ukraine and limited to act upon a motion of the Central Conference Council to temporarily until the next regular session to change the borders of the two episcopal areas of the central conference.

Out of the 13 countries in the central conference the delegates from Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and the Russian Federation together with bishop Eduard Khegay had decided not to participate in the conference. In a letter to the conference, they explained that the reason for their absence was fear of Russophobia or discrimination based on nationality. The letter also asked the conference not to make any decision but to wait until a face-to-face format is possible and only after the cessation of hostilities. The letter was read to the conference in its entirety.

Rev. Dr. Hilde Marie Øgreid Movafagh (Norway), a member of the central conference council, stressed that the motion was non-political, not an expression of East-West conflict, and not an attempt to expand the Nordic and Baltic Episcopal Area. "The only motivation is the real need to help the Ukraine in its time of present need and to recognise that despite the conciliatory work of the brave Eurasian Bishop Khegay it is impossible politically to have a Russian leadership of a church in Ukraine today." Rev. Robert Tserenkov (Estonia), also a council member, said; "the current situation calls for an immediate implementation of this motion since there is currently no other viable solution."

Several delegates from Ukraine spoke to the motion. Lay delegate Alexandre Arnaut said: "The Ukrainian pastors and members decided they could no longer be under Russia, and they wanted to be free to choose where they want to go to." The district superintendent Oleg Starodubets thanked the Nordic and Baltic members of the central conference for "initiating the process to care for and protect them. The Ukrainian brothers and sisters and their leaders have recently met together to discuss the topic on the table at this Central Conference and supported this motion." Lay delegate Alina Hrab from Ukraine explained: "Right now, there is





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war with Russia who is the enemy, and we cannot serve the Ukrainian people when the bishop is in Russia.”

The delegates were clearly affected by the seriousness of the situation, and the entire conference took place in a spirit of discernment with several pauses for prayer.

The motion was amended to read: ***The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference decide to temporarily, until the next ordinary Central Conference, change the borders of the episcopal areas in the Central Conference so that the Ukraine and Moldova Provisional Annual Conference be moved to the Nordic and Baltic episcopal area. In accordance with Paragraph 543.5 in the Book of Discipline, this motion has been presented for both bishops.***

The motion passed with 48 votes in favour, none against and one abstention.

The conference, with 47 votes in favour, one against and no abstentions, added the following explaining sentence: **In its decision, the Central Conference chooses to place decisive emphasis on the wishes of the annual conference in question.**

Bishop Patrick Streiff presided during the consideration of the motion.

Bishop Hans Växby led the conference in prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the implementation of the decision and over bishop Alsted, who is assuming episcopal leadership of the Ukraine-Moldova Provisional Annual Conference. Several delegates led in prayer for peace, for Ukraine and for the central conference.

Bishop Alsted closed the conference with the Lord’s Blessing.

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