

# THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## NORTHERN EUROPE AND EURASIA CENTRAL CONFERENCE

Extra session March 18. 2023 – ONLINE

### Minutes

#### 1. Welcome

Bishop Christian Alsted welcomed the members and the guests to the extra session of The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference. He informed the conference that this meeting is being recorded for the purpose of the minutes. The recording will be erased after the first meeting of the CCC.

#### 2. Opening Worship

Bishop Stefan Zücher reflected on the story where Jesus sends out his disciples to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Luke. 19, 5. Jesus also visited Zakæus. The Shalom of God came to Zakæus. This had important consequences for Zakæus. The gospel has transforming power, and this is also the power we are sent to the world with. The opening online service also featured the hymns “O, for a thousand Tongues to sing” and “Be thou my vision”.

#### 3. Opening business

a. Roll call – secretary rev. Ole Birch

#### Voting members

The following 64 people were the elected members from the annual conferences with voting rights in the Central Conference.

##### Central Russia Annual Conference

Irina Margulis (Clergy)  
Olga Kobzeva (Lay)  
Sergei Nikolaev (Clergy)  
Aleksy Voronov

##### Denmark Annual Conference

Jørgen Thaarup (Clergy)  
Thomas Risager (Clergy)  
Louise Aaen (Clergy)  
Shantii Digebjerg (Lay)  
Andreas Morsbøl (Lay)  
Jonatan Steinvig (Lay)

##### Eastern Russia and Central Asia provisional Annual Conference

Dmitriy Lysin (Clergy)  
Daniil Kumpyak (Lay)  
Artem Golov (Clergy)

Yulia Stukalova (Lay)

**Estonia Annual Conference**

Priit Tamm (EST) (Clergy)  
 Robert Tserenkov (EST) (Clergy)  
 Mark Nelson (EST) (Clergy)  
 Kaupo Kant (EST) (Clergy)  
 Edgars Sneiders (LV) (Clergy)  
 Remigijus Matulaitis (LT)  
 Ināra Avotina (LV) (Lay) Absent.  
 Marjana Luist (EST) (Lay)  
 Urmas Sassian (EST) (Lay)  
 Tarmo Lilleoja (EST) (Lay)  
 Meeli Tankler (EST) (Lay)  
 Kristina Matulaitienė (LT) (Lay)

**Finland (F) Provisional Annual Conference**

Veli Loponen (Clergy)  
 Jori Brander (Clergy). Absent. Substitute: Soile Kasi  
 Mika Partanen (Clergy)  
 Kreetta Heiskari (Lay)  
 Säde Loponen (Lay)  
 Saara Heimonen (Lay)

**Finland (S) Provisional Annual Conference**

Sarah Tiainen (Clergy)  
 Nils Gustav Salin (Clergy)  
 Jenny Jansson (Lay)  
 Andreas Elfving (Lay)

**North-West Russia and Belarus Provisional Annual Conference**

Andrei Kim (Clergy)  
 Elena Chudinova (Clergy)  
 Elena Kitaeva Soultan (Lay)  
 Natalia Konstantinova (Lay)

**Norway Annual Conference**

Hilde-Marie Øgreid Movafagh (Clergy)  
 Helene Benedikte Granum Aanestad (Clergy)  
 Jon Erik Bråthen (Clergy)  
 Hilde Sanden-Bjønnes (Clergy)  
 Ola Westad (Clergy) Left the meeting around 12.00. S substitute; Frøydis Grinna  
 Helen Byholt Lovelace (Clergy)  
 Knut Refsdal (Clergy)  
 Dag Martin Østevold (Clergy)  
 Audun Westad (Lay)  
 Stephanie Buadu (Lay)  
 Jon Løvland (Lay) Absent. Substitute: Ingerid Hoggen  
 Camilla Garn Røed (Lay)

Jan Magne Linnsund (Lay)  
 Maia Blomhoff Holm (Lay)  
 Magnus Løvland (Lay)  
 Anders Isnes (Lay)

#### **Southern Russia Provisional Annual Conference**

Aleksandr Pererva (Clergy)  
 Oleg Pozharskiy (Clergy) Absent. Substitute: Irina Metina.  
 Sergey Torlin (Lay)  
 Nadezhda Kiseleva (Lay)

#### **Ukraine and Moldova Provisional Annual Conference**

Oleg Starodubets (Clergy)  
 Yulia Starodubets (Clergy)  
 Alina Grab (Lay)  
 Alexandr Arnaut (lay)

63 elected members with voting rights from the annual conferences were present. This represents 98 % of the voting members. We have a quorum.

Jørgen Thaarup Raised the question of Andrei Kims participations as a voting member of the Conference. Andrei Kim is noted as a member of the leadership team of the Global Methodist Church on their website.

Bishop Christian Alsted referred the matter to the Judicial Court.

### **Non-voting members.**

#### **Equmenical guest**

Lasse Svenson, Uniting Church, Sweden.

#### **Central Conference Council members who are not elected**

Bettina Pedersen (DK)  
 Ole Birch (DK)  
 Sergei Pugachev (EA)  
 Svetlana Tsoy (EA)  
 Jori Brander (FF) Absent.  
 Per-Endre Bjørnevik (NO)  
 Svein Veland (NO)  
 Ingull Grefslie (NO).

#### **Judicial Court Members**

Keld Munk (DK)  
 Steinar Hjerpseth (N)

#### **Official guests**

Bishop Harald Rückert (DE)  
 Bishop Hans Växby  
 Bishop Øystein Olsen

Bishop Stefan Zürcher (CH)  
Bishop Patrick Streiff

**b. Guidelines for participants in the online conference (doc. 3a)**

The Central Conferences Secretary Rev. Ole Birch presented the Guidelines (doc. 3a).

**c. The legality of the conference (doc. 3b)**

The secretary rev. Ole Birch presented the information that the Conference had been called on January 16, 2023, via CC website and e-mail to all delegates by bishops Edvard Khegay and Christian Alsted with the support of the Central Conference Council. The conference is legal.

**d. Approval of agenda (doc. 3b)**

Rev. Jørgen Thaarup made the following motion to change the agenda.

Motion:

Agenda item 4 and item 5 shall be taken under final decision in one combined and joined voting.

Rationale:

All petitions together, combined and joined gives each of the countries' Methodist Churches the authority and support to make decisions on their own future and how to develop in the direction they want themselves.

Due to technical problems the vote had to be done two times.

The final vote was 42 in favor, 18 against and 4 abstaining.

One non-voting member did not leave the room and voted "abstain".

**The motion passed.**

**The agenda was approved.**

**e. Setting the quorum and the bar of the conference.**

The conference has more than 50 % of its members present and therefore has a quorum. The bar is set by the letters V, M, JC and B in front of the name of the participants on their picture on the web meeting screen (Zoom) and to ensure the integrity of the voting by moving all non-voting members and guests to a separate web room when voting takes place. (Excepting bishop Alsted and bishop Khegay, the secretary and bishop Alsted's assistant).

**f. Presiding Officers are bishops Eduard Khegay and Christian Alsted. Bishop Alsted will preside during the entire conference.**

**g. Tellers – There will be no tellers. We will vote by electronic vote and the results will appear on the screen.**

**h. Approval of the Plan of Organization and Rules of Order (doc. 3c)**

Bishop Alsted presented the proposed Plan of Organization and Rules of Order.

**The Plan of Organization and Rules of Order was approved.**

**4. Motion 1, from the Nordic, Baltic, and Ukraine area group of the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference Council (doc. 4) and motion 2 from the Eurasia area group of the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference Council (doc. 5 + supporting document 5.1; 5.2; 5.3; 5.4; 5:5)**

The motions and its rationale were put before the conference.

Priit Tamm presented a motion:

*I move to amend the motion No 1 on the Future of the UMC in Northern Europe by dividing it into two parts, voting separately on subparagraphs 1 through 4 and subparagraphs 5 and 6.*

*Subparagraphs 1 to 4 provide a means for disaffiliation for churches or districts of the Estonia Annual Conference who no longer wish to be part of the UMC. This is one issue. Subparagraphs 5 and 6 are for churches who wish to remain, giving freedom for different standards on marriage and ordination. This is a completely separate issue. There is no reason for these to be treated as one motion for one vote. Those who wish to leave should not be required to vote on issues that only affect those who stay.*

*In fact, the very content of subparagraphs 5-6 were presented to the Estonian Annual Conference in June 2022 and was rejected by 96% of delegates. Many of us do not believe that having different standards on marriage and ordination is biblically faithful proposal. In fact, this is part of the reason we wish to leave. By combining all of this as one, the Conference is pushing those who wish to leave to support something they in fact disagree with. This pushes us into the position of hypocrisy. To be consistent according to our conscience, we would then have to vote against the entire package, including voting against our own plan for disaffiliation. This creates an absurd situation for us. Estonia requested and were promised friendly disaffiliation and we have done everything possible to respect the process and exit in a respectful manner so that in the future we can also have a friendly relationship despite our differences. And we would like the conference to honor this by allowing us to vote separately on subparagraphs 1 -4 and subparagraphs 5-6. Therefore, I move to vote separately on subparagraphs 1 -4 and subparagraphs 5-6.*

Bishop Alsted determined that given the change to the agenda that was voted through under pt. 3d this motion is not in order.

Motion to reconsider the issue of combining the motions 1 and 2 under pt. 3d was made by Yulia Stukalova. Yulia Stukalova stated she had voted on the prevailing side.

The motion needs a 2/3 majority.

The result was 32 in favor, 24 against, 7 abstaining.

The motion to reconsider failed.

Sarah Tiainen made the motion to postpone motion 1 and 2 to the next regular central conference. After some speeches against her motion, Sarah Tiainen withdrew her motion.

Jørgen Thaarup proposed the following amendment to point 5 and 6 of the motion. (The underlined parts are added to the motion).

5. *Standards and policy for marriage.* Based on Article of Religion XXII of the Methodist Church and ¶1543.7, 543.13 and 543.14 the central conference delegates to each of the annual conferences within its boundaries the power to set the standards and policy for rites and ceremonies for the solemnization of marriage, taking into consideration the laws of the country or countries within its jurisdiction and

provided that such policy and standards are not contrary to the Doctrinal Standards, the Constitution, the General Rules of the United Methodist Church, and provided that the spirit of connectional relationship is kept between the local and the general church.

The amendment was passed with 35 in favor, 17 against, 10 abstaining.

Ola Westad had to leave the meeting. Frøydis Grinna took his place in the Norwegian delegation.

*6. Standards for ordination and the license for pastoral ministry.* Based on Article of Religion XXI of the Methodist Church and ¶1543.7 the central conference delegates to each of the annual conferences within its boundaries the power to set the standards for ordination and for pastoral ministry provided that such standards are not contrary to the Doctrinal Standards, the Constitution, the General Rules of the United Methodist Church, and provided that the spirit of connectional relationship is kept between the local and the general church.

The amendment failed with 21 in favor, 35 against, 7 abstaining.

Pritt Tamm made the following amendment.

I wish to amend the motion 1 and propose to remove subparagraphs 5 and 6 from the motion 1.

The amendment was passed with 32 in favor 29 against and 2 abstained.

Report from the judicial court.

Steiner Hjerpset told the conference that Judicial Court could not meet during the special session of the central conference. His understanding was that since Andrej Kim was an elected member of the central conference they could not change this status.

Motion to move all before us by Yulia Stukalova.

Bishop Alsted ruled that this motion cannot be made under our rules as they are found in 3c Plan of organization and rules of order.

Knut Refsdal made the motion to refer the petitions 1 and 2 back to the Central Conference Council for further consideration.

The motion failed with 30 in favor, 30 against, 2 abstaining.

Bishop Alsted called the vote on petitions 1 and 2 as amended.

The petitions were passed with 40 in favor, 20 against and 2 abstaining.

## **5. Other matters of information**

Bishop Christian Alsted gave some information on the Global Day of Prayer and selected decisions by the Judicial council.

## **6. Closing Prayer**

We read the prayer of peace by St. Francis of Assisi together, and sang "Come, thou fount of every blessing".

## **7. Adjournment**

Bishop Alsted thanked everybody for their participation and declared the conference adjourned.