



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

NORTHERN EUROPE AND EURASIA CENTRAL CONFERENCE

Nordic & Baltic Area Group meeting, Riga, October 5th and 6th 2023

Present: Hilde Marie Ørgreid Movafagh (NO), Ole Birch (DK), Edgars Snieders (LV), Meeli Tankler (EE), Ingull Grefslie (NO), Bettina Pedersen (DK), Jori Brander (FF) Sarah Tiainen (FS). Svein Veland (NO). Ingerid Hoggen (NO).

Christian Alsted, Kirsten Hastrup.

Absent: Per-Endre Bjørnevik (NO) Yulia Starodubets (UK)

Minutes by Ole Birch

Item	Minutes
1	<p>Opening and approval of the agenda.</p> <p>Christian Alsted offered his welcome to Riga and share a devotion on Lukes's account of Jesus calming the storm. He talked about the storms in our life and in the life of our church. Let us not be afraid, Jesus is with us. We shared prayers.</p> <p>Christian Alsted presented the agenda.</p> <p>The agenda was approved.</p>
2	<p>Work in Subcommittees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continued education• Development of the connection in the episcopal area• International and Ecumenical representations
3	<p>Reporting from Subcommittees</p> <p>Subcommittee on Continued Education</p> <p>Present: Hilde Marie Ørgreid Movafagh, Remigius Matulaitis, Sarah Tiainen, Meeli Tankler</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Update on Baltic Methodist Seminary <p>Baltic Methodist Seminary is in search of a new rector. Külli Tõniste was the missionary from GBGM, and is not supported by GBGM any longer. The seminary Board of Trustees was first offering her the possibility to continue for one more year, and then changed the offer: to have a sabbatical for 6 months, and then continue as a faculty. The seminary will have financial difficulties (no more support from CCTEF etc) and also struggle in terms of keeping its accreditation: so far it could claim to be part of the bigger network, and have support from GBHEM etc. The current Estonian Methodist Church leadership has not been too interested in theological education.</p> <p>Lithuania is interested in sending students to study in Tallinn also in the future – the question is whether they would be treated as students from a different denomination. Right now the welcome is communicated by interim rector Taavi Hollman.</p> <p>Should we consider to do something to support the education in Baltics? Need to discuss the education between the church and seminaries in the area.</p> <p>As Tallinn seminary is no more with us (Estonian UMC has disaffiliated from the UMC as well</p>



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	<p>as the seminary), it puts a double load to Oslo seminary as they cannot take the responsibility for everything. Originally the 2 seminaries were supposed to take turns in the area of continued education.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="343 526 1433 660">2. Oxford Institute scholarships – research meeting at scholarly level; we decided last year to offer scholarships, and relevant persons should be informed. We propose to make the information sheet including also other information about continuous education. Hilde Marie is responsible for doing it.<li data-bbox="343 672 1433 840">3. Update about Theological Means Fund support for project in Norway (Norwegian free churches were also contributing): project is progressing, and the results will appear next year as a book. The project may continue in the future to include other Nordic countries. We want to investigate whether the Fund can be used for the basic theological education and that everyone could apply. Kirsten and Hilde Marie shall investigate if this is possible.<li data-bbox="343 851 1433 918">4. The book project is developing; will be released at the CC in 2025. Some people are already working on articles but we need more writers. The invitation will be sent out.<li data-bbox="343 929 1433 1198">5. Gatherings for continued education – we have so far failed to organize these. The burden again will be on Oslo Seminary only (the idea was that Tallinn and Oslo are taking turns). The MTSE gathering on <i>Church in Crisis</i> (working title), and student course in Oslo seminary in spring 2024 about Methodist history in Europe (with Patrick Streiff) might be relevant to pastors and deacons also. We agreed to invite pastors and deacons to the spring 2024 Methodist history course; Hilde Marie will send out the information. MTSE lecture series (October-December 2023) information needs to be shared with church leaders (see attachment). <p>We need some preparatory work before the CCC meeting to use the time together better: perhaps a Zoom meeting. And we need to communicate better the education options that are available.</p> <p>Submitted by Meeli Tankler</p> <p>Subcommittee on Development of the connection in the episcopal area</p> <p><u>Connections Nordic Baltic Area -plan 2023- 2025</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="343 1534 790 1568">1. Pastor gathering – lessons in english<li data-bbox="343 1579 1061 1612">2. Friendship congregations – across boarders in the Nordic area<li data-bbox="343 1624 1125 1657">3. School of congregational development/and pastors gathering 2025<li data-bbox="343 1668 965 1702">4. Encourage youth groups to relations across boarders <p>Subcommittee on International and Ecumenical representation</p> <p>All representatives will be thanked for their service at the Central Conference 2025.</p> <p>2.1 Commission on the Status and Role of Women A new representative must be found. Received with gratitude.</p> <p>2.2 Africa University</p>



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	<p>A new representative must be found. Received with gratitude.</p> <p>2.3 European Methodist Council Received with gratitude.</p> <p>2.4 General Board on Finance and Administration We need to continuously keep ourselves informed about the budgetary developments. Received with gratitude.</p> <p>2.5 General Board on Church and Society Received with gratitude.</p> <p>2.6 Connectional Table A new representative must be found. Received with gratitude.</p> <p>2.7 Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters. Important information and questions: * that STCCM will not review the church in Europe before CC 2024. * What happened with Jørgen not being the STCCM-adviser to Russia? * Power balance of our global structure? * Regionalization Received with gratitude.</p> <p>2.8 United Methodist Communication Received with gratitude.</p> <p>2.9 Conference of European Churches Where are we on our understanding of the development in CEC? CA shared his thoughts on the situation with CEC, EMC Church Leaders has had a conversation about the subject, no conclusion has been reached but they are critical of the development of CEC on its focus on the relationships with The European Union, and the dominance of orthodox and Lutheran churches. Received with gratitude.</p> <p>2.10 United Methodist Men A new representative must be found. Received with gratitude.</p> <p>2.11 General Board on Global Mission Received with gratitude.</p> <p>GBHEM – no report Comm. on General Conference – no report</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Planning of weekend in Riga about the future of Methodism in our area The plans have been sent out in advance. Hilde Marie Ørgreid Movafagh presented ideas behind and different parts of the plan. Goal: The building of relationships and pointing out direction for our churches. Christian Alsted presented the work of the group leaders.</p> <p>Christian Alsted asked for response to his document on possible standards and policies of Annual Conferences on same-sex marriages and ordination of homosexuals. We had a conversation on the words of the text and made some adjustments. We agreed that the text was helpful.</p>



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5	<p>Committee on episcopacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Bishop's personal reportb. overview of priorities, travel and time spentc. Episcopal nomination & election of bishop <p>The Committee had a conversation on the reports and generally on the ministry of Christian Alsted. Estonia: Could I have done more. No, you did all you could and in a very respectful way. Concerning Ukraine: Great work and a big challenge. Norway: Worked hard with other leaders to keep the parts of our connections together. Taken time to meet groups thinking about leaving. We encourage the bishop to make time for rest. Finland S need a stronger methodist profile and leadership help. Thank you for mentoring new DS's We recognise the special challenges that come from having to lead in 7 different cultures. Ole Birch will inform the chair of the committee Per-Endre Bjørnevik on our conversation</p> <p>Transition of bishop</p> <p>Christian Alsted presented information and deadlines concerning the transition of a new bishop spring and summer 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Effective date and transition periodb. Renewal leavec. Moving of the episcopal office.d. Transition assistant. <p>7 weeks transitions period</p> <p>Approved that transition period for Kirsten Hastrup, more work needed to ensure we are in compliance with Danish work laws. Preparations need to be made for an extended job description, outlining the challenges for the new bishop. This should also contain an outline of the nominating process. Per-Endre and Ole Birch will call a diverse working group and report at our spring meeting 2024.</p>
6	<p>Central Conference – Time and Place, Copenhagen, proposed time 2 – 6 April 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Budget <p>Ole Birch presented the proposed budget.</p> <p>We decided to increase the budget support from the Central Conference Fund to 220.000, - D. Kr.</p> <p>The budget was approved.</p> <p>---</p> <p>Budget approved at Area Group meeting October 5. 2023</p> <p>Budget conditions</p> <p>Place: CABINN Apartments and CABINN Hotel. Arne Jacobsens Allé 4, 2300 København S</p> <p>Expenses based on 64 participants.</p> <p>Delegates 45 (No delegates from Eurasia)</p>



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Official guests	7		
6-7 Guests for 1 day, equivalent to full time =	2		
CCC members with no vote	9 (4 from Eurasia)		
Secretary of the bishop	1		
The Central Conferences Fond Pays for official guests and CCC members. Other guests pay the full price.			
The Central Conference Fund supports the budget with 220.000 D. Kr.			
Budget			
Expenses in D. Kr. (1 euro = 7,46 D. Kr.)			
Meeting facilities (1 large and 1 small room for 3 days. Another 2 small rooms for 1 day).			10.500, -
*Conference fee for 3 days. 1797 kr. times 64 people.		115.008, - (+5%)	120.758, -
Supper at hotel. 2 times 299, - kr. times 64 people.		38.272, - (+5%)	40.185, -
**Singel rooms. 4 Nights at 558, - kr. per night times 64.		142.848, - (+5%)	149.990, -
Supper two evenings at The Jerusalem Church.			10.000, -
Music for worship times 3.			10.000, -
Musician at the hotel for devotions etc.			10.000, -
Decorations etc.			2.000, -
Conference Materials.			5.000, -
Extra Cleaning Jerusalem Church.			1.000, -
Sound equipment.			8.000, -
Streaming equipment.			5.000, -
Metro transport x 3.			10.000, -
Reception Sunday.			40.000
Miscellaneous.			20.000, -
Total			432.433, - kr.
Support from the Central Conference Fund			- 220.000, - kr.
Expenses after support from CC Fund			212.433, - kr.
*Includes The meeting room, lunch and 2 x coffee.			
** Includes breakfast.			
Income:			
Expenses divided by 64 participants			3.319, -
<u>The fee is rounded up to 3350, - D. Kr. (450 euro)</u>			
b. Episcopal election			
c. Review evaluation from Central Conference 2016			
d. Program			
Ole Birch presented the draft program.			
Christian Alsted wanted more time for bibelstudy in the morning.			
The Norwegian delegation wanted a later start to the day.			



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	<p>The program will be adjusted in the fall of 2024 when we know more about the issues for the agenda.</p> <p>Christian Alsted briefed us on conversation with Eduard Khegay concerning options for the program of the CC 25 regarding the decision on the Eurasian leaving the UMC.</p> <p>Christian Alsted also shared the issue of disagreement concerning rev. Andrew Kim’s membership of the UMC.</p> <p>e. List of things to remember – making the conference as engaging as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus Groups? ○ Speed debating – or similar? ○ Small groups – spiritual life – Christian conferencing ○ Plan of organization and Rules of Order ○ Adaptations to the Book of Discipline ○ Committee on investigation and administrative review para 636 and 2703.2 put together fewer members - cooperation with other annual conferences. ○ Paragraphs on complaints – can be simplified. ○ Simplified annual conference organization. ○ Course of Study program ○ Authorize Annual Conferences to set their own policies and standards regarding marriage, licensing and ordination of clergy. ○ Elections ○ Reports ○ Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Youth Council ○ Committee on Adaptation of Book of Discipline
<p>8</p>	<p>Plan for coming meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 21-22 March 2024 in Copenhagen (Thursday and Friday, Area Group) b. Full Council online November 22. 2023. 17.00 to 18.30 CET c. 23 April – 3 May 2024 General Conference in Charlotte, NC We need a new clergy delegate from the Baltic Annual Conference. d. 21-22 November 2024 in Copenhagen (Thursday and Friday, Area Group) e. Meeting all day Wednesday before the Central Conference April 2 – 6, 2025 and on Friday evening organizing meeting of the council.
<p>9</p>	<p>Other matters</p> <p>Number of delegates to Central conference 2020.</p> <p>Denmark 3 clergy and 3 lay. No questions, we have the names.</p> <p>Norway 8 clergy and 8 lay. No questions, we have the names.</p> <p>Finland S</p>



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	<p>2 clergy and 2 lay. Problem: We have information on 3 + 3.</p> <p>Finland F 3 clergy and 3 lay. Problem: We have no names of substitutes.</p> <p>Baltic 3 clergy and 3 lay. Problem: Elections needs to be held to make up the numbers.</p> <p>Ukraine 2 clergy and 2 lay. No questions, we have the names.</p> <p>The Central Russia Annual Conference 2 clergy and 2 lay.</p> <p>The Eastern Russia and Central Asia Provisional Annual Conference 2 clergy and 2 lay.</p> <p>The Northwest Russia and Belarus Provisional Annual Conference 2 clergy and 2 lay.</p> <p>The Southern Russia Provisional Annual Conference. 2 clergy and 2 lay.</p>