



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE NORTHERN EUROPE AND EURASIA

CENTRAL CONFERENCE

The Book of Discipline
2020/2025 Supplement Adapted by
The Northern Europe and Eurasia
Central Conference



Copenhagen, Denmark – 2025, April 2 - 6







PREFACE

The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference

Earlier on, the Book of Discipline of the Methodist-Episcopal Church was translated into Scandinavian languages. In the second half of the 20th century, relevant parts of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church were adapted by the Central Conference and published also in the Scandinavian languages. When the Central Conference expanded to include all three Baltic Countries, Russia and seven other of the former Soviet republics, English became the official language. In 2001, 2005 and 2009 an adapted edition of the Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church was published in English.

In 2012, the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference decided to publish a Supplement for Northern Europe and Eurasia which combined with the Book of Discipline was to constitute the Northern Europe and Eurasia Book of Book of Discipline. The 2016 and the current 2020/2025 Supplement follow the same principles and are published in accordance with the provisions given in ¶ 31. Article IV 5 and further specified in ¶ 547.7.

This Supplement contains the Historical Statement of the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference, a Reading Guide and paragraphs of the Book of Discipline adapted by the Central Conference together with main documents from the 2025 Central Conference in Copenhagen , Denmark and a Directory. The Supplement is also available on www.umc-ne.org.

I hand over this Supplement with prayers for our vast connectional Church.

Bishop Christian Alsted







Content:

Historical Statement.....	7
Ecumenical Agreements	19
 Adapted Part of the Book of Discipline 2020/2024.....	21
Reading Guide	21
Paragraphs adapted by the Central Conference	25
Educational Standards for Certified Layspeakers	26
Ministry of the Ordained	28
Educational Standards for Clergy	31
Superintendency	37
The Conferences (The Central Conference)	39
The Conferences (The Annual Conference)	53
The Conferences (The District Conference).....	63
Church Property.....	65
 Episcopal Address.....	69
Laity Address.....	87
 Report of the Central Conference Council	97
Report of the Committee on Episcopacy	108
 Minutes of the 2020/2025 Central Conference.....	110
In Memory of Bishop Hans Våxby 1944-2025	155
 Directory	157







Historical Statement

Methodism in Northern Europe & Eurasia:

Methodist ministry in Scandinavia began in Stockholm as an outreach of British Methodism. In 1830-42 Scottish Methodist pastor George Scott ran a rather comprehensive operation, which had a significant influence upon the initiation of Free Church life in Sweden. George Scott's activities broke down due to opposition of a dramatic nature.

The Northern European Countries were experiencing a period of strife and immense change. The increased population could no longer be supported neither agriculturally nor be incorporated into the new industries of the growing cities. Health and welfare standards were low, and social needs were great. Radical changes in society created a longing to find better living conditions in America. Likewise, many people became occupied with the search for help in spiritual values.

The arrival of the Methodist Church to Northern Europe was linked to immigration across the Atlantic, particularly among seamen who sailed to America. In the 1830's and the following decades, all Protestant denominations in the United States were influenced by the Second Great Awakening. In the same period, immigration from the countries of Northern Europe to America began growing at a massive rate towards the turn of the century. In the 1830's and 40's the first Scandinavian speaking Methodist churches were established in the United States, and conferences were eventually organized, utilizing the Scandinavian languages in worship services, newsletters, books and all matters of administration.

Bethel Ship John Wesley

At the initiative of a Swedish sailor, a seaman's church was established in New York in 1832 in order to serve the harbour's sailors and to bring the gospel to the many emigrants there. The floating church – "Bethel Ship John Wesley" – became a significant instrument in bringing Methodism to the Nordic residents. Olaf Gustaf Hedström, of Sweden, led the mission in New York harbour for over 30 years, beginning in 1845. Many seamen and emigrants who had experienced conversion carried the Methodist revival with them to other parts of the United States, as well as to their home countries in Northern Europe.





Norway

In Norway, the story of Methodism began with seaman Ole Peter Petersen's preaching in 1849 and the years ahead. In 1851, O.P. Petersen established the Norwegian-Danish Methodist Church in America. In 1856, Danish-American Christian Willerup was sent to Scandinavia as a superintendent in order to lead the church, which had emerged spontaneously. The first Methodist church was founded during the same year, thereby making the establishment of the Methodist Church in Norway a reality. In 1876, the church in Norway received status as an Annual Conference. There were 29 pastors, 19 congregations and 2,798 members, and the conference got its own superintendent, Martin Hansen.

Denmark

During a family visit to Copenhagen in 1845, Christian Willerup conducted the first public meetings. In 1856, when he was sent to Scandinavia as superintendent, the ministry began to take shape, and from 1858, when Willerup moved to Copenhagen, there were regular meetings. The first congregation was established in 1859, and in 1865 the church received official approval by the state, according to The Royal Constitution. In 1911 the Methodist ministry in Denmark received status as an Annual Conference, at the time there were 53 pastors, 27 congregations, 127 preaching stations and 3,634 members.

Sweden

Various Methodist preachers operated in Sweden in the 1850's. This led to the establishment of the Methodist Church in Sweden in 1868. The work grew rapidly, and in 1876, the church was able to form as an independent Annual Conference with 55 pastors, 97 congregations, 249 preaching stations and 4,123 members. During the same year, the church received official approval by the state as an independent church. Victor Witting was appointed superintendent in Sweden.

In 2012, the Annual Conference in Sweden left the connection and merged with the Baptist Church of Sweden and the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden, and created a new denomination, The Uniting Church in Sweden (Equmeniakyrkan). Former United Methodist district superintendent Lasse Svensson was elected as the first church





leader of the denomination. The Uniting Church in Sweden and the United Methodist Church signed an agreement of full communion in 2015 both on a global and on a central conference level. This agreement was ratified by the 2016 General Conference.

Approximately 100 members including 12 clergy desiring to remain United Methodist joined the Finland Swedish provisional Annual Conference and formed a district in Sweden. The 2012 Central Conference decided to extend the border of the Finland Swedish Provisional Annual Conference to include Sweden. In 2015 the United Methodist Church and the Uniting Church in Sweden (Equmeniakyrkan) signed an agreement of full communion.

Finland

On the Finnish side of the Bay of Bothnia, Methodist preaching began to be heard by 1859 and the subsequent years. Gustaf Lervik, a coxswain who had returned to his homeland, began to preach in his home country after being converted aboard the Bethel Ship in New York. Later, the Bärnlund brothers joined in as preachers. In the 1880's impulses from Sweden led to a new start for Methodism in Finland, the first congregation was established in 1881. Methodism in Finland fell under the Swedish Annual Conference and had status as a district under the leadership of Superintendent B.A. Carlson. In 1887 the first Finnish-speaking congregation was founded, and two years later B.A. Carlson established a mission to Russia, with meetings held in St. Petersburg.

At that time Finland was part of the Russian empire, but ruled as a separate Grand Duchy with its own legislation. In 1891 the Finnish Senate recognized the Methodist church as a legal minority church in the country. In light of the situation the Swedish Annual Conference organized "The mission in Finland and St. Petersburg" the following year. By 1906 the Russian authorities had given official legal permission for Methodist preaching in St. Petersburg. In 1907, German-American Dr. George A. Simons (son of Frisian immigrants from the island Sylt in Schleswig) was appointed as superintendent in St. Petersburg. The link to Sweden weakened, and under his leadership the work developed rapidly with ramifications for Russia and Estonia. The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 put a stop to all possibilities for church growth, yet, in spite of opposition, the work continued into the 1920's. The Methodist church gathered for the first time as an independent Annual





Conference in 1911. The church had 1,568 members. In keeping with the development in Finland after its independence, the work was separated in a Swedish-speaking and a Finnish-speaking conference in 1923. Finnish-speaking Methodism suffered greatly during World War II, since 60 % of its members lived in regions that were incorporated into the Soviet Union.

The Baltic Countries

Methodism in the Baltic Countries can be traced back to the beginning of the 1900's. From the north, Methodism travelled from St. Petersburg to Saaremaa (Ösel) and the Estonian mainland. From the south, the inspiration came from German Methodism, partly from the Methodist Church and partly from the Evangelical Association and The Christian Brethren Church. At the time of World War II the Evangelical Association and Brethren Church in Lithuania and Latvia were connected with Germany via the Königsberg District, while the Methodist Church's ties were with the Nordic Countries. In Estonia, Methodist preaching began in 1907, and the first congregation could be established in 1910. Vassili Täht was sent by the Methodists in St. Petersburg, in Estonia he met Karl Kuum and together they were integral in starting up the Methodist congregation in Kuressaare (Arensburg at the time), on the island Saaremaa.

The Northwest German Conference appointed the first Methodist minister to service in Kaunas, Lithuania in 1905. In 1900, Pastor Heinrich Ramke of Königsberg had already preached in Kaunas, and during his stay discovered that a group in Kaunas, over several years, had been in contact with the Methodist Publishing House in Bremen. In 1911, the first church building was built in Kaunas, which was the first Methodist edifice built in the Baltics. The Evangelical Association from the Königsberg District started evangelistic work in Riga, the capital of Latvia, in 1908, with the establishment of the first church in 1912. From this point, the work developed into the formation of congregations in Kuldiga and Liepaja. German Methodism started work in Riga with the appointment of George R. Durdis in 1910. This led to the establishment of the first Methodist church in Riga in 1912. In 1911, the Methodists came into contact with the Moravian Brethren missionary Alfred Freiberg, who had founded the congregation in Liepaja, which in turn became a Methodist church.





The three Baltic Countries attained independence after World War I, and the work developed rapidly, with American support. Riga became the centre for Methodism in the Baltics with the establishment of a theological seminary and residence for superintendent Dr. George A. Simons. In 1924, there were 47 Methodist pastors in the Baltics: 24 in Estonia, 15 in Latvia and 8 in Lithuania. The Baltic Annual Conference was organized in 1929, and each of the 3 countries received status as districts. The work in the Baltics grew, so that by 1939 there were around 3,000 registered members. During the same year, 13 Methodist pastors were registered serving 15 congregations in Estonia, 17 Methodists pastors serving 19 congregations in Latvia, and 7 Methodist pastors serving 7 congregations in Lithuania. At that time, the Evangelical Association had 3 pastors and 3 congregations in Latvia, as well as 7 pastors and 7 congregations in Lithuania. The Evangelical Association tallied around 1,000 members in Latvia and Lithuania.

The incorporation of the Baltic Countries into the Soviet Union after World War II was catastrophic for the Methodist Church. Systematic persecution of pastors and congregations, as well as confiscation of buildings destroyed a great deal of the work. Only Estonia was successful in maintaining the work of the church, due to notable national leaders such as Alexander Kuum.

The Baltic Countries re-established their independence in 1991. In Latvia, a small group of earlier Methodists remained, and in 1991 these contacts led to the resurrection of the United Methodist church of Latvia, while the district was formally re-established in 1992 with three congregations. In 1995, the Methodist church of Lithuania resumed in Kaunas and a year later in Siauliai. The United Methodist church in Lithuania was formally re-established in 1996.

New congregations have been founded, and the operations have spread from the indigenous languages and peoples to the Russian-speaking population. In Tallinn, there was already a Russian-language outreach in the 1950's, and in the 1980's, the Russian-language outreach likewise commenced in various places. Until 2023 Latvia and Lithuania had the status as district conferences within the Estonia Annual Conference. In 2023 the name of the Estonia Annual Conference was changed to the Baltic Annual Conference, later the same year the Estonia District left the United Methodist Church over the issue of homosexuality. The Estonia Methodist Church signed an agreement of mutual recognition as a prerequisite to be able to disaffiliate, and the Baltic Methodist





Theological Seminary still offers scholarship to students from Latvia and Lithuania.

Europe

The Depression during the 1930's caused further weakening of the ties to the church in America. Methodism in Northern Europe belonged to the Methodist Episcopal Church, under the auspices of the General Board of Missions, but the Unity conference of 1939 gave Methodism in northern Europe an altered affiliation to the Mother church. Until that time, the work in the Northern European countries had been a branch of the Methodist Episcopal Church, similar to the work in other Central European countries. After World War I, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South had established extensive mission organizations in war torn Europe where no other Methodist churches were established: Belgium, Poland and Czechoslovakia (today's Czech and Slovak Republics).

In addition to the two American Methodist churches, British Methodism, also called Wesleyan Methodism, had made inroads on the European continent with outreaches in French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and German speaking areas. Wesleyan Methodism was organized as part of the British Annual conference. Furthermore, the Methodist church tradition was represented in force by several small churches, which were all related to the United Brethren in Christ and The Evangelical Association. A series of church unions led to the uniting in church structure of the entire Methodist church family on the European continent, which organically is part of the larger United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Church is, by way of her membership in the Methodist church's World council, part of the massive cooperation between churches in the Methodist and Wesleyan traditions.

By the end of World War II, the European continent could organise two central conferences: The German and the Northern European. In addition, there were ten Annual conferences and two Missions conferences from the former German area organised under episcopal supervision of the southeast Jurisdiction of the Methodist Church in the United States.

After World War II, there was an attempt to form a single European central conference. The attempt failed, and in 1954, a central conference for Central and Southern Europe was formed in addition to





the other two central conferences, Germany and Northern Europe. The European Council of Central Conferences of the Methodist church was founded after negotiations under the Methodist world conference in Oslo in 1966. In 1980, the name was changed to the European council of the United Methodist Church. Plenary sessions with the British and Irish Methodist churches led to the 1993 formation of the new European Methodist Council, where all Methodist traditions in Europe were united for the first time within the same organization. Affiliates of the European Methodist Council included:

1. The consultative conference of the European Methodist churches, which commenced in 1957
2. The European Methodist Youth council, and
3. The World Federation of Methodist and Uniting church Women - Europe, and The World federation of Methodist and Uniting Women - Britain and Ireland.

In 2016 the member churches of the European Methodist Council signed a community agreement.

Eurasia

After the dismantling of the Soviet Union, The General Board of Global Ministries initiated a contact with Russian Orthodox Church and Soviet/ Russian Peace Fund to assist in the re-establish education and organize help sending. At the same time several individual initiatives lead to the formation of congregations in several areas within Russia and Ukraine, mostly as the result of new contacts to Methodism in the United States. The first new congregations were established in Moscow, Samary and Yekaterinburg. Methodism was formally re-established in this part of the world in 1992 under the name The United Methodist Mission in The Commonwealth of Independent States, 100 years after the Methodist-Episcopal Mission in Finland and St. Petersburg was organized.

Ukraine

The earliest Methodist movement in Ukraine dates to the late 1920's when two churches in the Transcarpathian region - Uzhhorod and nearby Kamyanitsa - made the decision to affiliate with the Methodists and the Czechoslovakian Methodist Conference began relating to them officially. By 1940 the area fell to the control of Hungary, and by the end





of WWII it fell under Russian Occupation. At that time members were forced to become Baptists – the only officially recognized protestant organization of the Soviet regime.

Post Soviet Union

After the fall of the Soviet Union, United Methodists Congregations began to spring up in the former CIS including Ukraine, as small congregations emerged in the Crimean cities of Sevastopol, Simferopol, and Kerch and the northeast city of Kharkiv.

In 1991, Rüdiger Minor, bishop of the former East Germany Central Conference, was assigned as episcopal coordinator of Methodism in Eurasia.

The General Conference decided in 1992 to make Eurasia a separate Episcopal Area. The General Conference authorized the Northern Europe Central Conference, which had had oversight over the Methodist ministry in the former Soviet countries, to elect a bishop to carry out the work in the new area. With representatives present from the Russian United Methodist churches, the Central Conference of 1993 elected Rüdiger Minor as Bishop of Eurasia, with residence in Moscow. The next step was taken in 1996 when Russia Provisional Annual Conference was formed, which was confirmed by the Central Conference in Pärnu in 1997. Pastoral education was established in Moscow in 1997.

In 2001 Eurasia became an Annual Conference with full rights. The new conference consisted of 70 clergy members and 81 local churches. In 2003 the United Methodist Church in Eurasia was divided into four conferences: The Central Russia Annual Conference consisted of 923 members, 39 clergies and 33 local churches. The Northwest Russia Provisional Annual Conference consisted of 453 members, 21 clergies and 20 local churches. The South Russia-Ukraine-Moldova Provisional Annual Conference consisted of 759 members, 30 clergies and 30 local churches. The East Russia-Kazakhstan Provisional Annual Conference consisted of 416 members, 19 clergies and 14 local churches.

The central conference was, for the first time, held in Moscow in 2005. Ukraine was now separated from the South Russia Provisional Annual Conference to form its own Ukraine and Moldova Provisional Annual Conference.





Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

In 2014 Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine. A few churches from the Ukraine and Moldova provisional annual conference were transferred to the South Russia Provisional Annual Conference in 2016. However the transfers were not approved by the Ukraine Moldova Provisional annual conference, which requested to be transferred from the Eurasia episcopal area to another episcopal area. After Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, an extra session of the central conference decided to change the borders of the episcopal areas and include Ukraine and Moldova in the Nordic and Baltic episcopal area. Despite the war, the church in Ukraine is caring for internally displaced and continues to develop and expand its ministry.

Global Pandemic

In the beginning of 2020 the entire world was hit by a global pandemic causing far-reaching lockdowns and severe restrictions, which led the churches to move their ministry to online platforms and explore new approaching to community. After the end of the pandemic the church has experienced a decline in attendance by 30%, in particular the children and youth ministry has been affected - the church is only slowly recovering.

Disaffiliations

Listening to several churches desiring to separate from the denomination due to disagreements over human sexuality, an extra session of the central conference in the spring of 2023 decided to approve a process for local churches to separate from the denomination under certain circumstances and conditions. In the summer of 2023, the entire Estonia district disaffiliated from the connection, and during the following year another two local churches in Norway disaffiliated.

Having followed the process for annual conferences wishing to leave the United Methodist Church, the Central Russia, the Northwest Russia and Belarus Provisional, the South Russia Provisional, and the Eastern Russia and Central Asia Provisional Annual Conferences were given permission by General Conference to disaffiliate and reorganize as an autonomous Methodist Church. The 2025 the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference voted to declare the relationship between





the four Eurasia annual conferences and the United Methodist church dissolved.

The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference

World War I weakened the connection between Europe and America, thus a substantial independence of continental European Methodism from the Mother church in the United States became necessary. In 1920, the General Conference decided to divide Europe into several episcopal areas. The Northern Europe Episcopal Area, including Methodism in the Nordic countries, was established and put under the supervisions of the Danish Bishop, Anton Bast.

Though Methodism in the North European countries was tied together historically, the new structure meant that the church in this region, to an even greater extent, would forge closer ties and fellowship in order to facilitate their new and greater independence.

In 1924, the North Europe Episcopal Area organized as a central conference, and the Baltic-Slavic Annual Conference became integrated.

In 1924, pastoral education for Scandinavian language candidates, which until that time took place in their respective annual conferences, became consolidated at the Nordic Theological Seminary, Överås, in Gothenburg. This common Nordic seminary continued until 1971, when a theological seminary was established in Bergen for Norwegian candidates.

In 2008 the Sweden Annual Conference joined the interdenominational Stockholm Theological Seminary, THS, and the pastoral training for Methodist pastors moved from Överås to THS. Pastoral education for the Baltic Area was re-established in 1994, with the opening of the Baltic Methodist Theological seminary in Tallinn.

With the geographic expansion, beginning with the “Glasnost” period in Soviet Union, the name of the Central Conference has changed from Nordic to Northern Europe (1989), and to Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference (2009), which now until 2025 consisted of the two Episcopal Areas - Nordic and Baltic, and the Eurasia Area.

Since World War II, the Central Conference has been led by bishops elected by the Central Conference itself:





Theodor Arvidsson of Sweden (elected in 1946); Odd Hagen of Norway (elected 1953); Ole E. Borgen of Norway (elected 1970); Hans Växby of the Finland Swedish conference (elected 1989); Rüdiger Minor of the East Germany Central Conference (elected 1993); Øystein Olsen of Norway (elected 2001, the Nordic and Baltic Area); Hans Växby of the Finland Swedish conference (elected 2005, the Eurasia Area); Christian Alsted of Denmark (elected 2009, the Nordic, Baltic and Ukraine Area) and Eduard Kheday of Central Russia Annual Conference (elected 2012, the Eurasia Area). Knut Refsdal of Norway (elected 2025).







Ecumenical Agreements in the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference

The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference:

The Leuenberg Concordia with Lutheran and Reformed Churches in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe 1994.

Agreement of full communion with the Uniting Church in Sweden (Equmeniakyrkan) 2015

Community of Methodist and Wesleyan Churches in Europe, September 2016.

Agreement of mutual recognition with the Methodist Church in Estonia, 2023.

Denmark Annual Conference:

Agreement of full communion “One faith, one Baptism, one Grace” with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark 2016.

Finland Swedish and Finnish Provisional Annual Conferences:

Agreement of full communion “Sharing in Christ” with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 2010.

Norway Annual Conference:

Agreement of full communion “The Fellowship of Grace” with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway 1994.

Estonia Annual Conference:

Agreement in mutual recognition of both churches having signed the Leuenberg Concordia with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Estonia 1997. The agreement is no longer valid after the district conference left the connection.



Sweden:

Agreement of full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden 1993. The agreement is no longer valid after the annual conference left the connection.





Adapted part of the Book of Discipline 2020/2024

Reading Guide

Many of the adaptations in previous separate editions of the Book of Discipline for the Northern Europe and Eurasia Annual Conference were not about content, but about transferring the text to our own context, cf. ¶544.7 & 16 & 17. As we do not publish a full Northern Europe and Eurasia Book of Discipline, this supplement doesn't contain editorial changes of terminology; instead we encourage the practice of "adaptive reading." The following is a guide for reading the Book of Discipline (BoD) in the Northern Europe and Eurasian (NEE) context and in addition a few clarifications.

1. Clarification of terms

Reading the Book of Discipline we encounter American terminology, and we need to know the Northern Europe and Eurasia equivalents or understanding.

- University Senate →

this responsibility is handled by the Central Conference Council

- General Board of Higher Education and Ministry →

when the reference concerns the Central Conference the Central Conference Council is responsible

- District Committee on Ordained Ministry →

is included in the area of responsibility of the Board of Ordained Ministry in annual conferences that have no such committees

- Ministerial Education Fund →

in Northern Europe and Ukraine there are other channels for the support of candidates for ministry





- General Boards and Agencies →

General Boards and Agencies operate only on a limited scale in the Central Conference; the annual conferences have their own boards and agencies, the general administrative responsibility is handled by the the annual conference council.

Wespath →

The Ukraine and Moldova Provisional Annual Conference and the Latvia District and Lithuania District are part of the central conference pensional plan and relate through their pension boards to Wespath. All other annual conferences handle pensions through either their pension board or the annual conference council.

- World Service and other general funds →

References and regulations concerning General Funds do not apply, with the exception of the Episcopal Fund and the General Administration Fund. However, in Northern Europe and Eurasia the annual conferences are apportioned to the Central Conference Fund.

- Residence Program →

Continuing education for provisional clergy members of the annual conference

2. We practice a simplified organization in the annual conference and provisional annual conference organisation

Most of the paragraphs where the BoD says, there “shall” be a certain committee or board, we read “may.” The exceptions on the annual conference level from this rule are

- Annual Conference Council
- Board of Ordained Ministry





3. Organization of the local church

The guiding principles for the organization of the local church are outlined in BoD ¶ 243. According to BoD ¶ 244 “The basic organizational plan of the local church shall include provisions for the following units: A charge conference, a church council, a committee on pastor-parish relations, a board of trustees, a committee on finance, a committee on nominations and leadership development, and such other elected leaders, commission, councils, committees, and task forces as the charge conference may determine.” Note that the paragraphs say “shall include provisions for the following units” which means, all functions must be taken care of, while it does not mean that all councils and committees must exist. Several functions can be taken care of by the church council, if this in a more fruitful way enables the church to pursue its primary task and mission in the context of its own community.

4. The Candidacy Process for Ordained Ministry

The one year membership requirement § 310.1a to be considered for candidacy for ordained ministry is understood to be active membership, which also includes some degree of leadership responsibility. Each annual conference may set its own requirements for candidacy such as having completed the course for lay speaker.

5. Working conditions

The basic principle concerning the correlation between the Book of Discipline and the law in the individual countries is that we follow the Book of Discipline, when it is the most extensive, and we follow the law, when the law is the most extensive. For instance ¶ 356 gives regulations for maternity leave, but we follow the law of the country, as it is the most extensive in most of our countries.

6. We adjust to the Northern Europe and Eurasia reality

Several paragraphs and subparagraphs in previous NEE editions were deleted and marked with “Not relevant in the Northern Europe Central Conference.” We continue to ignore these in our reading, however, this is just about matters that are clearly referring to the American context, not matters we don’t agree with or don’t like.





When this Reading Guide is not sufficient, turn to your district superintendent or bishop for further clarification and guidance. The guidelines for reading the Book of Discipline given in this introduction are included in the responsibility of the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Judicial Court (§548.3) to “hear and determine the legality of any action of an annual conference taken under the adopted portions of the Discipline or of a decision of law by the presiding bishop pertaining to the adapted portion of the Discipline, upon appeal of the presiding bishop or of such percentage of the members of the annual conference as may be determined by the central conference concerned.”





Paragraphs adapted by the Central Conference

Most of the adaptations in previous editions of the Northern Europe and Eurasia Book of Discipline are taken care of by the guiding principle in the Reading Guide. The following paragraphs are adapted by the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference to replace the corresponding paragraphs in the global Book of Discipline.

¶ 267. Certified Lay Speaker

1. A certified lay speaker is a professing member of a local church or charge, who desires to serve the Church and who knows and is committed to Scripture and the doctrine, heritage, organization, and life of The United Methodist Church and who has received specific training to witness to the Christian faith through spoken communication, to lead within a church and community, and to provide caring ministry. The certified lay speaker serves the local church or charge (or beyond the local church or charge) in ways in which his or her witness, leadership, and service inspires others to a deeper commitment to Christ and more effective discipleship. The certified lay speaker, through continued study and training, should prepare to undertake one or more of the following functions, giving primary attention to service within the local church or charge, or other United Methodist ministry setting:

- a) Provide leadership, assistance, and support to the program emphases of the church or other United Methodist ministry.
- b) Lead meetings for prayer, training, study, and discussion when requested by the pastor or district superintendent.
- c) Conduct, or assist in conducting, services of worship, preach the Word, or give addresses when requested by the pastor or district superintendent.
- d) Work with appropriate committees and teams which provide congregational and community leadership or foster caring ministries.
- e) Assist in the distribution of the elements of Holy Communion upon request by a pastor.
- f) Teach the Scriptures, doctrine, organization, and ministries of The United Methodist Church.

2. The certified lay speaker serves by preaching the Word when requested by the pastor, district superintendent.





3. One may be certified as a lay speaker after he or she has:

- a) Obtained recommendation from the pastor and the church council and charge conference of the local church in which he or she holds membership.
- b) Completed a track of study including courses on leading worship, leading prayer, discovering spiritual gifts, preaching, United Methodist heritage and polity, and/or other courses as determined by the conference board of ordained ministry.

4. Recognition as certified lay speaker may be renewed annually after the certified lay speaker has:

- a) Submitted an annual report and renewal application to the charge conference or church council giving evidence of satisfactory performance as a certified lay speaker.
- b) Obtained recommendation for continued recognition as a certified lay speaker from the pastor and the church council

A certified lay speaker may transfer certification to another district or conference upon receipt of a letter from the previous pastor and district superintendant.

Educational Standards for Certified Lay Speakers

To earn a certificate as a Lay Speaker, a person needs theoretical and practical training in close connection with the local church where the person is a member. The purpose is to develop skills for leadership of the spoken word and care-giving ministry in the local congregation.

A training course for certified Lay Speakers must include:

Bible study:

Introduction to Old and New Testaments; self studies of the Bible; use of commentaries and Bible dictionaries

Spoken communication

Personal testimonies; Biblical meditations, addresses and sermons, as well as conduct of worship and devotion





Leadership

Church and community leadership, including leading of small group meetings for prayer, training, study and discussion

Care-giving ministry

Counselling, spiritual advice, visiting and pastoral care

Methodist theology

Doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church, BoD 2016: § 102 – 166, (Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task, The ministry of all Christians and Social Principles),

A Methodist presentation of the Christian faith and selected Wesley Standard Sermons.

Methodist polity

Connectional structure, organization and church culture

Methodist history

Methodist history in England, America, Northern Europe, and the local area (nation).

The United Methodist Theological Seminaries within the Central Conference, the Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, or another board or agency authorized by the Annual Conference develop the curriculum with literature available in each national language and the framework of time for the total training course:

Either

- a training course based on part time studies over minimum 20 two hours course days spread over 2 years, under the leadership of the ordained Elder in charge,

Or

- a training course scheduled as a one year full time bible school.

Or





- a training course based on a combination of self-studies and seminars planned for all lay speakers of an Annual Conference by a Theological Seminary or the Board of Ordained Ministry.

The training course might be open to any active member, but license as a lay speaker is depending on the recommendation of the Elder in charge and the sanction of the Charge Conference. License is given by the District Superintendent.

Ministry of the Ordained

¶ 347. Transfers

1. from Other Annual Conferences—Ordained clergy, associate members, or provisional members from other annual conferences of The United Methodist Church may be received by transfer into full, associate, or provisional membership with the consent of the bishops involved. Recommendation by the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry and approval of the clergy session shall take place prior to the transfer.

2. from Other Methodist Denominations and Denominations we have an agreement of full communion with —a) Ordained elders or ordained clergy from other Methodist churches and from denominations we have an agreement of full communion with may be received by transfer into provisional or full conference membership, with the consent of the bishops or other authorities involved, without going through the process required for ministers from other denominations. Recommendation by the Board of Ordained Ministry and approval of the clergy session shall take place prior to the transfer. A psychological report, criminal background and credit check, and reports of sexual misconduct and/or child abuse shall be required. They shall submit, on a form provided by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry:

(1) a notarized statement detailing any convictions for felony or misdemeanor or written accusations of sexual misconduct or child abuse; or





(2) a notarized statement certifying that this candidate has not been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor, or accused in writing of sexual misconduct or child abuse.

b) Ordained elders or ordained clergy being transferred shall meet the educational requirements of The United Methodist Church and those transferring from denominations we have an agreement of full communion with shall give evidence of their agreement with and willingness to support and maintain United Methodist doctrine, discipline, and polity.

c) The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry shall certify the satisfaction of educational requirements for conference membership and, in cases where additional education is required, shall develop an educational program in consultation with the Board of Ordained Ministry.

d) The denominations meeting this definition are: All churches that are members of the European Methodist Council, The Uniting Church in Sweden (Equmeniakyrkan), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Norway, in Finland and in Denmark.

3. from Other Denominations—

a) On recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the clergy members in full connection may recognize the orders of ordained clergy from other denominations and receive them as provisional members or local pastors. They shall present their credentials for examination by the bishop and Board of Ordained Ministry and give assurance of their Christian faith and experience. They shall give evidence of their agreement with and willingness to support and maintain United Methodist doctrine, discipline, and polity and present a satisfactory certificate of good health from a physician on a pre-scribed form approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. The Board of Ordained Ministry, in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, shall determine whether they meet the educational requirements for conference membership. A psychological report, criminal background and credit check, and reports of sexual misconduct and/ or child abuse shall be required. They shall submit, on a form provided by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry:





(1) a notarized statement detailing any convictions for felony or misdemeanor or written accusations of sexual misconduct of child abuse; or

(2) a notarized statement certifying that the candidate has not been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor, or accused in writing of sexual misconduct or child abuse.

b) Unless they are members of a denomination we an agreement of full communion with ordained elders or ordained clergy from other Christian denominations shall serve as provisional members for at least two years and complete all the requirements of ¶ 335, including courses in United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity, before being admitted into full conference membership.

4. The Board of Ordained Ministry of an annual conference is required to ascertain from an ordained clergyperson seeking admission into its membership on credentials from another denomination whether or not membership in the effective relation was previously held in an annual conference of The United

Methodist Church or one of its legal predecessors, and if so, when and under what circumstances the ordained minister's connection with such annual conference was severed.

5. Ordained clergy seeking admission into an annual conference on credentials from another denomination who have previously withdrawn from membership in the effective relation in an annual conference of The United Methodist Church or one of its legal predecessors shall not be admitted or readmitted without receiving a recommendation from the annual conference from which they withdrew or its legal successor, or the annual conference of which the major portion of their former conference is a part, such recommendation to be sent from its Board of Ordained Ministry within 90 days of the request.

6. Election to membership and recognition of orders. To complete the transfer process:

a) Following the provisional member's election to full conference membership as a deacon or elder as provided in ¶ 330 or ¶ 335 respectively, the bishop and secretary of the conference shall provide a certificate of full membership in the annual conference; and

b) After the orders of an ordained minister of another church shall have been duly recognized, and the minister has been elected to





full membership, the certificates of ordination by said church shall be returned to the minister with the following inscription written plainly on the back:

These orders are recognized by the _____ Annual Conference
of The United Methodist Church, this _____ day of _____, [year].
_____, President: _____ Secretary:

The ordained minister also will be furnished with a certificate of recognition of orders signed by the bishop.

7. Clergy who are retired, on medical leave, or on sabbatical leave and reside in another annual conference may at their own initiative apply to the conference Board of Ordained Ministry for affiliate membership in the annual conference where they reside. By a two-thirds vote of the executive session, such clergy may be received with rights and privileges, including service on conference boards, agencies, taskforces, and committees, with voice but without vote. Voting membership shall be retained in the clergy member's home annual conference for the duration of affiliate member relationship. Such persons may serve on the board, agency, taskforce, or committee of only one annual conference at any one time.

Educational Standards for Clergy

These Educational Standards are related to the ministries described in Part VI Chapter two of the 2020/2024 Book of Discipline.

Ministry and education – a) UMC have several preaching ministries. Some of them are lay ministries elected by the Charge Conference in the local Church. Others are ministries appointed by the bishop, and some are professional ministries, appointed to and employed by the Church.

The titles of the preaching ministries are: Lay Speakers, § 267; Local Pastors, § 318, and student local pastors, § 318.3, who are licensed to ministry, § 315, in waiting for ordination; Provisional clergy members, § 324, in waiting for Deacon or Elder ordination; Ordained Deacons, § 328, and Elders, § 332; Superintendents §§ 402-403; Bishops § 414. They are all preachers, and all of them hold the ministry of bringing





the Gospel of Christ to the Church and the people of the area. They all have the same obligation to preach the Gospel, to explain the Christian Creeds, to offer the Means of Grace to the people, and to teach, explain and defend the doctrines of the UMC. The different preaching ministries are organic coherent and connected to one another so that the first ministry is the condition for the following ministries, the ministry of Elders and Deacons, and the later and last titled ministries are always built on all the previously ministries.

All the ministries are ministries in their own right and authority, and all persons in ministry have the full right to stay in that ministry without progressing to the next level of ministry. The church can elect a person to ministry in one level but omit electing the same person to another ministry. No person has the right to a specific ministry only because the same person already is in another ministry. All changes or progress in ministry are always depending on the election by the church to the specific ministry. A change in ministry is also possible from Deacon to Elder, or from Elder to Deacon, and these changes are always depending on education, vocation and election by the group of clergies of the conference.

b) The several preaching ministries are prepared for in different education programs or education standards. These education programs are connected and coherent in such a way that education for the first levels of ministries is the condition for the education on the next level of education. A specific category of ministry has a specific program of studies, but seen together and combined, all categories of ministry have one, long, progressive education, where each level of studies is a fully integrated element in the comprehensive education for all the different preaching ministries. Most elements in education on each level will appear again at the next level, but not for repetition of the same. When a subject is coming back in education it is on a developed, advanced and higher level. The comprehensive and combined education is like the pedagogic circle, where the same themes and items are studied, every time on a higher level, building on what was studied at the previous program of education.

c) The Board of Ordained Ministry, § 634.3.c., has the full supervision and censorship/examination of all categories of preaching ministry and the educational programs and standards for the different ministries. In Annual Conferences where possibilities are given for persons to be enrolled in Bible Schools, Colleges or Universities, the obligations of





the Board of Ordained Ministries are reduced to overview the content of education given by these institutions, UMC related or not, and require additional studies if the content and the level of academic learning is not satisfaction for the ministry, the person is preparing for.

In Annual Conferences where no UMC related program of studies is not available, the Board of Ordained Ministry has the obligation to give a description and a didactive format of required studies for the ministry, the person is preparing for. If needed the Board of Ordained Ministry can organize an examination, if the person is not connected to an institution of education, not following the European University standards, the so-called Bologna standard of education with the ECTS credits.

In Europe, where we don't have the function of the University Senate, § 1410.1.-3., to evaluate the content and quality and theological tradition of UMC related universities, and by doing so, determine the standard of pastoral education in the UMC, the Board of Ordained Ministry in each Annual Conference with no UMC related theological institution, has the obligation to do the evaluation and accreditation of the different programs of education and Study Courses, the candidates are enrolled in, and, if needed, require additional education, and if needed, even organize and examine courses for candidates for ordained ministry. Education not following European University standards does not necessarily qualify for ministry in a country where European University standards are criteria for ordination. But when a clergy is ordained, the clergy person have the option to apply for changing membership to another annual conference in the worldwide UMC, and only the ordination and appointment is the criteria.

d) The theological basic subjects, the themes of the courses, are the same in all education programs for preaching ministry. The level is not the same, and is in progression in all subjects from program to program. The classic theological basic subjects are:

- Old Testament studies.
- New Testament studies.
- Church history studies.
- Christian faith and dogmatic studies.
- Pastoral and praxis studies, including studies of diaconal ministry.





Lay Speakers education is presented in the Educational Standard, § 267.5. and indicate the studies in all the basic theological subjects. The Wesleyan theology is not located to one or two of the basic theological subjects, but part of all the subjects. Textbooks from the Wesleyan tradition are recommended in all subjects.

e) The principal progression in each of basic theological themes are:

- Old Testament: Timeline and different historical epochs. Texts and theology of Exodus. Texts and theology of Exil. Theology of Genesis 1-11. From cult religion of the Tempel to law religion of the Synagogue. Messiah in the OT. Biblical hermeneutics and a variety of hermeneutic traditions. Development of written text, reception history.

- New Testament: Life and story of Jesus. The preaching of Jesus in the four Gospels. The history of the beginning of Christianity as presented in the book of Acts. Exegesis on the biblical languages. The theology of the first church as represented in the letters of the NT. Hermeneutical tradition, the context of the Biblical world. History of written text.

- Church history: Christian antiquity. Mainstream of European Christianity. Reformations and confessions in continental Europe, England. Methodist history in England, America and continental Europe. Contemporary church history, Pentecostalism and Ecumenism.

- Christian faith and dogmatic studies. The Ecumenical Creeds. The Antioch, Alexandrin and Carthage tradition of theology. Reformation theology. Wesleyan theology from John and Charles to European Methodism. Contemporary theology and ethics. Constructive and eco theology. Scandinavian theology.

- Pastoral theology and praxis studies. Theories behind praxis, e.g. Psychology of religion and faith, Sociology of religion, Homiletic and liturgy. Missiology. Pastoral care and counseling. Diaconal ministry. Ecclesiology and church laws in Book of Discipline.

f) The didactic and pedagogic progression in studies have the three classical steps:

- Informative and introduction level. The purpose of studies is to reproduce the knowledge given in the textbooks and the lectures, if lectures are offered, and to analyze and discuss the given knowledge.

- Advanced and developed level. The purpose of studies is to be critical and develop subjective perspectives in analyzing and discussion of the





subjects, oral and written, and to build up ability to use theory in the reflection on practical ministry.

- Creative and research level. The purpose of studies is to use the information given to create new knowledge and rational, oral and written.

- Studies at Lay Speaker's and Local Pastor's level are on informative and introduction level. Studies at Provisional Clergy member's level is mostly informative and introduction level AND first try on advanced and developed level. Studies at Ordained Deacon and Elder's level are mostly advanced and developed level and introductive to creative and research level. Doctoral level of theological studies is focused on creative and research level in academic writings.

- Teachers and pastors, who have an advisory or censorship role to students at one study program or another must have education and degrees on a higher level than the students they are guiding. Teachers at Lay Speaker programs must have education on Bachelor Divinity level or higher. Teachers at study programs for local pastors must have education on Masters Divinity level or higher. Teachers at study program for ordained Deacons and Elders, Superintendents and Bishops require Doctoral degrees or equivalent competences.

g) The level of the different study programs for the different preaching ministries can be identified with the European University standards, the so-called Bologna standard of education with the ECTS credits:

- Lay Speaker's education shall be on pre-university level, gymnasium level, folk high school level, no ECTS credits are granted. Some annual conferences offer Lay Speakers training in the first year of university studies within the 30 ECTS level.

- Local Pastor's level shall be no lower than 90 ECTS credits, or 1½ years full time studies, or 5 years part time study course combined with appointment to ministry in a local church, § 318. Appointment is important because practical ministry is also education.

- Provisional clergy member's level shall be no lower than Bachelor Divinity 180 ECTS credits, or 3 years full time studies, or Local Pastor's studies combined with upgrade Local Pastor's study course no lower than 90 ECTS credits.

- Deacon and Elder's level shall be no lower than Master Divinity 120 ECTS credits after completed Bachelor Divinity.





h) Diagram with criterions for studies on different levels of preaching ministries:

	Lay Speakers' level	Local Pastors' or ½ Bachelor level	Provisional clergy or Bachelor level	Deacon – Elder Master level
Entry Qualifications	10 years in school	12-13 years in school and Lay Speaker diploma	12-13 years in school include high school, A-levels, college and Lay Speaker diploma	Bachelor's degree or 1½ years up-grade local pastors' education 90 ECTS + Local Pastor
Years of studies, fulltime	Part time courses or 1 year Bible folk high school	1½ year or 5 years part time program and appointment local church	3 years	2 years (appointment added)
ECTS for graduation	(30 ECTS)	90 ECTS incl. thesis	180 ECTS incl. thesis	120 ECTS incl. thesis
Academic level in progress: -Intro/Basic level: -Developed level: -Research/creative level:	xxx	xxx x	xxx x	xxx x
Literature per ECTS		50-60 pages	80-90 pages	100-120 pages
Thesis -Pages (1 = 500 words) -ECTS -Literature -Opponent -Examiner -Foot/Endnotes		10-15 pages 5 ECTS 200-400 pages Advisor Advisor	15-30 pages 10 ECTS 500-1000 pages Advisor Advisor Yes	40-80 pages 30 ECTS 2000-3000 Advisor and colleague Advisor and censor Yes
Teachers/advisors: -with bachelor's degrees: -with master's degrees: -PhD students: -with PhD degrees:	x x x	x x x	xxx x x	(x) xx xxx





The Superintendency

¶ 404. Provisions for Episcopal Areas

1. In central conferences, the number of bishops shall be determined on the basis of missional needs, as approved by the General Conference on recommendation of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters. The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference has been authorized to elect one bishop.

¶ 405. Election and Consecration of Bishops

1. Eligibility—All ordained Elders under the age of sixty-eight in full membership with a United Methodist annual conference and in active service are eligible to the episcopacy.

2. Term

a) In Northern Europe and Eurasia a bishop is elected for a first term of eight years. A bishop can be reelected for a second term of four years. A bishop who has served a second term, and will reach the official retirement age in his or her country within the following quadrennium can be reelected for a third term of four years.

b) An elder between the ages of sixty-four sixty-eight can only be elected for a term of four years.

3. Nomination

a) An annual conference, in the session immediately prior to the next regular session of the central conference, may name one or more nominees for episcopal election. Also members, groups of members, disciplinary entities, and organizations within The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference can place a nomination. All nominations shall be made in writing to the central conference committee on episcopacy within a time limit set by the central conference council.

b) All nominations shall be accompanied by a presentation of the candidate in writing – half a page A4 (500 words, 30 lines). The chairperson of the central conference committee on episcopacy must approve the presentation before further distribution.





Presentation of persons nominated within the set time limit will be published in the pre-conference material.

c) Similar procedures shall be developed for persons nominated by ballot who receive ten votes or 5 percent of the votes cast, and the information shall be made available to the delegates at the site of the conference.

d) United Methodist magazines and web pages within the central conference will follow the nomination process on their own initiative from a journalistic perspective. Both nominators and nominees can make themselves available for additional information.

e) Nominators, in cooperation with the central conference committee on episcopacy, shall make it possible for the nominees to be present at the central conference.

f) A public presentation and hearing will be held at the central conference.

g) Debate and election speeches are allowed. until the nomination is closed.

4. Process

a) Election takes place in a session set by the central conference.

b) Tellers elected by the conference will count the votes.

c) Delegates, in electing bishops, shall give due consideration to the inclusiveness of The United Methodist Church with respect to sex, race, and national origin. In addition, consideration shall be given to the nature of superintendency as described in ¶ 401.

d) The ballot is secret and personal. Delegates cannot be bound to vote for any specific nominee.

e) Two thirds of given and valid votes are necessary to elect a bishop.

5. Consecration - of bishop takes place at the session of the conference at which election occurs or at a place and time designated by the conference. The consecration service may include bishops from other jurisdictional and central conferences. At least one elder and one lay shall participate in the consecration. It is strongly urged that the consecration service also include representatives from other Christian communions, particularly those with whom we have a formal agreement that includes the mutual recognition of ministry and ordination





¶ 418 Limitations on Years of Service.

Annual Conferences can decide which of the following two rules concerning limits of years of service they want to follow.

A. The normal term for a district superintendent shall be up to six years, but this may be extended to no more than up to eight years at the discretion of the bishop, in consultation with the cabinet and the district committee on superintendency.

No superintendent shall serve for more than eight years in any consecutive eleven years. No elder shall serve as district superintendent more than fourteen years. In addition, consideration shall be given to the nature of superintendency as described in ¶ 401.

B. The normal term for a district superintendent shall be up to six years, but this may be extended to no more than up to ten years at the discretion of the bishop, in consultation with the cabinet and the district committee on superintendency.

No superintendent shall serve for more than ten years in any consecutive thirteen years. No elder shall serve as district superintendent more than eighteen years. In addition, consideration shall be given to the nature of superintendency as described in ¶ 401.

The Conferences (Central Conference)

¶ 542 Composition

The central conference shall be composed of clergy and lay members in equal numbers, the clergy members elected by the clergy members of the annual conference and the lay members by the lay members thereof. Their qualifications and the manner of election shall be determined by the central conference itself, subject only to constitutional requirements. Each annual conference and provisional annual conference shall be entitled to at least two clergy and two lay delegates, and no other selection of delegates shall be authorized that would provide for more than one clergy delegate for every six clergy members of an annual conference; except that a majority of the number fixed by a central conference as the ratio of representation shall





entitle an annual conference to an additional clergy delegate and to an additional lay delegate.

Each missionary conference and mission are authorized to elect and send one of its members to the central conference concerned as its representative, said representative to be accorded the privilege of sitting with the committees of the central conference, with the right to speak in the committees and in the regular sessions of the central conference, but without the right to vote. Representatives of missionary conferences or missions shall have the same claim for payment of expenses as is allowed to members of the central conference.

- a) In the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference the number of delegates to which an Annual Conference or Provisional Annual Conference is entitled is one clergy and one lay delegate for every six clergy member in the annual conference, and one extra additional clergy and one lay delegate
- b) The Uniting Church in Sweden shall, as stated in our signed agreement, be entitled to two delegates, one clergy and one layperson with all rights and privileges of delegates including membership in committees, except the right to vote. The Church Leader of the Uniting Church in Sweden may also be invited to the Central Conference by the bishops of the conference.

¶ 544. Powers and Duties

1. To a central conference shall be committed for supervision and promotion, in harmony with the Discipline and interdenominational contractual agreements, the missionary, educational, evangelistic, industrial, publishing, medical, and other connectional interests of the annual conferences, provisional annual conferences, missionary conferences, and missions within its territory and such other matters as may be referred to it by said bodies or by order of the General Conference; and it shall provide suitable organizations for such work and elect the necessary officers for the same.

2. A central conference, when authorized by a specific enabling act of the General Conference, may elect one or more bishops from among the traveling elders of The United Methodist Church. The number of bishops to be elected by each central conference shall be determined from time to time by the General Conference.





3. When a central conference shall have been authorized to elect bishops, such elections shall be conducted under the same general procedure as prevails in the jurisdictional conferences for the election of bishops. A central conference shall have power to fix the tenure of bishops elected by the said central conference.²¹

4. The General Council on Finance and Administration shall determine the apportionment amounts for the annual conferences of the central conferences for the succeeding quadrennium based on calculation methodology approved by the General Conference upon recommendation by the Council. This determination shall be informed by consultation with the Council of Bishops.

5. A central conference, in consultation with the bishops of that central conference, shall fix the episcopal areas and residences and make assignments to them of the bishops who are to reside in that central conference. The bishops of a central conference shall arrange the plan of episcopal visitation within its bounds.

6. A central conference shall have authority to elect and support general officers in all departments of the work of the Church within the boundaries of the central conference but may not determine the number of bishops.

7. A central conference shall have power to make such changes and adaptations of the Book of Discipline as the special conditions and the mission of the church in the area require, especially concerning the organization and administration of the work on local church, district, and annual conference levels, provided that no action shall be taken that is contrary to the Constitution and the General Rules of the United Methodist Church, the Doctrinal Standards and Our Conference-approved theological statements, including By Water and the Spirit, This Holy Mystery, and Sent In Love, and provided that the spirit of connectional relationship is kept between the local and the general church. Subject to this restriction, a central conference may delegate to an annual conference within its boundaries the power to make one or the other of the changes and adaptations referred to in this paragraph, upon the request of such annual conference.

8. A central conference shall fix the boundaries of the annual conferences, provisional annual conferences, missionary conferences, and missions within its bounds, proposals for changes first having been submitted to the annual conferences concerned as prescribed in the





Discipline of The United Methodist Church. No annual conference shall be organized with fewer than thirty-five clergy members except as provided by an enabling act for the quadrennium, which shall not reduce the number below twenty-five. Nor shall an annual conference be continued with fewer than twenty-five clergy members except as provided by an enabling act for the quadrennium.

9. A central conference may advise its annual conferences and provisional annual conferences to set standards of character and other qualifications for admission of lay members.

10. A central conference shall have power to make changes and adaptations in procedure pertaining to the annual district and charge conferences within its territory and to add to the business of the annual conference supplementary questions considered desirable or necessary to meet its own needs.

11. A central conference shall have authority to examine and acknowledge the journals of the annual conferences, provisional annual conferences, missionary conferences, and missions located within its bounds and to make rules for the drawing up of the journals as may seem necessary.

12. A central conference shall have authority to adopt rules of procedure governing the investigation and trial of its clergy, including bishops, and lay members of the Church and to provide the necessary means and methods of implementing the said rules; provided, however, that the ordained ministers shall not be deprived of the right of trial by a clergy committee, and lay members of the Church of the right of trial by a duly constituted committee of lay members; and provided also, that the rights of appeal shall be adequately safeguarded.²⁴

13. A central conference is authorized to prepare and translate simplified or adapted forms of such parts of the ritual as it may deem necessary, such changes to require the approval of the resident bishop or bishops of the central conference.

14. A central conference shall have the power to conform the detailed rules, rites, and ceremonies for the solemnization of marriage to the statute laws of the country or countries within its jurisdiction.

15. A central conference shall have authority 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 central conference may delegate the same authority to each of the annual conferences within its boundaries.

a. The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference delegates the above mentioned authority to each of the annual conferences within its boundaries.

b. When an annual conference translates the social principles, it may make such changes to ¶162D that are needed to align the wording with its standards and policy, and civil law regarding marriage.

16. A central conference shall have authority to set standards for ordination and the license for pastoral ministry within its jurisdiction, 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 central conference may delegate the same authority to each of the annual conferences within its boundaries.

a. The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference delegates the above mentioned authority to each of the annual conferences within its boundaries.

17. Subject to the approval of the bishop's resident therein, a central conference shall have the power to prescribe courses of study, including those in the vernaculars, for its ministry, both foreign and indigenous, including local preachers, lay servants, Bible women, deaconesses, teachers - both male and female - and all other workers whatsoever, ordained or lay. It shall also make rules and regulations for examination in these courses.

18. A central conference shall have authority to edit and publish a central conference Discipline, which shall contain in addition to the Constitution of the Church such sections from the entire Church and also such revised, adapted, or new sections as shall have been enacted by the central conference concerned under the powers given by the General Conference.





a. The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference publishes a supplement which together with the Book of Discipline 2020/2024 serves as our Book of Discipline.

b. Each annual conference may in consultation with the bishop translate the parts of the Social Principles they consider relevant and applicable to their context, provided that the spirit of connectional relationship is kept between the local and the general church.

19. In a central conference or provisional central conference using a language other than English, legislation passed by a General Conference shall not take effect until 18 months after the close of that General Conference in order to afford the necessary time to make adaptations and to publish a translation of the legislation that has been enacted, the translation to be approved by the resident bishop or bishops of the central conference. This provision, however, shall not exclude the election of delegates to the General Conference by annual conferences within the territory of central conferences or provisional central conferences.

20. A central conference is authorized to interpret Article XXIII of the Articles of Religion so as to recognize the governments of the country or countries within its territory.

21. A central conference shall have power to authorize the congregations in a certain state or country to form special organizations in order to receive the acknowledgment of the state or country according to the laws of that state or country. These organizations shall be empowered to represent the interests of the Church to the authorities of the state or country according to the rules and principles of The United Methodist Church, and they shall be required to give regular reports of their activities to their respective annual conferences.

22. A central conference may, with the consent of the bishop's resident in that conference, enter into agreements with churches or missions of other denominations for the division of territory or of responsibility for Christian work within the territory of the central conference.

23. A central conference shall have the right to negotiate with other Protestant bodies looking toward the possibility of church union; provided that any proposals for church union shall be submitted to the General Conference for approval before consummation





¶ 548. Conference Agencies

1. A central conference may have a standing committee on women's work. This committee should preferably be composed of the women delegates and such other persons as the central conference may elect. The duty of this committee shall be to study the relation of women to the Church and to devise ways and means of developing this portion of the Church membership, to the end that it may assume its rightful responsibilities in the extension of the Kingdom. The committee shall make recommendations to the central conference regarding women's organizations within its areas. A central conference-organization may become a member of the World Federation of Methodist Women and may elect a representative to the World Federation of Methodist Women within the provisions of the federation.

2. A central conference may organize a women's unit, after consultation with the committee on women's work, in connection with any annual conference or provisional annual conference within its bounds and provide a constitution and bylaws for it.

3. A central conference that adapts and edits the Discipline as provided in ¶ 543.16 shall establish a judicial court, which in addition to other duties that the central conference may assign to it shall hear and determine the legality of any action of the central conference taken under the adapted portions of the Discipline or of a decision of law by the presiding bishop of the central conference pertaining to the adapted portions of the Discipline, upon appeal by the presiding bishop or by one-fifth of the members of the central conference. Further, the judicial court shall hear and determine the legality if any action of an annual conference taken under the adapted portions of the Discipline or of a decision of law by the presiding bishop of the annual conference pertaining to the adapted portion of the Discipline, upon appeal of the presiding bishop or of such percentage of the members of the annual conference as may be determined by the central conference concerned.

a) Membership - The court shall be composed of one member from each of the annual conferences within the central conference. Three members shall be clergy in full membership, and three shall be lay members of the church and been so for at least four years. The members are elected for four years and can be re-elected once for four more years. No one can serve more than two out of three quadrennia. A person over 70 years is not eligible. The term of service expires at the closure of





the central conference session where a successor is elected. Members of the court are elected only upon nominations from annual conferences. The chairperson of the court is present at the central conference sessions.

b) Substitutes - Substitutes shall be elected in same numbers and by same rules as for regular members. Should a vacancy arise during the quadrennium, a clergy member is replaced by a clergy and a lay member by a lay person. The substitute shall serve till the end of the four-year term.

c) Organization - The court elects a chairperson and a secretary at the closure of the central conference session.

d) Restrictions - Members of the judicial court shall be ineligible to serve as delegates to the central conference, members of the central conference council and the central conference committee on the Discipline. No member of the court who also is a member of a central conference board or committee shall vote or take part in deliberations on matters concerning this board or committee; instead, a substitute shall serve on such a matter.

e) Meetings - The judicial court meets when there are matters to be dealt with. Four members constitute a quorum. Simple majority is enough for a decision; in case of equal number of votes, the opinion of the chairperson prevails. All persons who in one way or another are involved in a case, shall be parties to the proceeding and have the right to present evidence. Other persons with a direct or indirect interest in a case may also present their views.

f) Jurisdictions – The jurisdiction of the court is defined in the Constitution § 31, Article IV.6

g) Matters – Within its jurisdiction the court shall hear and determine the legality of: (1) decisions by the central conference, annual and national district conferences and their boards and committees, when appealed by the bishop or by no less than a fifth of the voting members of the central conference or a third of the voting members in an annual or national district conference. The judicial court can confirm such decisions or declare them as such or partly in violation of the law of the church. (2) Questions arising on the rules, regulations , and such revised, adapted, or new sections of the central conference Discipline.





h) Notification and Publication – The decisions of the judicial court shall in its entirety be sent to the bishop and all parties to the proceeding. All decisions during the quadrennium shall be reported to the central conference and printed in its minutes if necessary in a separate edition. A summary for each decision shall be published in the official magazines of the church.

4. A central conference may have a standing committee on young people's ministry. This committee shall be composed of youth, young adults, and adult leaders of youth or young-adult ministry from each annual conference in the central conference. The duty of this committee shall be to study the relation of young people to the Church and to devise ways and means of developing the Church's ministry for, with, and by young people.

5. Every board, standing committee, commission, council, and work area of the central conference shall designate one of its members as its coordinator of witness ministries. These persons shall help the agencies of which they are members to engage in witness ministries and, in particular, to ask, "How are we intentionally reaching new people for Jesus Christ through our ministries?" and "How are we helping new people grow and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ through our ministries and areas of responsibility?"

¶ 550. Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Council

The council executes assignments given by the central conference and administers running business between central conference sessions as well as prepares central conference sessions. It is amenable and accountable to the central conference and reports to the central conference. The purpose of the council is for the discernment and articulation upholding of the vision for the church, sharing of experience and good practices, and channeling of connectional resources and mutual help promoting connectional exchange and cooperation. The council reports to the central conference and prepares central conference sessions.

a) Membership

(1) Members of the council is the bishop ex officio and the following number of representatives:





4 members, both clergy and lay, from Norway

2 members from Denmark

1 member each from Latvia and Lithuania

1 member each from Finland S and Finland F

1 member from Ukraine/Moldova.

All members shall be involved in the national leadership of the church.

Substitutes shall be elected by the same number and in numerical order. Substitutes are not personal.

(2) Membership recommendations. All conferences shall seek equal representation between men/women, clergy/lay, and further seek to ensure representation of young people under the age of thirty-five. A Minimum of one member from each annual and national district conference must be a member of its conference council

(3) Membership term

a) The members and substitutes are elected for the quadrennium, serving from the adjournment of the ordinary central conference session in the beginning of the quadrennium until the adjournment of the following ordinary session.

b) Meetings - The council meets normally in the spring and fall each year. Other arrangements can be agreed upon if the budget allows.

c) Officers - The council elects a chairperson and a secretary for the quadrennium among the elected members of the council

d) Office - The office of the bishop is also the Office of Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference.

e) Presidium

1) The chairperson, the chair of the committee on episcopacy, the bishop and the secretary forms the presidium of the council.

(2) The presidium prepares meetings of the council and assigns matters to working groups.

(3) If necessary, the presidium can decide upon matters that cannot wait until the next meeting of the council.





f) Council responsibilities - It is the responsibility of the council

(1) To elect treasurer for the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Fund, the Episcopal Fund, and all other funds under its jurisdiction.

(2) To receive and approve annual financial reports for the funds mentioned above, audited by a certified public auditor.

(3) To give an annual report to the annual and national district conferences and receive an annual statistical summary from these.

(4) To present a quadrennial summary of the financial reports of the funds mentioned above to the central conference for approval.

(5) Either to publish The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church in Northern Europe & Eurasia (NEEBoD) each quadrennium or in other ways make changes and adaptations available.

(6) To set time and select place for central conference sessions.

(7) To deal with matters assigned to them by the council or its presidium. Decisions with impact on matters outside the respective area require confirmation by the council or its presidium.

(8) To function as the committee on episcopacy (§ 551).

(9) To function as the episcopal residence committee with the responsibility:

(a) To make recommendations to the annual conferences regarding the purchase, sale, or rental of an episcopal residence.

(b) To prepare an annual budget covering the cost of providing the episcopal residence, which may also include utilities, insurance, and normal costs of upkeep in maintaining the residence.

(c) To supervise the expenditure of funds allocated from all sources for expenses related to the provision of the episcopal residence and to account for such expenditures annually to each annual conference in the episcopal area.





(d) To give oversight in all matters related to upkeep, maintenance, improvements, and appropriate insurance coverage for the episcopal residence.

(10) To be responsible for the necessary administration, in case of vacancy in the office of bishop due to death or other reason, until the vacancy is filled (§ 407).

(11) To develop annual budget for the episcopal fund to be submitted to the General Council on Finance and Administration for approval.

g) Subcommittees - In order to support and perform its duties, the council can organize ad hoc subcommittees to fulfil its purpose and any of its permanent tasks

h) Economy

(1) The travel expenses of the council, accommodation and travel meals (per diem) are covered by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Fund.

(2) Apportionments to the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference are paid by the annual and national district conferences based on a formula set by the Central Conference.

(3) The formula is a percentage of the total gross salary of all clergy under appointment in the local church on conference and district level and in institutions fully or partly owned by the church or a church entity. The gross salary includes the full salary (before taxes), all employee benefits and the value of free housing.

(4) The apportionment percentage for 2025-2029 is 1 %, starting from 2026.

¶ 551. Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Committee on Episcopacy

a) There shall be a central conference committee on episcopacy, composed of the elected members of the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Council. The committee elects a chairperson and a secretary. The bishop is not a member of the committee but gives a personal report to the committee in connection with an annual consultation.





b) The functions of the conference committee on episcopacy shall be:

- (1) To support the bishop of the area in the oversight of the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Church, with special reference to the area where the bishop has presidential responsibility.
- (2) To be available to the bishop for counsel
- (3) To assist in the determination of the episcopal needs of the area and to make recommendations to appropriate bodies.
- (4) To keep the bishop advised concerning conditions within the area as they affect relationships between the bishop and the people of the conference agencies.
- (5) To interpret to the people of the area and to conference agencies the nature and function of the episcopal office.
- (6) To engage in annual consultation and appraisal of the balance of the bishop's relationship and responsibilities to the area and annual conferences, general Church boards and agencies, and other areas of specialized ministry, including, at all levels, concern for the inclusiveness of the Church and its ministry with respect to sex, race, and national origin, and understanding and implementation of the consultation process in appointment making.
- (7) To include decisions and recommendations in the minutes of the central conference committee, and report to the central conference.

¶ 552. Other central conference work

can be performed by the following board, which is also responsible for promoting and coordinating activities within respective working area without financing from the Central Conference Council: The Central Conference Children and Youth Council.

¶ 553. Apportionments into the Episcopal Fund and the General Administration Fund

Apportionments to the Episcopal Fund and the General Administration Fund are paid by the annual conferences based on a formula set by the General Conference.





In the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference the annual and the national district conferences pay these apportionments based on the formula previously used to for apportionments to the episcopal fund.

The formula is a percentage of the total gross salary of all clergy under appointment in the local church, on conference and district level and in institutions fully or partly owned by the church or a church entity. The gross salary includes the full salary (before taxes) all employee benefits and the value of free housing. The apportionment percentage for 2025-2029 is set at 2,50%.

We use this formula as long as it is approved by the General Council on Finance and Administration.

¶ 554. The European Methodist Council

1. The Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference is a member of the European Methodist Council.
2. A financial contribution to the council shall be included in the budget for the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Fund.
3. The Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference is represented in the European Methodist Council by three members, the bishop, one clergy and one lay representative. The annual and national district conferences submit nominations to the Central Conference Council, which makes the election.

¶ 555 The Baltic Annual Conference

The name of “the Estonia Annual Conference” changes to “the Baltic Annual Conference”, the Central Conference enables the Baltic annual conference to keep the status of an annual conference for the coming quadrennium.





The Conferences (The Annual Conference)

¶ 611. Annual Conference Council

In each annual and national district conference within Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference there shall be a conference council. In Denmark the council is called Landsledelsen, in Finland Kirkkohallitus (Finnish) or Kyrkostyrelsen (Swedish), in Latvia Baznīcas Valde, in Lithuania Baznycios administracinės, in Norway Hovedstyret, and in Ukraine “Рада щорічної конференції”.

¶ 612. Functions

The conference council shall have the following functions, membership and organization:

1. Functions. The conference council shall have the following functions:

- a) Annual conference council on finance and administration (¶ 613-619), of which the purpose is to develop, maintain, and administer a comprehensive and coordinated plan of fiscal and administrative policies, procedures, and management services for the annual conference.
- b) Annual conference council responsible for connectional ministries (¶ 608)
- c) Annual conference board of trustees (¶ 2512-2517)
- d) Annual conference board on church location and building (¶ 2518-2524)
- e) Annual conference committee on Christian unity and interreligious concerns (¶ 642)
- f) Annual conference board of pensions, when not separately organized (¶ 639).

2. Membership.

- a) Members of the council are the bishop, the district superintendents, the conference lay leader, and those persons the conference wishes to elect. The conference treasurer may be a member of the conference council.
- b) Diversity is important for the annual conference council and its members should mirror the annual and district





conference in regards to age, gender, geography and congregational affiliation.

c) The conference council should have equal numbers of clergy and lay members.

3. Officers. The council shall have a chairperson elected by the annual conference. The council elects among its voting members a vice chairperson, a secretary, and other officers as the council decides. The conference treasurer/director of administrative services (§ 619) shall be the treasurer of the council.

4. No member of the council shall vote on or take part in deliberations on significant matters directly or indirectly affecting her or his business, income, or employment, or the business, income, or employment of his or her immediate family.

5. Organization.

a) The council may establish committees and task forces and define their duties and authority as it deems necessary for fulfilling its purpose and responsibilities.

b) The annual conference may enact bylaws governing meetings, quorum, and other matters of procedure for the council, or it may authorize the council to enact such bylaws; in any event, such bylaws shall not be in conflict with the Book of Discipline.

c) If deemed necessary for the fulfilment of its functions and if so authorized by the annual conference, the council may be incorporated.

6. Amenability. The council shall be amenable and report directly to the annual conference.

¶ 613. Responsibilities

See the 2020/2024 Book of Discipline

¶ 615. Apportionments

The council shall recommend to the annual conference for its action and determination the methods or formulas by which the approved budgeted amounts for clergy support, administration, and other causes shall be apportioned to the churches or charges of the conference.





¶ 634. Conference board of ordained ministry

1. Each annual conference at the first session following the General Conference shall elect for a term of four years a Board of Ordained Ministry. At least six ordained elders and deacons in full connection and, when possible, at least two associate members or full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study shall be included as members of the board with voice and vote. Each annual conference shall elect at least one-fifth laypersons, which may include diaconal ministers, and may at its discretion elect further lay members, up to one-third of the membership of the board. All laypersons shall be professing members of local churches in the annual conference. The board membership shall include both men and women, and attention should be paid to the demographic constituents of the conference. When possible, at least one ordained clergyperson in the retired relationship, at least one ordained clergyperson in extension ministry, and when possible at least one young adult clergyperson in full connection age 35 or younger, and a district superintendent named by the bishop to represent the cabinet

a) Members shall be nominated by the presiding bishop after consultation with the chairperson of the board, the executive committee, or a committee elected by the board of the previous quadrennium, and with the cabinet. To ensure adequate board membership, consultation shall include an evaluation of the workload of the board in meeting disciplinary and annual conference responsibilities. Vacancies shall be filled by the bishop after consultation with the chairperson of the board. An elected board member may serve a maximum of three consecutive four-year terms

b) This board shall be directly amenable to the annual conference, notwithstanding its organizational relationship within any other program or administrative unit of the annual conference. The annual conference council on finance and administration shall recommend adequate administrative funds for the board and its staff in light of its workload.

c) The board shall organize by electing from its membership a chairperson, registrars, and such other officers as it may deem necessary. A vocational discernment coordinator may be named to coordinate the candidacy mentoring process.





The board shall designate its executive committee, which shall include elders, deacons, and laity. The board shall organize in such manner as to care for its responsibilities, including the needs of certified persons, diaconal ministers, local pastors, deacons, and elders. The board may include in its organization a division of deacons and a division of elders.

d) Each annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry shall establish a Conference Relations Committee of at least three persons to hear requests for discontinuance of provisional members, involuntary leave of absence, administrative location, involuntary retirement, or other such matters as may be referred to them by the board of ordained ministry. District superintendents shall not serve on the Conference Relations Committee.

e) To ensure maximum contact with and support of persons in appointments beyond the local church, the board shall maintain relationships with all general agencies that have responsibility for persons in such appointments.

f) The board shall meet at least once prior to its meeting at the time of the annual conference session and may set a deadline prior to annual conference for transacting its business.

g) The board shall select from its own membership an official representative to serve as a member of or liaison to existing district committees on ordained ministry.

h) The board shall provide orientation for new members, including distribution of any available written guidelines.

2. The duties of the annual conference board of ordained ministry shall be:

a) To assume the primary responsibility for the enlistment and recruitment of ordained clergy by working in consultation with the cabinet to study and interpret the clergy needs and resources of the annual conference, with due regard to the inclusive nature of the Church. It shall, with the assistance of the local church committee on pastor-parish relations, conference agencies, and every ordained minister of the conference, enlist women and men of all races and ethnic origins for the ordained ministry and guide those persons in the process of education, training, and ordination, recommending colleges and schools of theology listed by the





Central Conference Council. Persons recruited should have an understanding of and appreciation for persons of different racial and ethnic heritages.

b) To renew a culture of call in the church by giving strategic leadership to annual conferences, districts, congregations, campus ministries, camps, and other appropriate ministries, especially among youth and young adults.

c) To seek from a school of theology information about the personal and professional qualities of an applicant for provisional membership or of a provisional member; provided, however, that the applicant or member consent to the provision of such information.

d) To receive annual reports on the progress made by each ministerial student enrolled in a theological school and to record credit for work satisfactorily completed.

e) It shall require a transcript of credits from each applicant before recognizing any of the applicant's educational claims. In case of doubt, the board may submit a transcript to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry for evaluation.

f) The board shall annually appoint and train a sufficient number of mentors in each district in consultation with the district superintendent.

g) To guide the candidate for ordained ministry who is not enrolled in a theological school and who is pursuing the Course of Study as adopted by the Central Conference Council

h) To examine all applicants as to their fitness for the ordained ministry and make full inquiry as to the fitness of the candidate for: (1) annual election as local pastor; (2) election to associate membership; (3) election to provisional membership; and (4) election to full conference membership.

i) To provide all candidates for ordained ministry a written statement on the disciplinary and annual conference requirements for the local pastor, provisional, and full membership.

j) To interview and report recommendation concerning: (1) student local pastors; (2) certified candidates for ordination





as deacons; and (3) certified candidates for ordination as elders.

k) To assign a board member to serve as liaison to retired clergy in the conference.

l) To interview applicants and make recommendation concerning: (1) changes from the effective relation to a leave of absence or retirement; (2) return to the effective relation from other relations; (3) honourable location; (4) readmission of located persons and persons discontinued from provisional membership; (5) sabbatical leave; (6) incapacity leave; (7) appointment as a student; (8) termination; and (9) changes to or from less than full-time ministry.

The board shall keep a record of these changes and the reason behind them and place a copy in the permanent records of the annual conference maintained by the secretary of the conference.

m) To ensure confidentiality in relation to the interview and reporting process. The personal data and private information provided through the examinations of and by the Board of Ordained Ministry will not be available for distribution and publication. There are occasions when the Board of Ordained Ministry would not report privileged information, which in the judgement of the board, if revealed in the executive session of clergy members in full connection with the annual conference, would be an undue invasion of privacy without adding measurably to the conference's information about the person's qualifications for ordained ministry. However, it is the right of the executive session of the clergy members in full connection with an annual conference to receive all pertinent information, confidential or otherwise, related to the qualifications and/or character of any candidate or clergy member of the conference.

n) To be in consultation with the bishop through the chairperson or the executive committee regarding transfers. This consultation is to be at the bishop's initiative and, where possible, to take place prior to transfers into the annual conference.

o) To provide support services for the ordained minister's career development, including personal and career





counselling, continuing education, formation in servant leadership and continuing spiritual growth in Christ, assistance in preparation for retirement, and all matters pertaining to clergy morale. In providing such support, the board, in cooperation with the cabinet, shall give training and guidance to each local committee on pastor-parish relations regarding its work and role.

p) To work with and support the Order of Deacon and the Order of Elder, including receiving reports, offering financial support, and coordinating the Orders' activity with the continuing formation offerings of the board. The board may delegate continuing formation responsibility to the Orders by mutual agreement, with final approval, evaluation, and budgeting remaining with the board.

q) To work with and support the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members (see ¶ 323), including receiving reports, offering financial support, and coordinating their continuing formation.

r) To provide a means of evaluating the effectiveness of ordained ministers in the annual conference (¶¶ 604.4, 350). Suggested guidelines will be provided by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Division of Ordained Ministry. In cooperation with the cabinet, the board shall develop standards of effectiveness for clergy serving as pastors of congregations in that annual conference.

s) To interpret the high ethical standards of ordained ministry set forth in the Discipline and to study matters pertaining to character (¶605.7).

t) To recommend to the full members of the annual conference for validation special ministries for which members seek appointment. The appointment to such ministries is the prerogative of the bishop and the cabinet.

u) To provide continuing support and management of consecrated diaconal ministers using the policies described in ¶¶ 301-317 of the 1992 Book of Discipline.

v) To care for the administration of professional certification established by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry through (1) enlisting and recruiting clergy and laity to become certified in Christian education, music, youth,





evangelism, and other areas established by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry; (2) determining whether applicants meet the standards established by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry; (3) to recommend to the annual conference board and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry; (4) to renew or discontinue professional certification biannually based on a review of their ministry; and (5) to report annually to the annual conference for publication in the conference journal a roster of all persons certified in professional careers for which they have received certification, including places of service address.

w) To report annually to the annual conference for publication in the conference journal a roster of all persons certified as Lay Ministers.

x) To administer the portion of the Ministerial Education Fund for use by the annual conference in its programs of enlistment, basic professional educational aid, continuing formation, ethnic ministry and language training, and professional growth of ordained ministers. Priority shall be given to scholarships for seminary students preparing for ordination.

y) To cooperate with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and assist in: (1) the interpretation of current legislation concerning ordained ministry; (2) the interpretation and promotion of the Ministerial Education Fund; (3) the promotion and observance of Ministry Sunday; and (4) the supplying of a record of all information, recommendations, and action on each candidate for ordained ministry after each session of the annual conference; (5) the promotion and addition of standards required for certification in specialized ministry careers.

z) To promote in the annual conference and/or jurisdictional conference a system of financial aid to ministerial students. A conference transferring a person with less than three years of active service into another conference may require reimbursement either from the person or from the receiving conference for outstanding obligations for theological education financed through conference funds.





aa) To report in a timely manner any change in the conference relationship of a clergy member of the conference to the conference board of pensions.

3. The board shall elect a registrar and such associate registrars as it may determine; one such associate registrar to be given responsibility for candidacy, including giving leadership to the training and guidance of mentors in each district. A staff executive may be named by the board to fulfill the functions of registrar.

a) The registrar shall keep full personnel records for all candidates for ordained ministry under the care of the board, including essential biographical data, transcripts of academic credit, instruments of evaluation, and, where it applies, psychological and medical test records, sermons, theological statements, and other pertinent data.

b) Pertinent information and recommendations concerning each candidate shall be certified to the annual conference. The registrar shall forward an acknowledgement of transfer to the pastor of the local church where each newly elected provisional and associate member held membership.

c) The registrar shall keep a record of the standing of the students in the course of Study and report to the conference when required. This record shall include the credits allowed students for work done in accredited schools of theology in approved Course of Study schools, or Course of Study correspondence.

d) The registrar shall file in the bishop's office for permanent record a copy of circumstances involving the discontinuance of provisional membership or termination of the local pastor status.

e) The records and files of the Board of Ordained Ministry are kept on behalf of the annual conference and shall be maintained under guidelines provided by the General Council on Finance and Administration in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the General Board of Pensions.

4. Administrative costs of the Board of Ordained Ministry shall be a claim on the conference operating budget. The Board of





Ordained Ministry shall have direct access to the conference council on finance and administration in support of its program.

¶ 635. Conference Administrative Review Committee

There will be an administrative review committee composed of three clergy in full connection and two alternates who are not members of the cabinet, the Board of Ordained Ministry, or immediate family members of the above. Alternatively, the Board of Ordained ministry in another annual conference in the central conference may be elected to serve as administrative review committee. The committee shall be nominated by the bishop and elected quadrennially by the clergy session of members in full connection with the annual conference. Its only purpose shall be to ensure that the disciplinary procedures for discontinuance of provisional membership (¶ 327.6), involuntary leave of absence (¶ 355), involuntary retirement (¶ 358.3), administrative location (¶ 360), or a resolution process (¶ 363.6) are properly followed. Additionally, if in the event of unresolved issues related to medical leave (¶ 357.4) a fair process hearing (¶ 362.2) occurs, the administrative review committee shall ensure that fair process was followed. The entire administrative process leading to the action for change in conference relationship, or any just resolution process, shall be reviewed by the administrative review committee, and it shall report its findings to the clergy session of members in full connection with the annual conference prior to any action of the annual conference. The administrative review committee shall notify the parties of the review of the process. The administrative fair process hearing procedures (¶ 362.2) should be followed by the administrative review committee. Prior to its report, if the committee determines that any error has occurred, it may recommend to the appropriate person or body that action be taken promptly to remedy the error, decide the error is harmless, or take other action.





The Conferences (The District Conference)

¶ 666. There may be a district committee on ordained ministry.

1. The district committee on ordained ministry shall be amenable to the annual conference through the Board of Ordained Ministry, which shall assign one of its members to the district committee. All members shall be nominated annually by the district superintendent in consultation with the chairperson or executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry and approved by the annual conference. Interim vacancies shall be filled by the district superintendent. The committee shall be comprised of at least two professing members of local churches, the district superintendent, who may serve as the executive secretary and at least four other clergy in the district. The clergy shall include elders, and where possible, a deacon in full connection, women, a deacon or elder who is age 35 or younger, an associate member, and may include one local pastor who has completed the Course of Study. All persons named to the district committee on ordained ministry shall be members with vote. The district committee on ordained ministry shall provide orientation for new members, including education regarding the ministry and roles of all clergy and distribution of any available written guidelines. At least two professing members of local churches shall be full participating members of the committee with vote, nominated annually by the district superintendent and approved by the annual conference.

2. The district committee on ordained ministry shall elect its officers at the first meeting following the annual conference session when the members are elected.

3. The committee shall maintain a list of all persons who have declared their candidacy for the ordained ministry and are pursuing candidacy studies with a candidacy mentor. A duplicate list shall be forwarded to the annual conference registrar for candidacy; such list being made current at least prior to each session of the annual conference.

4. The committee shall offer counsel to candidates regarding pre-theological studies.

5. The committee shall supervise all matters dealing with candidacy for the ordained ministry and with the license for local pastor.





6. The vote of the committee on matters of candidacy shall be by individual written ballot of the committee present. A three-fourths majority vote is required for certification. All other matters of candidacy shall be by a simple majority vote.

7. The committee shall maintain a service record and file on every local pastor and candidate for the ordained ministry. The records and files of the committee are kept on behalf of the annual conference and shall be maintained under guidelines provided by the General Council on Finance and Administration in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits.

8. The committee shall recommend to the Board of Ordained Ministry those persons who qualify for associate and provisional membership, for license or continuance as local pastors, and for restoration of credentials. All persons shall have been professing members of The United Methodist Church or a baptized participant of a recognized United Methodist campus ministry or other United Methodist ministry setting for a minimum of one (1) year.

9. The committee shall examine all persons who apply in writing for certification or renewal of certificate. Where there is evidence that their gifts, evidence of God's grace, and usefulness warrant and that they are qualified under ¶¶ 315-319, and on recommendation of their charge conference or the conference Board of Ordained Ministry, the committee shall issue or renew their certificate.

10. The committee shall examine all persons who apply in writing to be certified as lay ministers. When there is evidence that their gifts, evidence of God's grace and usefulness, warrant and that they are qualified under ¶ 271, and on recommendation of their charge conference, the committee shall recommend their certification or recertification. The district committee shall report annually to the annual conference through the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry a roster of all persons certified as lay ministers.

11. All persons interviewed by the district committee shall be informed of decisions and recommendations as soon as possible, both orally and in writing.





Church Property

¶ 2501. Requirement of the Trust Clause for All Property

1. All properties of United Methodist local churches and other United Methodist agencies and institutions are held, in trust, for the benefit of the entire denomination, and ownership and usage of church property is subject to the Discipline. This trust requirement is an essential element of the historic polity of The United Methodist Church or its predecessor denominations or communions and has been a part of the Discipline since 1797. It reflects the connectional structure of the Church by ensuring that the property will be used solely for purposes consonant with the mission of the entire denomination as set forth in the Discipline. The trust requirement is thus a fundamental expression of United Methodism whereby local churches and other agencies and institutions within the denomination are both held accountable to and benefit from their connection with the entire worldwide Church.

In consonance with the legal definition and self-understanding of The United Methodist Church (see ¶ 141), and with particular reference to its lack of capacity to hold title to property, The United Methodist Church is organized as a connectional structure, and titles to all real and personal, tangible and intangible property held at jurisdictional, annual, or district conference levels, or by a local church or charge, or by an agency or institution of the Church, shall be held in trust for The United Methodist Church and subject to the provisions of its Discipline. Titles are not held by The United Methodist Church (see ¶ 807.1) or by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church, but instead by the incorporated conferences, agencies, or organizations of the denomination, or in the case of unincorporated bodies of the denomination, by boards of trustees established for the purpose of holding and administering real and personal, tangible and intangible property.

2. The trust is and always has been irrevocable, except as provided in the Discipline. Property can be released from the trust, transferred free of trust or subordinated to the interests of creditors and other third parties only to the extent authority is given by the Discipline.

3. Local churches and other United Methodist agencies and institutions may acquire, hold, maintain, improve, and sell property for purposes





consistent with the mission of the Church, unless restricted or prevented by the Discipline.

4. In the Northern Europe Central Conference the title “The United Methodist Church” (UMC) is as follows:

In Finland: Metodistkyrkan, and Metodistikirkko,

In Latvia: Apvienotā Metodistu Baznīca,

In Lithuania: Jungtinė Metodistų Bažnyčia

In Denmark: Metodistkirken,

In Norway: Metodistkirken,

In Sweden: Metodistkyrkan,

In Ukraine: Релігійне Управління Об’єднанної Методистської Церкви,

5. On the Annual Conference level all documents regarding property, entry into the land register, pledge or mortgage deed shall be issued in the registered name, which is as follows:

In Finland: Finlands svenska metodistkyrka, and Suomen Metodistikirkko,

In Latvia: Latvijas Apvienotā Metodistu Baznīca,

In Lithuania: Lietuvos Jungtinė Metodistų Bažnyčia

In Denmark: Metodistkirken i Danmark,

In Norway: Metodistkirken i Norge,

In Sweden: Metodistkyrkan i Sverige,

In Ukraine: Релігійне Управління Об’єднанної Методистської Церкви України,

(The United Methodist Church in Ukraine),

6. On the local church or charge conference level the title shall be as follows:

In Finland: Metodistkyrkan in x-town, and Suomen Metodistikirkko, x-town seurakunta (the name of the town in the correct genitive form)

In Latvia: Latvijas Apvienotās Metodistu Baznīcas x-town’s draudze,

In Lithuania: Jungtinė Metodistų Bažnyčia in x-town

In Denmark: Metodistkirken in x-town,





In Norway: Metodistkirken in x-town Menighet,

In Sweden: Metodistkyrkan in-town,

In Ukraine: Релігійне Управління Об'єднаної Методистської Церкви in x-town

7. The incorporated annual conferences in the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference and their legal predecessors are:

a) Metodistkirken i Danmark

(1) Den Biskoppelige Methodist-Kirke (1850-1939)

b) Suomen Metodistikirkko

(1) Suomen Piispallinen Metodistikirkko

c) Finlands svenska metodistkyrka

(1) Metodistkyrkan i Finland, svenska avdelningen

(2) Metodist-Episkopalkyrkan i Finland, svenska avdelningen

d) Latvijas Apvienotā Metodistu Baznīca (1991-)

(1) Latvijas Bīskapu Metodistu Baznīca (1921-1940)

e) Lietuvos Jungtinė Metodistų Bažničia

f) Metodistkirken i Norge

(1) Den Biskoppelige Methodist-Kirke (1850-1939)

g) Metodistkyrkan i Sverige (1939-2012)

(1) Methodist-Episkopalkyrkan

h) Релігійне Управління Об'єднаної Методистської Церкви України (The United Methodist Church in Ukraine)

8. A local church or charge may be incorporated separately while retaining its character as an integrated part of the annual conference.

¶ 2703. Composition of the Committee on Investigation

1. When respondent is a bishop - There shall be a committee on investigation elected by the central conference. The central conference may elect the committee on investigation from any of the other central conferences in Europe. Nominations shall be made by the bishop in consultation with the episcopacy committee. Further nominations may be offered from the floor of the jurisdictional or central conference. The committee shall consist of seven clergy in full connection (with not more than one clergyperson from each annual conference, if possible), two lay observers, and six alternate members, five of whom shall be





clergypersons in full connection (with not more than one clergyperson from each annual conference, if possible), and one of whom shall a layperson. If additional members or alternates are needed, they may be named by the Bishop. Committee members shall be in good standing and should be deemed of good character. The committee should reflect racial, ethnic, person with disabilities, economic condition, and gender diversity. The committee shall elect a chair- person and organize at the jurisdictional or central conference. Seven clergy or alternates seated as members of the committee shall constitute a quorum.

2. In each annual conference, there shall be a committee on investigation to consider judicial complaints against clergy members of the annual conference, clergy members on honorable location or administrative location from that annual conference, local pastors, and diaconal ministers. In each annual conference the bishop nominates the board of ordained ministry in another annual conference within the central conference to serve as committee on investigation. Should a member of the committee on investigation have been a party to any of the prior proceedings in the case that finally comes before the committee, he or she shall be disqualified from sitting on the committee during its consideration of that case, and his or her place shall be taken by an alternate member.

3. When respondent is a layperson - In all cases, the pastor or district superintendent should take pastoral steps to resolve any complaints. If such pastoral response does not result in resolution and a written complaint is made against a professing member for any of the offenses in ¶ 2702.3, the pastor in charge or co-pastors (¶ 205.1) of the local church, in consultation with the district superintendent and the district lay leader, may appoint a committee on investigation consisting of four professing members and three clergy in full connection (both clergy and professing members must come from other congregations, exclusive of the churches of the respondent or the complainant). Committee members shall be in good standing and should be deemed of good character. The committee should reflect racial, ethnic, person with disabilities, economic condition, and gender diversity. When the pastor in charge is (or co-pastors are) bringing the charge, the district superintendent, in consultation with the district lay leader, shall appoint the committee on investigation. Five members shall constitute a quorum.





Episcopal Address

I enjoy sitting at the beach watching the ocean - the fresh smell of the salty sea air in my nostrils, the sharp cries of the seagulls, and the waves rolling in towards the shore. The waves have a heartbeat of their own, they steepen and break unto the beach and the water recedes, steepen and break - recede, steepen and break - recede, steepen and break - recede. It goes on and on and on and on and on and on,,,,, When I sit there watching the ocean, I lower my shoulders, I calm down, relax, and slowly I fall into the rhythm, the same rhythm again and again. Like my breath, breathing out, breathing in, exhale, inhale

Jesus sending his disciples “as the Father has sent me, so I send you.” Jesus breathing on His disciples, “receive the Holy Spirit” – The same rhythm, exhale, inhale, exhale inhale....

This is how the Spirit moves, we are filled and then we are sent. We are never filled for our own pleasure or our own edification; we are filled for a higher purpose, we are filled to be sent with and in the power of the Spirit, to be witnesses, to make disciples baptizing and teaching, to follow God in His mission. And for this sending, we need the energy of the Spirit, the truth of the Spirit, the freedom of the Spirit, the memory of the Spirit, the direction of the Spirit.

Without the Holy Spirit we would still be sitting there, anxiously worrying about what might happen to us, wondering if what He said and did was true or just a giant illusion.

Grace and the Holy Spirit

In the Letter to a Roman Catholic, John Wesley writes:

“I believe the infinite and eternal Spirit of God, equal with the Father and the Son, to be not only perfectly holy in himself, but the direct cause of all holiness in us; enlightening our understandings, correcting our wills and affections, renewing our natures, uniting our persons to Christ, assuring us of our adoption as sons, leading us in our actions; purifying and sanctifying our souls and bodies, to a full and eternal enjoyment of God.”

John Wesley’s understanding of the Holy Spirit is clearly trinitarian. The Holy Spirit is infinite and eternal and





equal with the Father and the Son, they are interrelated. In his book *responsible grace* Randy Maddox explains that Wesley understood the Holy Spirit to be God's gracious empowering presence restored through Christ. He says, "in one instance Wesley even defines grace simply as the power of the Holy Spirit enabling us to believe and love and serve God, which corresponds with the letter to the Roman Catholic", where Wesley says, "the Holy Spirit is the direct cause of all holiness in us enlightening our understandings, correcting our wills and affections, and renewing our natures uniting our persons to Christ and assuring us of our adoption as sons."

While Wesley prefers using the term "grace", which he unfolds in a comprehensive theology of grace from prevenient grace to justifying grace to sanctifying grace to glorifying grace, he could have used "grace" and "the Holy Spirit" interchangeably. Not least when, he describes prevenient grace and sanctifying grace. Prevenient grace/the Holy Spirit is at work giving people the divine impulse to do good, to love, to realize their short comings and to seek God. Sanctifying grace/the Holy Spirit is the "direct cause of all holiness in us; enlightening our understandings, correcting our wills and affections, renewing our natures, uniting our persons to Christ."

The Holy Spirit enable us to will and to want and to desire to be filled, shaped, motivated and driven in the love of Christ towards his likeness.

Jesus breathed on his disciples and said: receive the Holy Spirit. He propelled them into God's mission emphasizing that the breath of God, the Spirit, inspires every good desire in the heart of the believer, who exhales back to God love, wonder, praise, prayer and obedience.

The Lifegiver

As Jesus had taught in his final teachings to his disciples in John 14 through 16, the Holy Spirit communicates true knowledge of God and of his saving work in the world and in us. Through our physical senses we receive information from the world around us, in the same way the Holy Spirit reminds us of who we are, and of God's truth, and conveys lifegiving power and direction to take part in God's mission.

The work of the Holy Spirit is in the life of the believer, in the community and in the church. The former leader in the Methodist Church in Britain poignantly describes this in his book "the Way to Pentecost" from 1932:





“The presence of the Spirit is vital and central to the work of the Church. Nothing else avails. Apart from the Spirit, wisdom becomes folly, and strength weakness. ... Scholarship is blind to spiritual truth till He reveals. Worship is idolatry till He inspires. Preaching is powerless if it be not a demonstration of the Spirit’s power. Prayer is vain unless He energizes, human resources of learning and organization, wealth and enthusiasm, reform, and philanthropy, are worse than useless if there be no Holy Ghost in them”

Without the Spirit there would be no us, the good news would never have reached our shores, our hills, our plains and our mountains.

It’s nice to relax at the seashore, but we are not meant to stay there, we are called, sent and equipped to get up and face the realities of life and to move forward equipped with the Spirit.

Worried

I admit, life in 2025 may seem overwhelming. The list of problems threatening our existence is long: War, rearmament, right wing nationalism, racism, climate change, world population growth, hunger and poverty, just to mention a few. In the most recent survey Finland comes out as the happiest country in the world with Denmark in the second place, and yet youth are struggling with anxiety, isolation, confusion, and feeling of being out of place. For decades, our cultures have been abandoning Christianity, and the influence of Christian values is rapidly fading.

I understand, why many are concerned even worried about the future.

Is there any hope? Not perfunctory optimism, but a powerful force equipping us to face life with courage, creativity and confidence?

I hear the words of the risen Jesus: “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you” And I sense his breath: “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

A War is going on

There is war going on between countries in our central conference, Russia has brutally invaded Ukraine, and the war has shaken our relationships.





Four Eurasia annual conferences are leaving the United Methodist Church at the beginning of this central conference. The reason is disagreements with the denomination's way of handling our diverse understandings of homosexuality. Having been in close relationship with each other in the central conference for more than 30 years, the separation, painful as it is, was intended to be friendly and respectful, now the war has come between us and made our relationship difficult.

Jesus challenges us

From kindergarten and school, over social media and to world politics, we are all familiar with the idea 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. Revenge, believing that retaliation is a viable path forward. If someone kicks you, you kick them back. If a country bombs you, you bomb them back. If a religion kills your people, you kill them back. If someone takes your eye, you take theirs...

Jesus challenges this ancient dynamic - retaliation should not be your default response. Restoring justice through revenge is not going to get us anywhere. And he goes on: Don't hit back at all, if someone strikes you, stand there and take it. Make use of all hurt, injustice and violence as an opportunity to try to act as one of my followers. Try to be merciful and live generously.

Jesus' approach comes out as naïve to people living amid war in Ukraine -suffering daily attacks, burying their sons and daughters and trying to keep their hopes up after more than three years of war. I understand those who say, "I can't deal with those biblical texts right now, they make no sense to me. I know Jesus speaks the truth, but I just can't believe it."

Rearmament

Life doesn't work that way, and most certainly, life doesn't work that way on a geopolitical level. The only response we know in the face of violence is more violence. The only response we can come up with in the face of war it's more weapons, more killing and more destruction – and in the coming years our countries will spend billions of Euro buying weapons and ammunition. We will send support to Ukraine, and we will build our own military to discourage the enemy from attacking and to be able to defend our countries in a potential war.





There are evil intended leaders in this world, who cannot be trusted, and I don't possess the knowledge or wisdom to protest the rearmament, which seems inevitable.

Nevertheless, the enormous amounts of money invested in rearmament, as necessary as it may be, could have been used to reduce poverty and hunger, to invest in education and healthcare, building schools and hospitals, reducing our use of fossil fuels and so much more to the benefit of humanity. And we will all have to answer for our priorities, our actions and inaction.

Be prepared

Dear church, today we seem closer to being at war in Europe, than we have been since World War II. Right now war is going on in Ukraine and hundreds are being killed and injured on a daily basis - we may experience the same in our countries in the next few years. Our governments are taking the situation very seriously and are asking the population to be prepared.

Our Ukrainian brothers and sisters have much knowledge and hard earned experience, they can share with the rest of the central conference, and we need to listen and learn.

In the church we need to be prepared, if the war expands beyond Ukraine, and if our countries send soldiers to serve in Ukraine, we must:

- train military chaplains.
- train pastors, deacons and health personnel to work with traumatized people.
- think and talk through, how we can best serve people in a time of crisis and war.
- ask, what should we preach and teach now and if the war comes?

And right now, we need to preach and teach about hope, and what it means to live with hope.





Is there another way?

Is there another way? And, I know that the answer is not, let's open the doors, let's welcome our enemies and hand over everything to them.

My question is, what is a genuinely Christian response?

Seven months after the full-scale invasion, at the General Assembly of the world Council of Churches, I heard Metropolitan Job of Psidia say: "While we are gathered in the comfort of this place, two Christian nations in Europe are at war - Christians are killing Christians. How is this reflecting Christian discipleship. how can we Christians be silent, while this is happening?"

Again, Jesus challenges us way beyond our comfort zone saying: You know the law says love your friends, which is often accompanied by the unwritten law, hate your enemy. But I'm telling you and I know this is challenging, love your enemies. let your enemies bring out the best in you, and not your worst. When someone is giving you a hard time, respond with fervent prayer - then You are acting as a true child of God. You see, this is what God does he gives his best to all of us, his sun rises on all of us and his rain waters the ground for all of us. And this happens regardless of how good or bad, nice or nasty we are. If you only love those who love you, don't expect a special bonus. You're simply doing what everybody else does. If you only say hello to those who greet you, no one will notice. That is exactly what everybody else is doing too. Pull yourselves together, You are God's children, you were created for more than this. Live and love generously and graciously. Live and love the way God lives and loves towards you. Be perfect like God is perfect.

Jesus knows that we will come short - these standards are so far from where we are – nevertheless, he's not lowering the bar, he is raising it. This is how God is. This is how God is responding to you. This is how he loves you. This is the way of his mercy to you. This is his grace.

Growing up and pulling ourselves together it's not going to suffice. He is challenging us to be transformed in our innermost being by the grace and mercy of God – this is the only way to a life reflecting God's love. We cannot earn it. We don't deserve it – it is his gift to us, and all we can do is to receive it, to take it in, to be consumed by it and let it fill all the dark corners of our lives.





Reconciliation?

Now is not the time to reconcile – as long as drones and missiles are still fired, as long as people are killed - loving your enemy is far away. The Ukrainians know this, we all know this - love and reconciliation is not close at hand.

We are all affected by the violence, the killing, the hard words and the lies – watching the news affects us, hearing certain politicians speak affects us, reading the stories of suffering in Ukraine, in Gaza or somewhere else affects us. We may be tempted to turn off the news, simply because it's too much. Nonetheless, we have to be aware, and we cannot shut our eyes. But. We must protect our souls, conscious that this evil may affect our souls, fill us with hatred and make us cynical.

Can we help each other, can we pray for the Holy Spirit to show us a different way? Could we exercise our love muscles and practice reconciliation at least in our families, in our friendships and in our local churches? Can we have a loving and reconciling attitude towards each other, and do our best to be gentle with one another and not suspect wrong motives?

The Baptist pastor and civil rights leader in the United States Dr Martin Luther King, taught people in the civil rights movement to protest and act without violence. They did their utmost to not respond to violence with violence – they worked hard to get away from the human default of retaliation.

King said: “Love is the greatest force in the universe. It is the heartbeat of the moral cosmos. He who loves is a participant in the being of God.”

What is Christianity?

This year we celebrate a church gathering, which took place in the year 325 AD. 1700 years ago bishops from all corners of the known world were summoned by the Roman emperor Constantine in the city of Nicaea, in today's Turkey. This was the first of several ecumenical councils in the history of the Christian church, and the main purpose was to achieve a common understanding of who Jesus Christ is, and how he is related with the Father.





A controversy had emerged around Arius of Alexandria and his followers, who claimed Christ is only similar and subordinate to the Father. While the vast majority of the church spearheaded by Athanasius the future patriarch of Alexandria believed Christ is of the same nature and substance as God the Father and thus eternal like the Father.

The emperor believed the division was merely an academic disagreement between two groups of religious experts, and that the matter could be easily resolved – he was mistaken. They met from May until the end of July in 325 for vital conversations about the beliefs, the teachings, the rituals, and the order of the church.

When the council ended, they had described the divine nature of Jesus Christ the son of God, and His relationship with the Father, expressed through a creed, which defines the Godhead, Father and Son, their nature and interrelatedness, while it only mentions the Holy Spirit. The creed was a significant and necessary initial expression of the faith, however, it wasn't completed until the council in 381 AD in Constantinople.

The Nicene-Constantinople creed of 381 AD, today known as the “Nicene Creed”, laid out the church's unified doctrine of the three persons in the one Trinity, affirming their interrelatedness, their co-equality and co-eternity. The creed of 325 AD established the first boundaries saying, those who do not believe this are not part of the true church and are to be considered heretics.

Furthermore, the Nicaea council decided on one date for the celebration of Easter in the entire church, and on a few practical matters that had caused disagreement.

Constantine's purpose of interfering with the church's internal business presumably was to secure unity and stability, the outcome was even more far-reaching, as the Nicaea council established the relationship between state and church and laid the foundation of Christian orthodoxy and of the unity of the church for centuries to come.

Truth

The Nicaea council endeavored to establish the universal and eternal truth of the Christian faith, the outcome was a creed accepted throughout the church.





In our time, the existence of objective, ultimate and universal truth is widely questioned. Many believe truth is subjective, individualistic and relativistic, meaning truth is different from person to person

Humanistic and social science taught at most of our higher educational institutions emphasize social-constructivism as the preferred philosophy of science approach saying, truth emerges as a product of social processes and the interactions an individual or group is engaging in.

Others would say, truth is normative, meaning truth is what we decide to be true. Or to put it in a different way: It's always the others who don't see reality as it is.

We hear world leaders blatantly repeat one series of lies after another, shamelessly claiming that obvious lies are truth with an insistence that affects reality and makes the lie a new truth to more and more people. There is a name for this "gaslighting".

AI manipulated messages, photos and videos make us ask; how do we distinguish between fact and opinion? How do we determine who delivers the message and from where? How do we determine whether the person on the photo or in the video even exists?

The question of truth and our perception of truth will be an extremely important topic in the coming years.

It is said that truth is the first casualty of war. I think the same is true in deep conflicts and crises - the truth is often sacrificed. That's why it's so important to insist on speaking the truth. We have a Christian obligation to tell the truth about what's going on - and we have that obligation even when the truth is against the party or group we are inclined to sympathize with. Neither individual Christians nor churches should identify so much with any of the parties in a conflict that it undermines their sound judgement and their commitment to truth and justice. Even when the truth is against us or when it is inconvenient, we must side with truth.

A Snapshot of 21st Century Christianity

At the time of the Nicaea council the centers of Christianity were Constantinople, Alexandria and Rome, today only Rome has retained its position.





In the year 1900, 80% of all Christians in the world lived in Europe and in North America, in the near future 80% of all Christians will live in Africa Asia, Latin America and Oceania. Christianity has always been moving and changing.

In the 21st Century the Pentecostal and the charismatic movement is the fastest growing part of Christianity. Today 1.7 billion Christians live in the global South and make up 67% of all Christians in the world, this number is expected to increase to 2.6 billion in 2050 which is 77% of the world's Christian population.

What is Christianity today? For certain it is not what Christianity was in 1950 or in 1980, when Christianity was largely defined from the northern hemisphere.

When the great 1910 missionary conference gathered in Edinburgh, less than 2% of the 1579 delegates came from the global south. The delegates were driven by the vision "The Evangelization of the World in This Generation", but today no one is looking to the global North for the future of Christianity.

The churches in the North may be wealthy, but they also strive with indifference, secularization, lack of knowledge, prejudice and decline. While the churches in the global South struggle with the challenges of growth and developing the depth of the faith through discipleship to impact and shape the society.

Survival Mode is Off

Christians in Afghanistan say, we will worship, and we may get killed. Christians in our part of the world say we will worship unless, we are on vacation, or away on the weekend, or were at a late party Saturday night, or simply not in the mood. Worship has become an appendix to our busy existence, a spice we add to our lives when we feel like it, and we suffer from it, our churches suffer from it, and our communities suffer from it.

Healthy living, eating healthy nutritious food, getting your exercise, staying in shape is a good thing, which we all need. However, our culture has become obsessed with our bodily health, while the health of our souls is completely neglected. The souls of 21st century Europeans are in a very poor condition. Should we just accept this as a new normal - I don't think so.





While the church in Europe in general is in a crisis, the question on the top of our mind should not be the survival of the church. We tend to forget the gap between the biblical vision of the church and the assumptions we breathe in from the society around us, deceiving us to think the church is just like any other good cause NGO that needs to be supported.

“The Church is in God’s keeping. We do not have the right to be anxious about it. We have our Lord’s words that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” said missiologist Leslie Newbigin. And what a relief it is; the survival of the church does not depend on us, and we don’t even have the right to be anxious about it.

Our job is to live and embody the gospel, we are bearers of the Gospel, which is a vital part of being involved in God’s mission (the *Missio Dei*). Gospel-bearing is concerned with making disciples of Jesus Christ, it is inescapably contextual and involves the entire church. Through the practices of compassion, justice and gospel-bearing we partner with God in the realization of his reign in the world.

Signs of a New Day

The pendulum has been swinging towards indifference and secularization for several decades, now it appears to be moving more in the direction of curiosity and spiritual openness. Newspapers in the Nordic countries have reported a growing interest in religion among young people - many express a desire to believe in some kind of higher power.

While any interest in religion and spirituality was an absolutely no-go for most politicians and celebrities a decade or two ago, we see many politicians, actors and even stand-up comedians expressing their faith. Most are still remarkably modest and careful “not to go too far” in claiming to be Christians, nevertheless they speak quite openly about their faith in ways and with words refreshingly unreligious.

Is this a trend, or rather a “return to normal”, as Joel Halldorf says in a comment in the Swedish newspaper *Expressen*, “atheism creates an emptiness which it cannot fill, therefore the return of religion is inevitable.”





A Historic Opportunity

Nonetheless, several trend-experts, sociologists and researchers in their analysis of trends among different groups are observing a steadily growing tendency among youth, not least among young men, towards wanting to talk about faith. Several pastors have noticed young people are beginning to attend worship.

Simultaneously, many teachers and psychologists are reporting an increasing level of unhappiness and mental imbalance among 16-25 year-olds caused by increased competition and performance pressure in the education system and other life arenas such as social media. Many youth are expressing significant concern and little hope for future – the effects of climate change, the war in Ukraine and the overall security situation appear to be main contributors to this concern.

In an article in the Christian daily in Denmark, Jacob Holst Mouritzen challenges the churches saying: “Churches have a historic opportunity to gain the attention and interest of younger generations. But it requires action, a clear strategy and targeted communication. If Christianity wants to be taken seriously as an answer to young people’s existential questions, communication must be moved to the channels where young people actually are. Alternatively, there are already many others knocking at the door to provide the answers they are looking for. And I fear that the church and the Christian faith are far from being first in the mental search engine when seeking spiritual answers. The church must understand that it is in a competition of minds, morals, values and beliefs. The Church is not only competing with other faiths, but also with influencers, spiritual communities and online subcultures that offer clear, distinct messages of meaning and identity.”

We need to become purposeful about reaching out to young people, not only in our youth ministry but in what we are doing in all our ministries, not least online. We need to train young missional leaders to champion these efforts, we need to work in collaboration with other churches, and we need to move fast. Mouritzen’s point is well taken, the openness is towards faith, spirituality and existential questions, not specifically towards Christianity - we are just one out of several options, and we are in a highly competitive field. The attraction is more towards authenticity and ability to communicate faith and hope in genuine and relevant ways, than towards being smart, cool and trendy.





We are off the Map

The way we live, work, learn, communicate, and obtain information changes rapidly. Change has never been as fast as it is today and will never be as slow as it is today. Our reality is increasingly fragmented and pluralistic, we are far from the homogeneous world we knew 20, 30, 40 or 50 years ago.

I was amazed by the creativity, flexibility and ingenuity we saw during the global pandemic, pastors and leaders courageously stepped up and made rapid shifts, moved ministry online, cared for people in creative ways, and explored new avenues to connect with the community. Despite promising each other, we would hold on to all the new learnings and approaches to ministry, almost all of us defaulted back into old familiar patterns, once the pandemic was finally over.

But, now we all know, we can find new ways. We all know the courage is there...

We used to know and at least to some extent understand our reality, we knew how to navigate, and we had the proper vehicles to move us forward like: Worship services, youth groups, Sunday schools, seminars, evangelistic campaigns, theological seminaries, hymns and organs, ordained pastors and deacons, small groups and more.

New structures, better and more inviting facilities, and more relevant and attractive worship services and programs will not bring us into the future. They are the well-used solutions that have brought us this far, but they are not likely to be able to take us where we need to go.

Even before the pandemic, and certainly afterwards we are off the map. Our GPS is not updated to the new roads, the new one-way streets, the new roundabouts and the new speed limits.

Discovering the New Map

To begin to see the new map and navigate in the new reality, we will have to find new, perhaps even unlikely partners, who know their way in the new landscape and are willing to help us. Some of these partners, may be found in our churches, especially among new-comers, some we may find among the curios on the margins of the church.

When we look for new vehicles to bring us forward, we may have to redesign and even reinvent familiar means of ministry, we will need





to give up several outdated vehicles, and we will undoubtedly need to discover new ones. I firmly believe we must explore and discover another model of church - a high impact low-cost model - and it may not involve the kind of buildings we are accustomed to or the number of employed clergy and staff we currently have. The question is, are we willing to listen and to learn?

As we engage in this bold experimenting endeavor, we need to remind ourselves, that church is basically three interconnected relationships: Our relationship with the Triune God – Our relationship with each other in community – And our relationship with the people and the world around us. (And I know most of you have heard me say this before)

While Jesus Christ and our faith in Him certainly is the foundation of the church, this foundation always leads to community, as the Christian life in essence is communal. Furthermore, our faith in Jesus Christ and our life in community, cannot exist in isolation, in a vacuum - for the faith truly to come alive, we must share and embody it. Our relationship with God is nourished through worship and the spiritual disciplines, our relationship with each other is nourished through small groups, and our relationship with the world around us is played out in our daily lives.

Its happening

Some of our churches and ministries are beginning to discover the new map and find ways to navigate it, some examples are... Engaging with the community in Vergale, an outreach from the church in Tarsi, Latvia. Creating a summer-church as a social-diaconal-cultural experiment for tourists and locals in an abandoned church in Svolvær, Lofoten, Norway. Ministry with a large group of Ukrainian youth in Vasa, Finland. Golgatha, a new faith community initiated by a group of youth, in Frederiksberg, Denmark. The student ministry in Lviv, Ukraine, offering an open Christian student community throughout the week. Oslo Methodist Church, Norway engaging in strong mission partnerships with local churches in Liberia. MSA Friday a community with single parents and their children – food, fun and friendship, run by the Methodist social work in collaboration with the Jerusalem Church in Copenhagen, Denmark. New church start in Virga, Latvia. Several churches are livestreaming their worship services, and they are making





new connections with a growing group of people – like the Kaunas UMC in Lithuania. And there are several other good examples.

We need more - more experiments, more failures, more learnings, more experiences – and we need to encourage each other to try, fail and try again.

We are moderates

Columnist David Brooks says in an article in the New York Times “the problem with moderates has always been that they don’t have a magnetic idea. Recent moderation has been a bland porridge that defines itself by what it doesn’t like.” He goes on by identifying the core problem in America today: division, the growing gaps between rich and poor, rural and urban, educated and less educated, left and right, black and white.” With a few modifications I believe the same could be said about Europe, we are facing the same division, fragmentation, isolation, protectionism and right wing nationalism.

Moderation really is a way of being, it’s an attitude of humility, refraining from always having to be right. When we listen to other people, when we consider other perspectives, when we try to learn and understand, and when we realize as human beings we are bound together, we love our children, we have an affection for our country and the place we live, and we are bound together, as we are all God’s beloved children sharing the same humanity. The profound Christian perception of unity, of being bound together through God’s love revealed in Jesus Christ, I believe, is the magnetic idea to overcome division.

We should have done better

If only the world-wide United Methodist Church had looked to Nicaea and the other early church councils to find insight and inspiration to work on resolving our differences through theological debates, polemics and even reconciliations. Instead, we fell into the trap of superficial bible reading, quick arguments, human rights and tunnel vision. We stopped doing the hard work of studying the Bible together, meaning the whole Bible not just preferred books and passages. We stopped paying attention together to the enlightening of the accumulated experience of the church, our tradition. We didn’t watch and listen carefully together





to the vivification of the faith found in the experience of Christians. And we didn't use our God given minds, our reason, together to determine how to understand all this. We began to believe, we could organize our way out of our disagreements, and we came up with sophisticated plans, petitions and procedures to help us get to where, one or the other group wanted to go.

We stopped listening to each other, we stopped talking with each other, and we fell into the trap of talking about each other and shouting at each other. We labelled each other liberals, conservatives, traditionalists, progressives almost forcing each other to fit into these very narrow boxes.

Unity was of the table and not considered that important - after all the the Christian church has split many times through history. When anyone suggested prayer, spiritual discernment, Christian conferencing or even conversation – they were laughed out. We had developed pre-conceived perceptions of each other. By default, we expected hidden motives and agendas. We hurt each other deeply. And at least, all in some kind of leadership position have sins to confess. I know, I do.

Perhaps we didn't know better. But I am not convinced that is a viable excuse.

Can we become radical again?

Several years after the Church of Norway had gone through the turmoil of dealing with marriage and human sexuality, Per Arne Dahl, a profiled bishop in the Church of Norway after his retirement, published a book entitled "The Power of Hospitality". In his book he calls the church back to living and practicing radical Christianity. In an interview with Vårt Land he says, "There is no more room for leaking energy or trying to navigate all the people's different opinions, it is time to practice." The Church of Norway has experienced deep conflicts and divisions over these matters, and Dahl encourages the church to reconcile, laying aside the issues of contention and move on focusing on the mission.

I ask the same question, after years of disagreement, discussion, division and even separation, will we be able to live together respectfully, offering generous space for each other to live and serve with integrity?





And just as important, will we be able to leave the discussions behind us and become radical again focusing on mission?

“We have access by faith into this grace in which we stand through him, and we boast in the hope of God’s glory. ³ But not only that! We even take pride in our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, ⁴ endurance produces character, and character produces hope. ⁵ This hope doesn’t put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”

As Wesley would put it, the Holy Spirit, the direct cause of all holiness in us, desires again to enlighten our understandings, correct our wills and affections, and renew our innermost being uniting us with Christ.

There are no short cuts, trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. Hard work, fervent prayer, creativity, courage and persistence will enable us, Nordic, Baltic and Ukrainian United Methodists, to become serious about our discipleship and to be what we are....

What are we?

We are a Jesus centered moderate bridge-building church willing to wrestle with the important issues without quick fixes and polarizing solutions.

We are a church focused on God’s salvation in Jesus Christ in all its fullness and for all of creation.

We are a church forming disciples of Jesus Christ, who empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully and lead courageously.

My question is: Will we again become a church with a deep resounding and passionate joy and awareness of being sent into God’s mission?

The past few years have reminded us of our limited knowledge about the future. We may be entering the beginning of the apocalypse, or we may be entering the beginning of the golden age of Christianity in the Nordic, Baltic and Ukraine area and in Europe— we don’t know.

But, one thing I do know! No matter matter what, the God’s mission is yet alive! And no matter what our calling remains the same, to make disciples of Jesus Christ, who empowered by the Holy Spirit, love





boldly, serve joyfully and lead courageously shaping people and the world in His image.

“Listen to words of the risen Jesus: “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you” And feel his breath on your face: “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Prayerfully submitted

Christian Alsted

Notes

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- 2 Randy Maddox, Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology (Kingswood Series), 1994
- 3 John 20:22, Common English Bible
- 4 Samuel Chadwick, The Way to Pentecost, Light and Hope Publications 1937
- 5 World Population Review “Happiest Countries in the World 2025”
- 6 Said by several Ukrainians I have been in conversation with.
- 7 Matthew 5:43-48 in my own words
- 8 A handwritten note by dr. Martin Luther King believed to have been written sometime in the mid 1960s.
- 9 Orthodoxy: Adherence to correct or accepted creeds
- 10 Lesslie Newbigin, A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Mission, Eerdmans 1994
- 11 Joel Halldorf, Expressen, 16 dec 2024
- 12 ”Livsstilsekspert: Vi rider på en ekstraordinær bølge af åndelig interesse.”Kristeligt Dagblad, 18 Mar 2025
- 13 David Brooks, New York Times 25 Feb, 2019
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- 15 Romans 5:2-5, Common English Bible



Laity Address

Dariia, Ukraine.

Good afternoon, everyone.

My name is Dariia and I serve at St John's UMC in Lviv. Today I am a delegate from the Ukrainian Annual Conference.

Challenges and opportunities for the church in today's world

I am writing this speech at a rather difficult time for myself and for the country. Before preparing it, I talked to representatives of churches from other Ukrainian cities because I understand that each church has its own conditions, its own people, and even a different level of threat from missile and drone attacks.

Some said that everything is stable, the church works like clockwork, everyone is in their place. However, many spoke about difficulties that are not only local but also common to the entire Ukrainian church. And this is what I want to talk about today.

War and its impact on the church

We are in the fourth year of the war. At the end of January, within a week and a half, my brother and my boyfriend were taken to the army right off the street. My brother is my last living relative, and my boyfriend is one of the ministers in our church. On 26 January, on Sunday, we were supposed to play together in worship, but on Saturday morning he was already mobilised, and in the afternoon he was at the training base. With a bouquet of flowers he had. I am grateful to the girls who agreed to stand in for us at the last minute because I was devastated.

As strange as it may sound, our church has long suffered from a lack of young men. Some went to war, some left the country, and some are simply afraid to go out. This leads to the fact that there are fewer ministers, no men's groups, and girls do not have anyone to build families with. Our pastor is really happy when there are guys in the church.





Also in the context of ministry, one girl from Uzhhorod said that their worship team cannot go to the church in Kamianytsia village to serve as a band because of blockposts. The men are forced to stay in the city, and the services are held in the conditions that the realities of wartime allow.

Even pastors who have not been officially registered until 2022 face the threat of being mobilised, despite the new law on clergy reservation.

And this is only a small part of how the war affects the church.

‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the LORD. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’ (Jeremiah 29:11).

Exhaustion and new challenges in ministry

War is exhausting. Sometimes, we no longer have the enthusiasm we had in 2022, when everyone united to help and pray. Comfortable Christianity has emerged, as well as a fear of going beyond the local community, there is less sacrifice and more of a ‘I want to do it, I do not want to do it’ approach. I think we need to remember to take more care of ourselves, our physical and mental health, and, of course, our hearts.

The Lord reminds us:

‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest’ (Matthew 11:28).

‘So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessings if we don’t give up.’ (Galatians 6:9).

A test of values and biblical principles

Last year our church also faced a challenge to our values regarding the ideology of marriage. We all know what was decided at the central conference and how it contradicts the biblical principles we profess. I thank God that we, the Ukrainian church, still have the opportunity to hold on to our conservative views. But to be honest I believe that the challenges in this matter are probably still ahead.





Opportunities that open up in these dark times

Despite all the difficulties, we have come to value relationships even more. I have noticed that we focus more on relationships with God and people, build closer ties, and support each other. The war teaches us not to waste time on the useless, but to cherish what has eternal value.

‘Bear one another’s burdens, and so you will fulfil the law of Christ’ (Galatians 6:2).

This is another important lesson we need to learn: the church is not just a building or structure, but a living community that helps, prays and supports.

The hope and calling of the church

Despite everything, God is good. He continues to work, to provide the necessary things, to answer prayers, to protect those who fight on the frontline and for whom we pray. Even in a world where everything seems to be losing its sense, we have no right to lose hope. We are called to continue to believe, pray and work in God’s field.

I have many stories and testimonies of how God works when the whole world is losing its mind. Is it easy now? No. Is it scary? Yes, it is. But we have to remember that we see only a small part of the big picture, and God is leading us further. And we have to show that we are changed by Christ, share our testimonies so other people also do not lose their hope.

‘You are the light of the world - like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden’ (Matthew 5:14).

In a world where death is so close, there is no point in wasting our time on something that is not love. We are called to be the ones who bring light, who serve, who help others not to despair. God does not call us to live by fear, but by faith, to be His hands and heart for this world.

‘And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love’ (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Thank you for your attention. May the Lord bless all of us and give us the strength to do His will even in the most difficult times.





Andreas Morsbøl, Denmark.

Relate church

Intro - church is strange

Hi, my name is Andreas Morsbøl Gram and I am member of UMC Copenhagen. I am very pleased to address you now as lay-delegate.

Church is strange

It's April and that means my son will turn 1 this month. It's only a few weeks ago since I returned from paternity leave. I spend the time going to church, as baby psalm singing is a fun way to activate the kid - and the churches are full! There are cosy blankets on the floor, soap bubbles and gesture songs. Many parents have realized how fun and wholesome it is, and they love it.

One time I talked to a dad who was relieved when he told me, he liked the baby psalm singing as long as it wasn't too much about God. We may find that a self-contradictory to have a church not about God, but I think he was actually relieved to find it not so formal and that it was actually relatable to him and his child. Maybe he found it less strange than he expected.

The stable church and the burn

As a kid church was a good, stable place in my life. My dad used to be a UMC pastor and with my family I always attended Sunday service. I went to Sunday school and to every scout meeting. Both my parents sang in the choir and there was even a youth choir. My two brothers and I went to summer camps and scout camps and met with friends from all over Denmark. I had a child's faith and believed that the church was a genuinely good place. When we moved to another town the church was there again - as a good, stable place.

But the church failed. My parents had a major crisis with it, which is why we moved town. As a family we got a cold shoulder from our local church, and I saw how my parents got hurt. They didn't talk to us children about it and we continued attending scout meetings and camps - but something had shifted.

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To me the Methodist Church, is homelike. I one time saw the UMC cross and flame out of the blue on a wall in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. I instantly fell a little at home so far from home. I think most of my family would feel the same, though the church failed us. Thick-headed, yes, maybe, but I don't think I'm overstating when I say our identity is closely linked to the methodist church. And if the church burned us, wouldn't it then be a major personal crisis? It was to me.

Reconciliation

I have been thinking. I have been conflicted about church. I have questioned whether I should be part of this church and even whether I would call myself a christian. Is this anything for me? One and a half years ago I finished a year-long therapy program with weekly meetings. I have done one other long-term treatment and around three years of individual psychotherapy. My ruminations have been severe and concerned issues that resulted in personal insecurity, a lack of self-worth, depression, and anxiety symptoms - and the therapy has helped me! I was hurt, deeply confused and I know now that the church burned me and my family.

I worked on other issues too, but one time a therapist called me religiously indoctrinated, which I don't reject entirely. I trusted the church, and the church hurt me. Why would I go back to someone who hurt me? Mindless, right?

Now, as I said, I have been thinking. Is it worth it? Isn't it just a really small community in urgent need of fresh air, both morally and culturally? I returned only with great caution, but: Last year I had my son. I married my wife. I have a stable place to live. I have plans for the future. I would not have worked that out without the church. Without support from friends at my local church, a constant inspiration from the biblical stories, and God's healing grace I wouldn't have come back. I count therapy as a means to this.

God's healing grace

I recently attended Sunday service at UMC in Strandby in Northern Jutland, Denmark. The pastor Mark Lewis asked us what kind of bait to use when fishing. Strandby is a fishing town, so he got some good





answers. What, then, if you are a fisher of people, he asked, while he laid out the story of the call to Simon Peter and Andrew. He suggested love. Be loving and they get hooked. I agree with Mark entirely, but it's maybe a little unspecific. I mean, love? Just put it out there, and they will get hooked, right?

In Strandby they also have the psalm of the Month. This Sunday the psalm of the Month was “Vi finder fred i kirken/We find peace at church” and in the third verse they sing:

Vi lyser op i kirken / We light up in church
et sted hvor Ånden bruser os i blodet /where the Spirit rushes blood
hvor ingen af os selv er ledetråden /where the lead is none of us
hvor dagligdagen bunder / where daily life reaches shallow water
i verdens største under / in World's greatest Wonder
og alle lyser lige smukt i gåden /and everyone light up the mystery.

How do you know you are loved? I know I feel loved when I feel seen. If someone goes out of their way for me and for who I am I feel at ease at first, relieved, and then loved. I have experienced it with my wife, of course, in therapy and - in church. Someone is trying to relate by being present and listening - and that's it: To me love is relating.

Church as our cross

Now, it's tempting to want to burn the thing that burned you. It's tempting to let something die off to make room for something new. Sometimes it's necessary. It's tempting to disregard anything unreasonable and strange to get a better public profile and hide away the strangeness of church. But strange is what keeps us going. We are church leaders, after all. We know the means of grace, we have felt the meaning of communion, we have been touched to our heart by the Word and the Blessing of the Holy Spirit. We might each have our personal Aldersgate experience.

To us God very is relatable. We are familiar with the mystery of Jesus Christ, and comfortable letting it remain a mystery. Un-strange would be pointless. But I think we can sometimes be too strange about the strange. Yes, we pray, yes, we read the Bible, yes, we sing collectively, yes, we go to communion, and yes, we share life and seek support and comfort from each other and the Holy Spirit. That is the point, and it is so giving!



But don't start there. Start by being curious. I'm back at the baby dad I met. People want to make contact, so be curious and ask: Who are you? Why are you here? How's are you? What do you think about it here? What made you come and bring your kid in spite of reluctance to anything church-like?

Jesus called us to follow him in every way. He called us to take up our cross, and as church-leaders maybe church is our cross. The church is as rich and pluralistic as it is problematic and dated. It's made up of people for better or worse, but it's where we light up, and so it's our obligation to make church relatable. Church is strange because God is strange, but we don't have to be strange about that. We can be curious. Be curious about God and people and meet them where they are. Be curious and relevant to them in every possible way. That is love. Relate.

Meeli Tankler, Estonia

I represent the Baltic Annual Conference, which since first of July 2023 consists of Latvia and Lithuania District. I would ask you to keep also the "lost tribe", Estonia, in your prayers as they are continuing to be in mission in their context while seeking to establish their identity as an autonomous Methodist Church. My topic today is the particular context for mission in our Baltic region, and the challenges and possibilities that the church is facing today in relation to society and the surrounding world.

Regarding the church history, Baltic States are not very similar: even as Christianity reached us about the same time, Lithuania remained predominantly Catholic while Estonia and most part of Latvia opened up for Protestantism quite early. Methodism came to all our countries about the same time, but Estonia was the only one where the Methodist church continued to exist throughout the Soviet occupation era, although quite isolated from the worldwide community. In Latvia and Lithuania, the Methodist church was re-established after regaining the independence in early 1990-s.

However, Baltic States are similar because we all have experienced a fiercely atheistic past, which has shaped significantly people's conscious and unconscious attitude regarding Church and believers. With the regained independence in 1991, all three countries stepped from the





communist atheistic worldview immediately into the capitalist secular worldview without having any transitional period. As a result, we see a lot of prejudices and even hatred whenever discussions related or even seemingly related to religion arise in the public arena. For many people, the secular worldview equals atheistic worldview, challenging them to fight both the religion as such as well as those who dare to speak positively about any religious values.

Let me give you a brief glimpse into the atheism presented and practiced in our countries. In 1970-s, as a Soviet university student I also had to take a class in so-called Scientific Atheism. The main idea presented to us was that religion belonged to the past. Here is a quote from the textbook,

„Humanity is moving legitimately, with historical inevitability, from the last exploitative society whose social conditions of life gave birth to and preserved the religion, towards a new communist formation, whose social relations no longer would give rise to supernatural beliefs and where religion as a prejudice of the past would initially still be preserved. The main task of atheist education is to help constructively form a scientific materialistic worldview, and an active life attitude. The purpose of atheism is to lead people to the real values of life and real happiness.” (Kuulo Vimmsaare, the Chair of the department of Philosophy in Tallinn Technical University)

In 2004, a Tartu University professor Atko Rimmel in his doctoral dissertation about atheism in Estonia described the continuing influence of atheist propaganda by saying, „widespread as a Soviet heritage is the model of atheism that is attacking believers and churches“. The Soviet atheism was indeed „a fighting atheism“: the issue was not about not believing in God – the issue was about proclaiming this not believing in any god as the one and only true worldview. Writes Vimmsaare, „Soviet people are exalted by an active lifestyle, a conscious attitude to social duty, unity of words and actions. This is a person who knows his own strength and understands his worth, who does not believe in god and is not afraid of devil, whose communist idealism is an amalgam of knowledge, conviction and practical action.”

This was the ideological context for Baltic States as well as most of Eastern Europe for about 50 years, and the influence is still tangible. However, the Pew Research Centre 2017 report about religion in Europe draws an interesting conclusion: “People in most post-Soviet





republics see religion rising in importance, in contrast with other countries in the region.”

In order to deal with today’s challenges and possibilities in our context, I would like to invite you to think about the parable of the lost son (Luke 15) – but to widen it a little bit. I would first raise the question: what was prompting the prodigal son to return home? Yes, he was hungry and penniless and disappointed – but I do believe that the main reason was his memory about home. In his mind, his home was a stable and safe place, managed well and wisely by his caring and loving father. A place with “more than enough food” (Lk 15:17) for the whole household, and with space for everyone who was willing to do some honest work. This memory picture encouraged and attracted him to turn back, and to ask for forgiveness and employment and place to stay.

We do our mission and ministry in the midst of prodigals, but I would say that they are second or third generation prodigals. This means that the memory line has been broken, and we cannot rely on any immediate experience or mind pictures about “the father’s home”. When we think about ordinary people in Baltic countries, most of them probably have no religious memories of their own. These next generation prodigals – and I am speaking also about my own generation here, not just youth – have all kinds of life experiences, come from various backgrounds, and their attitudes about their fathers or childhood homes may not always be positive. They may not be able to imagine (or even believe) a harmonic family life, real abundance in life that exceeds the material level, or trusting relations between people living and working side by side. The idea of going back somewhere in order to ask for forgiveness for any wrongdoings may also not resonate as more and more people in today’s world hardly accept their mistakes, never admit about regretting anything, and do not want to go back – only forward, even if it means getting more lost. If we tell them about the one and only way, they will not believe us, as there is no certainty that the way we are pointing to is better than any other way.

Probably we could best communicate the good news about God’s grace by creating some kind of environment that would resemble the “father’s home” as the Bible is describing it. We could try to create small home-like oases offering a glimpse of what would it mean to be accepted and unconditionally loved. To be safe and cared for. These oases could be book clubs or choir rehearsals; open-invitation-picnics in the city-park or guided walks on nature trails; lecture series for parents of teenagers





or conversation opportunities to practice foreign languages; knitting clubs or short courses for IT skills. This is something to consider for all of us, laity, using our creative minds, professional skills, and God-given gifts. A small core group of four or five can already initiate something that suits to a given context. The trick is to listen carefully to the needs of people in our immediate neighborhood, and find creative responses. To offer an atmosphere of genuine unconditional love and care as well as a real abundance in the spiritual and emotional sense. In due time, some need for help on the journey toward accepting and admitting their possible shortcomings may arise, as well as for guidance about asking for forgiveness both from God and from other people around them in order to mend broken relationships. However, the main thing is still to keep the atmosphere in all these various enterprises open, and as relaxed and loving as possible, and refuse the temptation to use them mainly as tools for recruiting new church members. People need enough space and time to discover God's grace for themselves, and we should be just fellow travelers on this road providing graceful presence, and sharing our God-given love with them. As Paul says, we are called to be "ambassadors who represent Christ" (2Co 5:20) to people around us.

Even as this expression has become a cliché, I have to use it here: while doing this we do need to step out of our comfort zone. Just like the father was running toward his son with open arms, ready to embrace him even before he would say or do anything. Miroslav Volf's concept of embrace as a metaphor for the relationship with "the other" is helpful here. He describes the embrace as first opening our arms for "the other" as a sign of openness and willingness to be in relationship; then waiting for "the other" to open their arms also (which in mission context may require a long time before the mutual trust is born!). The next step would be closing the arms around "the other" in hope that they would also close their arms ("It takes two pairs of arms for one embrace", says Volf), and finally opening the arms again. To let go – or to embrace each other again. I believe this is the attitude we all need for a real mission: to be open for people who are different from us; to accept them on their terms, not ours; and to be patient even if they choose to walk away again after a while. Because the missional embrace is never a trap where people cannot get out.

I read an Estonian novel recently about the 12th century when first Christian monks were coming to Estonia proclaiming their message,





and people were suspicious. It suddenly struck me how similar is the situation today. The main character in this novel, a young man longing to see the wide world, meeting new people and struggling with newly formed questions about Christianity hears the simple message that this God of Christianity actually loves people. This is something that is hard for him to believe, and at the same time is inviting him to believe. In today's world people struggle with the same issue. The message about God's love is not easy to believe. Maybe our best mission strategy would be not just pointing to the direction where the right way to father's home is or explaining the best routes. Maybe our best mission strategy would be walking lovingly together with our people on the journey on an unknown road to the unknown father's home who is waiting to embrace them with the same love he has embraced all the prodigals.

Report of the Central Conference Council

“Receive the Holy Spirit” Central Conference 2025

Welcome to 23rd session of the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark under the compelling theme “Receive the Holy Spirit.” In Wesleyan theology, the Holy Spirit is often named as the empowering presence of God, a presence that embrace both our past and our future.

We can look forward to a future oriented central conference, which will be blessed by much music from the Jerusalem UMC, and the election of a new bishop for the coming eight years.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call - one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.



These words to the Christians in Ephesus speak into the life of the United Methodists in the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference.

We have lived through a very demanding global pandemic, with all its implications. We are broken and divided over the war in Ukraine. Separation due to differing understanding of human sexuality and how to be in ministry with all people is affecting the entire United Methodist Church in significant ways, including us.

This report describes the work of the central conference council over the past eight years.

War

The war in Ukraine began when Russia invaded and annexed Crimea and parts of Luhansk and Donetsk in 2014. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine 24 February 2022 brought a dramatic escalation of the war.

Our articles of religion say: "We believe war and bloodshed are contrary to the gospel and spirit of Christ." (Articles of Religion art XVI ¶ 104)

Nevertheless, we find ourselves in the middle of a war. Many thousands have died on both sides, and at least 12 million people have fled their homes in Ukraine. More than five million have left for neighboring countries, while seven million people are still thought to be displaced inside Ukraine itself.

The pastors and leaders in Ukraine are faithfully and courageously serving under extreme circumstances offering comfort, help and not least hope to their parishioners and fellow citizens through local church and shelters. The United Methodists in the neighboring countries and throughout Europe are taking a very active part in offering hospitality, care, and support to the refugees. Amid the horror and pain of war, we see the power of the connection as Methodists across the world join in prayer, encouragement and giving. Throughout the war the United Methodist Committee on Relief UMCOR has provided significant support to assist church in Ukraine and in other European countries to care for refugees and internally displaced people.

All European central conferences have made substantial contributions, and individuals have made extraordinary efforts to help. We thank God for the generosity of our sisters and brothers throughout the connection – and we celebrate the strength of our connection.





The war and our central conference

Due to growing tension between the Ukraine Moldova Provisional Annual Conference and the other Eurasian conferences, the Ukraine conference in 2020 requested to be moved to another episcopal area. The central conference was reluctant to make this change and made several attempts to solve the conflict, regrettably all unsuccessful.

After the Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it became clear to a majority of the central conference council that episcopal supervision from Moscow would no longer be viable. An extra online session of the central conference was called for 30. April 2022 with the sole purpose of acting on a motion from the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference Council to temporarily until the next regular session of central conference to change the borders of the two episcopal area and move the Ukraine-Moldova Provisional Annual Conference to the Nordic and Baltic episcopal are. The call was issued and the motion made against the will of the central conference council members from Central Russia, East Russia and Central Asia, Northwest Russia and South Russia, and of bishop Khegay.

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.

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 favor, none against and one abstention.





The conference 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.”

After 2025 the central conference, we will only have one episcopal area, and the Ukraine and Moldova Provisional Annual Conference will be part of this area.

Ecumenism

The council cares for the central conference’s representation in the ecumenical fora, where we hold membership: The European Methodist Council, The World Methodist Council, The Conference of European Churches (CEC), The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE). (see separate reports)

We are represented on the European Methodist Council by bishop Eduard Kheday, rev Natalia Prokhorova, bishop Christian Alsted, rev Ingull Grefslie, Meeli Tankler and rev Jørgen Thaarup.

We are represented on the World Methodist Council by bishop Christian Alsted, rev Ingull Grefslie and rev Thomas Risager.

We have been represented at general assemblies of CEC in Novi Sad in Serbia by rev Leif Björklund, and in Tallin Estonia, by rev Sarah Tiainen.

We have been represented at general assemblies of the Community of Protestant Churches (the Leuenberg community) in Basel, Switzerland by Rev. Dr. Jørgen Thaarup and in Sibiu, Romania by bishop Christian Alsted.

Agreements with other churches

In September 2017, all European Methodist, Wesleyan and Uniting churches in the European Methodist Council signed a covenant agreement of mutual recognition of sacraments and ordination in Wesley Chapel. The purpose of the agreement is to enable member churches to consult together on matters of common concern. To enable a stronger Methodist witness in Europe; through the sharing of resources with one another, coordinating existing co-operative Methodist work in Europe and offering advice to each other. Through the covenant, we aim to be





more adequately represented in ecumenical and secular bodies, and to share with other ecumenical partners in Christian mission in Europe.

Our agreement of full communion with the Uniting Church in Sweden (Equmeniakyrkan) was ratified at our central conference in 2016. As part of the agreement there will be United Methodist delegates in the annual conference of the Uniting Church in Sweden, and there will be delegates from the Uniting Church in Sweden participating in the General Conference and in our Central Conference, these delegates will all have vote and no vote.

We also joyfully note that the Uniting Church in Sweden has become member of the European Methodist Council and of the World Methodist Council. And we are deeply grateful that the Uniting Church in Sweden decided to host the World Methodist Conference, which emphasizes their commitment to maintain and develop their relationship to the Methodist tradition.

Growing together

The council has worked on building relationships between local churches across the episcopal area to strengthen the connection. There is a growing exchange of resources and experiences on a local church level as well as on the conference level. This is particularly true when it comes to youth ministry, where connections between Lithuania and Norway, Latvia and Denmark, and Norway and Denmark are fruitful. An important factor in strengthening the connection is the School of Congregational Development, which took place in 2019 in Tallinn, Estonia and gathered almost 300 participants from the entire episcopal area.

The next school of congregational development will take place 18-21 September 2025 in Oslo, Norway, under the theme “Catch on fire” with subthemes “Purpose – Challenge – Hope – Adventure”.

The council continues to publish books in the “Nordic Perspectives on Methodism” series to stimulate Wesleyan theological thinking and writing in the Nordic context. The third book was on ministry with children and youth and came out in 2019. The fourth volume, which will focus on pastoral care and counseling, will come in 2026.





Continued education seminars for clergy have been reinvigorated, and the first took place in Oslo in the fall of 2024 – focusing on European Methodist church history.

Funds were made available from the Nordic Theological Funds to support participation in the Oxford Institute in August 2024, however, mainly due to the Oxford Institute being held the week before the World Methodist Conference in Gothenburg where several relevant participants were already involved, but no one applied or registered for the institute.

The council is encouraging annual Conferences to invite guests from other annual conferences. The hosting conference will offer participation fee and accommodation, while the sending conference will pay for the travel. Furthermore, we encourage annual conferences to invite guests from other annual conferences to events like youth camps, church camps, seminars etc.

The Youth Council

The youth organization in our central conference has decided that their representatives to the European Methodist Youth Council (EMYC) will form the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference Youth Council and meet in connection with EMYC's annual meeting. However, during the pandemic the European-wide youth council fell apart but is now in the process of being restarted in a different format.

The episcopal office will make attempts to gather the leaders of our youth organizations online to discuss what collaboration should be in the future.

Change in the office

In May 2016 Lilli Uth retired after 7 years as bishop Alsted's administrative assistant. We are deeply thankful for Lilli's dedicated, perceptive and highly competent ministry, which was expressed at a reception at the episcopal office.

Kirsten Hastrup assumed the position as administrative assistant after Lilli Uth. With her excellent administration and language skills she has proved to be an asset to the office and to the Central Conference – we are very grateful for her dedicated work.





A worldwide connection

Several of our leaders serving on general agencies and worldwide committees are doing an excellent job in bringing the Northern European or Eurasian perspective into the conversation and the work of the agencies. The central conference council receive reports from our representatives and help to pass on information and build relations. Several general agencies have done work in our annual conferences, and we continue to benefit from support through seminars, the Advance and through missionaries assigned to annual conferences. (our representatives will deliver a combined report from the agencies)

One excellent example of connectional collaboration was the 2017 seminar for indigenous peoples in continuation of the celebration of the centennial of the forming of the Sami nation in Trondheim, Norway. The seminar was supported by and planned in collaboration with the General Board of Church and Society and gathered Methodists and indigenous people from around the world.

The Trondheim church also was designated Feb. 5 as United Methodist Church historical site #524. The United Methodist Commission on Archives and History cited the congregation for its historical work with marginalized people.

Postponements

The extra session of general conference in St. Louis in 2019 was not able to lead the church to a peaceful solution. The Committee on a Way Forward presented three different options, and the general conference decided on “Traditionalist Plan” which enhanced policies about homosexuality and strengthened enforcement, and approved procedures for local churches to disaffiliate from the denomination and retain local church property. However, none of these changes would come into effect at central conferences until they meet in regular session.

Due to Covid19, we experienced several postponements of the general conference first from 2020 to the late summer of 2021, then again to the fall of 2022, and in the end to the spring of 2024. Which meant that the quadrennium was expanded to 8 years. Consequently, we could not have a regular central conference with episcopal election, and our central conference was postponed until the present conference in 2025.





Separation

In some places the decisions of the 2019 extra session of the general conference were received with satisfaction, in other places they were received with frustration and grief.

Following the end of the global pandemic, the postponement of general conference to 2024 led to reactions from several caucus groups, individuals, and annual conferences within the denomination. - Some were concerned, the church for yet another two years would not be able to deal with the disagreements related to human sexuality and make room for flexibility in its polity. While others expressed a desire to separate from the United Methodist Church with the purpose of joining a more traditional denomination. The launching of a new traditional denomination named the Global Methodist Church on 1 May 2022 accelerated the desire to disaffiliate for several local churches, particularly in the United States.

The four European bishops worked collaboratively to describe processes and to guide conferences, local churches and clergy that were seeking to disaffiliate.

An extra online session of the central conference was called for 18 March 2023. The conference was limited to acting upon two motions, a motion of the Nordic, Baltic and Ukraine Area Group on the future of the United Methodist Church in the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference, and a motion of the Eurasia Area Group requesting the central conference to approve that the Central Russia Annual Conference, the Eastern Russia and Central Asia Provisional Annual Conference, the Northwest Russia and Belarus Provisional Annual Conference, and the Southern Russia Provisional Annual Conference begin the process to become an autonomous Methodist church following the procedure laid out in the Book of Discipline ¶ 572.

The motion brought by the Nordic, Baltic and Ukraine area group was a thoroughly negotiated proposal with the purpose of caring for the several needs related to the future of the annual conferences within the central conference. For a limited period of time (until the opening of the next regular session of the central conference) the motion offered a pathway for disaffiliation for local churches and specifically for districts covering an entire country within the Estonia Annual Conference. Furthermore, the motion changed the name of the Estonia





Annual Conference to the Baltic Annual Conference. And finally, within the boundaries of the Book of Discipline laid out in ¶543.7, the motion offered annual conferences the opportunity to set and clearly state policies and standards regarding ordination and the solemnization of marriage.

After much deliberation a majority voted to delete the latter part of the motion. And the conference passed the motion offering a pathway for disaffiliation and changing the name of the Estonia Annual Conference to the Baltic Annual Conference.

The motion to permit the four Eurasia annual conferences to begin the process of becoming an autonomous Methodist church was passed, and during the following months all annual conferences in our central conference supported the decision by two-thirds majority of the aggregate vote.

Based on the provisions passed by the central conference the Estonia district with a 96% vote left the denomination in the summer of 2023, and an agreement of mutual recognition was signed.

During the following year two local churches in Norway left the connection. Two additional churches in Norway and one in the Finland Swedish annual conference in the fall of 2024 voted to separate, however, they were prevented from doing so, due to decision 1512 of 26 October 2024 by the Judicial Council. The decision says that after General Conference 2024 did not pass a pathway for disaffiliation, there is no legislation, policy, guidelines or rules authorizing the departure of local churches.

We are admonished...

Both extra central conferences were demanding for the relationships and the cohesion in the central conference. There has been much disappointment and frustration, and strong emotions involved, and we have hurt each other in several ways. The debate following the conferences has not always reflected how we should behave as a people of God. Again, Paul's admonition to the Ephesians speaks into our lives with each other. "I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. "





This unity is a fragile gift, we may unwrap, work to develop, strengthen and protect. Also, in this, we need the Holy Spirit, the empowering presence of God.

World Methodist Conference in Gothenburg

After several postponements the 22nd World Methodist Conference finally took place in Gothenburg Sweden in August 2024 – hosted by the Uniting Church in Sweden supported by the annual conferences in Norway and Denmark. Having the World Methodist Conference in Northern Europe offered a unique opportunity to experience the world-wide Methodist connection of more than 82 million Methodists, Wesleyans and Uniting Church Christians.

The overarching theme was “On the Move” with sub-themes, Migration, Pilgrimage, and Illumination.

The conference became a wonderful spirit-filled event, with exuberant worship and music, engaging seminars, inspiring debates, and exciting presentations. European methodism had a strong presence where the unique Methodist witness in Europe was presented in all its facets. We are deeply grateful to the Uniting Church in Sweden that they took on the challenge to organize and host the conference, and we are in awe of the way in which they shaped it and integrated their own annual conference.

Moving into the future

As sad as the disaffiliations are, they will not in any way stop us from moving on and faithfully make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

In the fall of 2023, the central conference council brought together leaders representing all the annual conferences, who will stay in the United Methodist Church or are waiting until after the General Conference 2024 to make up their mind.

Conversation, laughter, thoughtfulness, and joy filled the room when the 42 leaders from Ukraine, Norway, Lithuania, Finland, Latvia and Denmark were gathered in Riga, Latvia in the fall of 2023 to worship, pray, share, reflect and talk about our future together in the United Methodist Church.





From different positions several expressed the need for each annual conference to be able to set their own policies and standards for marriage and the licensing and ordination of clergy, and to be able to hold on to these policies and standards without interference from the general church. As one expressed it, “Different standards and policies may not be the best but perhaps the better option”, and many nodded in agreement.

Throughout the weekend the atmosphere was warm, respectful, and loving. At the close of the gathering one said:” I bring back a sense of belonging to the family, I have hope of relationship where we perceive each other as God’s children.”

The Future of our Central Conference

The departure of the four Eurasia annual conferences, the Estonia and a few additional churches reduces of number of clergies to a level that jeopardizes our ability to keep the status as a central conference. Which may imply that this is the last time we will be able to elect a new bishop for our part of the world.

Decisions on disaffiliation made in annual conferences and in local churches in Europe will necessitate the formation of a Europe wide taskforce to study and make proposals for the future organization of the United Methodist Church in Europe, including its central conference structure, and its episcopal supervision.

Some possible models could be:

- One Europe Central Conference with 2-3 episcopal areas. The main functions of the central conference will be to elect bishops and to coordinate inter annual conference and general church relations.
- Two Central Conferences in Europe - most likely with one bishop each. The challenge will be to make both central conferences financially sustainable.
- Our central conference becomes a provisional central conference, and we will have a bishop assigned to the central conference, as we will no longer be able to elect our own bishop. We will still be able to adapt the book of discipline and to have all the other powers and duties of a central conference.





Each of these models have their up- and downsides, and there are likely additional possible models. We need to explore and discuss our options considering what is best for the mission of the church. Identifying good viable solutions for the future of United Methodism in Europe will be a very important task for next central conference council.

Closing words

We can move into the future with confidence – the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, and He will build his church, as we “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” And we do believe the empowering presence of God is still at work in us and in and through the Church. - To Him be glory.

On behalf of the Central Conference Council

Christian Alsted

chair

Report of the Committee on Episcopacy

The Episcopal Committee (EC) has done the following to fulfill its duties as they are given in the 2016 DoD Supplement Northern Europe and Eurasia § 550.

We have conducted annual conversations with Christian Alsted on his ministry. These conversations have always been held in a positive atmosphere and the goal has been to give the bishop feedback from the committee and from the wider church so that he could be the best possible bishop for the whole church. We have received annual reports from the bishop, and these have formed the basis of our conversation. Once every four years we have asked a number of national leaders in the annual conferences to answer a questionnaire about the ministry of the bishop to inform these conversations. This has been a valuable input for our work.

Our overall conclusion is that Christian Alsted has served our church with distinction and brought his many gifts of preaching, teaching, administration, leadership, intellectual capacity and vision casting to





fruition in a time where it has been much needed. These have been tough times for all of us, but certainly also for our bishop, but he has led us through the storms. We are thankful for his work to hold up the unity of the church and for trying to help the different positions live together. On top of these challenges came the expansion of his episcopal area when the Ukraine/Moldova provisional annual conference was moved.

The EC has supported that our bishop has been able to take time off for rest and renewal during these hard times

The EC have also noted that the worldwide church has seen and sought out Christian Alsted's gifts for leadership. He has served in many capacities in the wider connection. We just want to name a few things; His role as president of The Connectional Table and in the Council of Bishops leadership, as a member of several boards and on the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters. In General Conference served as moderator in several difficult plenary sessions. It is also worth mentioning that he has done good work with European Methodist Council, the ecumenical organizations in Europe and World Methodist Conference. Finally, we want to announce how proud we are that he was the recipient of The World Methodist Peace Award 2024 for his ministry with the UMC in Ukraine.

EC has worked to prepare the election of a new bishop by publishing an Information Pack on the election itself, but also on the tasks and challenges that lie before the next bishop.

Per-Endre Bjørnevik and Ole Birch

Chair and secretary of the Committee on Episcopacy





Minutes

The 23rd regular session of the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference, 2- 6 April 2025 Copenhagen, Denmark

1. Opening

a. Welcome

Bishop Christian Alsted welcomed all delegates and guests to the conference.

b. Roll Call

The Roll Call was made by Ole Birch.

Delegates members and official guests

Delegates

Denmark clergy

Jørgen Thaarup

Thomas Risager

Louise Aaen

Denmark lay

Shanti Digebjerg

Andreas Morsbøl Gram

Jonatan Steinvig

Norway clergy

Knut Refsdal replaced by Ingull Grefslie after he was elected bishop.

Hilde-Marie Øgreid Movafagh

Jon Erik Bråthen

Hilde Sanden-Bjønnes

Ola Westad

Helen Byholt Lovelace





Frøydis Grinna
Christina Thaarup

Norway lay
Audun Westad
Jan Magne Linnsund
Aart Huurnink
Anders Isnes
Camilla Garn Røed
Ingerid Hoggen
Ove Braathen
Svein Tore Dreyer Fredriksen not present. Per Endre Bjørnevik
was approved to take his place.

Finland S clergy
Sarah Tiainen
Leif Göte Björklund

Finland S lay
Jenny Jansson
Thomas Westerborn

Finland F clergy
Veli Lojonen
Jori Brander
Mika Partanen

Finland F lay
Säde Lojonen
Vesa Tolin
Kreetta Heiskari

Baltic clergy
Edgars Sneiders





Remigijus Matulaitis not present.

Zinta Dzintara

Baltic lay

Ināra Avotina

Meeli Tankler

Kristina Matulaitienė not present.

Ukraine clergy

Yulia Starodubets

Oleg Starodubets

Ukraine lay

Dariia Zhukovska

Eugenia Fedorova not present. Anastasia Mykhtonuk approved to take her place.

The presence of the 15 delegates of the four Eurasia annual conferences had been confirmed by an e-mail from bishop Eduard Khegay. They took part online in agenda items 2 and 3.

Central Asia and Far East clergy

Artem Golov

Dmitriy Lysin

Central Asia and Far East lay

Yulia Stukalova

Daniil Kumpyak

North-West Russia and Belarus clergy

Andrey Kim

Elena Chudinova

North-West Russia and Belarus lay

Elena Kitaeva

Natalia Konstantinova was not present.





Central Russia clergy

Sergey Nikolaev

Olga Kobzeva

Central Russia lay

Irina Margulis

Aleksey Voronov

South Russia clergy

Alexandr Pererva

Nadezhda Kiseleva

South Russia lay

Irina Mitina

Natalin Nizhegorodova

Members with voice but no vote.

Members of the Central Conference Council

Rev. Ole Birch.

Bettina Pedersen.

Per-Endre Bjørnevik.

Rev. Ingull Grefslie.

Rev. Svein Veland.

Sergei Pugachev. Not present.

Svetlana Tsoy. Not present.

Bishops of the Central Conference

Bishop Christian Alsted, Northern Europe Baltic and Ukraine Area.

Bishop Eduard Khegay, Eurasia Area.

Visiting bishop from the Council of Bishops

Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank, Los Angeles.





Judicial Court

Rev. Steinar Hjerpseth. (Judicial Court will assemble online if needed).

Bishops' assistant

Kirsten Hastrup.

Delegate from the Uniting Church in Sweden

Rev. Lasse Svennson

Official Guests

All days

Bishop Øystein Olsen NEECC. (retired).

Bishop Harald Rückert, Germany. (retired).

Bishop Stefan Zurcher, South and Central Europe.

Bishop Werner Philipp, Germany.

Rev. Dr. Jonathan Hustler, Secretary of Conference, The Methodist Church in Britain.

Rev. Dr. Aleze Fulbright, Secretary of the General Conference.

Rev. Üllas Tankler, Regional Secretary Europe General Board of Global Ministry.

Friday

Sofie Larsen Kure, deputy secretary general National Council of Churches in Denmark

Friday to Sunday

Bishop Patrick Streif, South and Central Europe. (retired).

Saturday and Sunday

Bishop Thomas Reinholdt Rasmussen, Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Denmark.

Bishop Matti Repo, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

Bishop Sunniva Gylver, Church of Norway.





Rev. Henrik Erhard Hermansen, General Secretary Christian Council of Norway..

Communications staff

United Methodist Communications, Poonam Patodia

Germany Klaus Ulrich Ruof

Norway Karl Anders Ellingsen

Denmark Maria Aaskov

Number of voting members before the vote on the four Eurasia conferences forming an autonomous church: 55.

Number of voting members after the departure of the four Eurasia conferences: 40.

c. Quorum and the bar of the conference

We affirmed that there was a Quorum. The bar was set to be the first three rows from the front.

d. Chairs

Bishop Christian Alsted, Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank

e. Election of other officers

Secretary: Ole Birch

Assistant secretary: Ingerid Hoggen

In accordance with BoD 545.1 the minutes will be approved by the presiding bishop and the secretary.

f. Elections Tellers:

Team 1. Ingull Grefslie, Svein Veland. Üllas Tankler.

Team 2. Bettina Pedersen, Marie Flinck Hansen, Bill Lovelace,





g. Presentation of guests.

Greetings were given throughout the conference.

After lunch Thursday the conference received greetings from Rev. Jonathan Hustler - secretary of conference The Methodist church in Britain. We received greetings and perspectives on the future of the United Methodist Church in Europe from Bishop Werner Philipp – Germany, Bishop Harald Rückert – Germany (retired), Bishop Stefan Zurcher – South and Central Europe.

Friday morning Rev. Lasse Svensson - The Uniting Church in Sweden and Rev. Dr. Aleze Fulbright – Secretary of the General Conference greeted the conference.

Saturday Üllas Tankler – Regional Secretary Europe General Board of Global Ministry and Poonam Patodia - UMCOM greeted the conference.

h. Plan of organization and Rules of Order

The Plan of organization and Rules of Order was approved.

i. Approval of agenda

The agenda was approved.

j. Election of officers of the Focus Groups.

The following were proposed and elected.

Focus Group 1

1. Chair: Sarah Tiainen FS
2. Secretary: Andreas Morsbøl DK.

Focus Group 2

3. Chair: Audun Westad NO.
4. Secretary: Veli Lojonen FF.

Focus Group 3

5. Chair: Shanti Digebjerg DK.
6. Secretary: Ola Westad NO.





Focus Group 4

7. Chair: Christina Thaarup NO.

8. Secretary: Kreetta Heiskari FF.

2. Approval of the financial report of the Eurasia Episcopal Fund

The report was approved.

3. Motion for the Central Russia, the Northwest Russia and Belarus Provisional, the South Russia Provisional, and the Eastern Russia and Central Asia Provisional Annual Conferences to leave the United Methodist Church to form an autonomous Methodist church.

a. Introduction

The motion was introduced by bishop Eduard Khegay.

Non-disciplinary petition to the 2025 Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference on Autonomous Status for Eurasia to depart from the United Methodist Church to form an autonomous Methodist Church in Eurasia.

Whereas the following four annual conferences in Eurasia have asked to leave the connection and form an autonomous Methodist church, according to BOD 2016, ¶ 572: - Central Russia Annual Conference, meeting online on December 17, 2022 (Vote: 29 Yes, 1 No, 2 Abstentions); - Eastern Russia and Central Asia Provisional Annual Conference, meeting online on December 10, 2022 (Vote: 47 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstention) - Northwest Russia and Belarus Provisional Annual Conference, meeting online on December 17, 2022 (Vote: 18 Yes, 0 No, 2 Abstentions), - Southern Russia Provisional Annual Conference, meeting online on December 10, 2022 (Vote: 21 Yes, 0 No, 3 Abstentions);

and





Whereas the called session of the central conference of Northern Europe and Eurasia, meeting online on March 18, 2023, has approved the request and asked all its annual conferences to vote on it;

and

Whereas all annual conferences of the central conference of Northern Europe and Eurasia have voted on the request with the following aggregate number of votes: - Central Russia Annual Conference:: 423 Yes, 13 No, 20 Abstentions; - Eastern Russia and Central Asia Provisional Annual Conference: 420 Yes, 13 No, 22 Abstentions; - Northwest Russia and Belarus Provisional Annual Conference: 419 Yes, 15 No, 20 Abstentions; - Southern Russia Provisional Annual Conference: 408 Yes, 22 No, 24 Abstentions); and therefore the requested 2/3 majority is clearly fulfilled for each of these annual or provisional annual conferences;

and

Whereas the Eurasia episcopal area comprising the four annual conferences has submitted to the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters the following documents for creating an autonomous Methodist Church, named “The Christian Methodist Church in Eurasia” - Historical Statement, - Constitution, - Main Doctrinal Standards;

and

Whereas the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, meeting on April 21, 2024, in Charlotte NC has found all needed steps according to ¶ 572 fulfilled and has approved the request, and the Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships has endorsed the request;

and

Whereas the postponed 2020 General Conference on April 25, 2024, with a vote of 672 yes and 67 no approved an enabling act for the four annual conferences in Eurasia to leave The United Methodist Church and form an Autonomous Methodist Church becoming effective at the forthcoming regular central conference of Northern Europe and Eurasia; and said General Conference asked the parties mentioned in ¶ 571.4 and 572.6 to work towards a plan of cooperation.





THEREFORE, the 2025 regular Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference in accordance with ¶ 572.5 declares the present relationship between the United Methodist Church and the four annual conferences and provisional annual conferences in Eurasia dissolved.

b. Vote

Vote on declaring the present relationship between the Central Russia, the Northwest Russia and Belarus Provisional, the South Russia Provisional, and the Eastern Russia and Central Asia Provisional Annual Conferences and the United Methodist Church dissolved.

The motion was approved. Votes in favor: 55. Votes against: 0. Abstentions: 0.

c. Greeting by bishop Christian Alsted

Bishop Christian Alsted offered greetings saying, “for the past 30 years we have been in close connection with each other. We have served Christ together in making disciples for the transformation of the world. The decision today marks a new reality. We respect the integrity of your decision to depart from the United Methodist Church, and we pray and wish that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit may continue to fill and shape you as you faithfully serve. We give God thanks for what has been and is to come.”

d. Greeting by bishop Eduard Kheday

Bishop Eduard Kheday offered greetings saying among other things. “Dear sisters and brothers, people called Methodists, This is our last Central Conference as delegates from Eurasia. I want to use this moment to express my gratitude. Thank you very much for understanding our view on human sexuality and our plan to leave the UMC. It is not a reason to rejoice, but it is a least harmful move to help everyone to follow their convictions. During several decades we were together as one Central Conference. I have experienced wonderful hospitality during the meetings of the Central Conferences when we met in Nordic and Baltic countries





Dear sisters and brothers, I wish I can thank many more people and groups of our beloved UMC and tell you stories of God's work, but I realize how much more work the Central Conference must do these days. So, on behalf of our delegation from Eurasia, I want to express gratitude for supporting our autonomous status."

After the greetings we said goodbye to each other and the online session ended.

4. Addresses

- a. The Episcopal Address was presented by bishop Christian Alsted
- b. The Laity Address was presented by Dariia Zhukovska, Andreas Morsbøl Gram and Meeli Tankler.

5. Episcopal Election

a. Presentation of candidates for Episcopacy

A presentation of candidates for the Episcopacy was held Thursday afternoon.

Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank chaired the session.

The candidates, Thomas Risager and Knut Refsdal, each gave their presentations and then Meeli Tankler from the Committee on Episcopacy asked them prepared questions.

There was also time for questions from the delegates.

b. Hearing

A Hearing took place Thursday afternoon and evening. The delegations from the different countries took turns interviewing the candidates.





c.Episcopal election (Friday morning)

Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank chaired the session.

Ole Birch did a roll call of the voting delegates, and the election process was explained.

There were 40 entitled to vote. To be elected, a candidate needs 2/3 of the votes, equals 27 votes.

Before each ballot, a bishop or a guest was asked to lead in prayer. Between each ballot there was singing, reflection and silence.

The ballots were as follows

- 1st ballot: Knut Refsdal 20, Thomas Risager 19, blank 1.
- 2nd ballot: Knut Refsdal 20, Thomas Risager 19, blank 1.
- 3rd ballot: Knut Refsdal 21, Thomas Risager 18, blank 1.
- 4th ballot: Knut Refsdal 23, Thomas Risager 16, blank 1.
- 5th ballot: Knut Refsdal 21, Thomas Risager 18, blank 1.
- 6th ballot: Knut Refsdal 20, Thomas Risager 17, blank 3.
- 7th ballot: Knut Refsdal 21, Thomas Risager 18, blank 1.
- 8th ballot: Knut Refsdal 23, Thomas Risager 16, blank 1.
- 9th ballot: Knut Refsdal 22, Thomas Risager 15, blank 2, invalid 1.
- 10th ballot: Knut Refsdal 22, Thomas Risager 16, blank 1, invalid 1.
- 11th ballot: Knut Refsdal 22, Thomas Risager 17, blank 1.
- 12th ballot: Knut Refsdal 21, Thomas Risager 18, blank 1.
- 13th ballot: Knut Refsdal 23, Thomas Risager 16, blank 1.
- 14th ballot: Knut Refsdal 24, Thomas Risager 15, blank 1.
- 15th ballot: Knut Refsdal 22, Thomas Risager 17, blank 1.
- 16th ballot: Knut Refsdal 23, Thomas Risager 16, blank 1.
- 17th ballot: Knut Refsdal 23, Thomas Risager 15, blank 2.
- 18th ballot: Knut Refsdal 23, Thomas Risager 16, blank 1.
- 19th ballot: Knut Refsdal 25, Thomas Risager 13, blank 2.





20th ballot: Knut Refsdal 25, Thomas Risager 14, blank 1.

21st ballot: Knut Refsdal 24, Thomas Risager 14, blank 2.

22nd ballot: Knut Refsdal 24, Thomas Risager 14, blank 2.

23rd ballot: Knut Refsdal 25, Thomas Risager 14, blank 1.

24th ballot: Knut Refsdal 24, Thomas Risager 15, blank 1.

25th ballot: Knut Refsdal 26, Thomas Risager 13, blank 1.

After the 25th ballot Thomas Risager thanked the conference for the love and confidence that it had shown Knut Refsdal and him. He thanked his supporters and encouraged them to break the deadlock by changing their vote.

Knut Refsdal was elected as our new bishop on the 26th ballot. Votes: Knut Refsdal 30, Thomas Risager 9 and 1 blank.

Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank presented bishop Knut Refsdal to the conference and prayers were offered for the new bishop.

Bishop Knut Refsdal thanked the conference for their trust and asked for the prayers of the church.

6. Christian Conferencing in Focus Groups

Bishop Christian Alsted emphasized the Methodist understanding of Christian conferencing as a means of grace and highlighted the instructions in the conference material.

7. Reporting from the Focus Groups

a. The Episcopal Address

(agenda item 4a) – debate based on reports from the Focus Groups

Focus Group 1

About the episcopal address: The focus group appreciate bishop Christian Alsted's candor and courage and him challenging us to wrestle the topics of the report. The group want to receive the report and add it to the minutes of the conference with the recommendation that it is sent to every annual conference for further studies.





About the laity addresses: The focus group want to comment how beautiful, honest and personal these report are. The group want to receive the reports and add them to the minutes of the conference with the recommendation that it is sent to every annual conference for further studies.

Focus Group 2

1. Episcopal address Group moves to receive the report and add it to the minutes.

2. Laity address, Dariia Zhukovska

Group moves to receive the report and add it to the minutes.

3. Laity address, Andreas Morsbøl

Group moves to receive the report and add it to the minutes.

4. Laity address, Meeli Tankler

Group moves to receive the report and add it to the minutes.

5. Group moves to refer episcopal and laity addresses to the annual conferences. We feel that these addresses are important and it would benefit if more people could read them. We ask Central Conference Council to search the best ways to distribute them to the annual conferences.

6. Suggestions for future

a. It would be helpful to have the episcopal address beforehand for reading.

b. It would be helpful to know what is expected from laity address. Is it a personal testimony, viewpoint from writer's annual conference or something else.

Focus Group 3

The episcopal and laity addresses

We recommend that the reports be received with the following notes and recommendations: The addresses are all brave, and they show the diversity within our central conference. We recommend the addresses to the annual conferences for further reading and reaction.





Challenge: «We are off the map – and we don't know where to go.»
This is a discussion the conferences have to take.

Focus Group 4

Focus group 4 moves to receive the episcopal and laity addresses with a recommendation that they are sent to each annual conference to be distributed to each local church for study and discussions on the important themes brought to us by bishop Alsted and the lay delegates.

Conclusions

The address was received and added to the minutes.

The conference voted in favor of sending them to the annual conferences and the local churches for further studies.

The conference also voted in favor of asking the central conference council to search for the best methods of distribution.

b. The Laity Address

(agenda item 4b) – debate based on reports from the Focus Groups.

(See above item 7a).

The address was received and added to the minutes. The conference voted in favor of sending it to the annual conferences and the local churches for further studies, and to the ccc for some guidelines on the best ways of distributions.

8. Personal report from the bishop

Working group 4 moves to receive the report with gratitude and add it to the minutes.

The report was received with gratitude and added to the minutes.

9. Report from the committee on Episcopacy

Working group 4 moves to receive the report and add it to the minutes.

The report was received and added to the minutes.





10. Report from the Central Conference Council

Rev. Hilde Marie Movafagh and rev. Yulia Starodubets gave the conference highlights from the report.

We had a plenary conversation on the future of our church.

Focus Group 2

”Group 2 discussed about the future of UMC in Europe and we’re positive on European cooperation”.

The reports last part was processed in focus group 3. Input from Focus Group 3:

“As to «The Future of our Central Conference, the conclusive chapter, we will underline the necessity for talks about the issue. A talk on many levels, also at each annual conference”.

The report was received and added to the minutes.

11. Financial reports – covering 2017-2024

a. The Central Conference Fund

Approved and added to the minutes.

b. The Episcopal Fund Nordic, Baltic and Ukraine

Approved and added to the minutes.

Motion from focus group 1.

Recommendation to the CCC concerning the finances of the bishop’s function.

The central conference recommends that the Central Conference Council during the first concerning quadrennium will plan for balance between what the central conference is paying to the episcopal function and what we are receiving from The Episcopal Fund so that we at the end of the quadrennium will be self-sustaining. This plan should allow The Central Conference Council to increase the apportionment percentage before the next central conference.

The motion was approved and sent to the Central Conference Council.





c. The Area Fund

Approved and added to the minutes.

d. The Nordic Means for Theological Education

Approved and added to the minutes.

e. Auditor Report covering 2017-2024

Approved and added to the minutes with a note that actual central conference fund profit (2016-2023) is DKK 422 101. (Some digits were missing from the material.)

Motion from Aart Huurnink: The Central Conference Council provides a budget for the next 4 years regarding the central conference fund and the episcopal fund to the Central Conference.

The motion was approved.

12. Statistical report – covering 2017-2023

The report was received and added to the minutes.

Question: Can there be better guidelines for the report, they differ on how to measure average worship attendance? Referred to the central conference council.

13. Ecumenical reports

a. The Conference of European Churches

The report was received and added to the minutes.

b. The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe

The report was received and added to the minutes.





c. The European Methodist Council

The report was received and added to the minutes.

d. European Commission on Mission

The report was received and added to the minutes.

e. The World Methodist Council

The report was received and added to the minutes.

The conference expressed gratefulness to the Uniting Church in Sweden for hosting the World Methodist Conference with the support of the Norway and Denmark annual conferences.

14. Collective report from our representatives on general agencies

The report was received and added to the minutes.

Bishop Alsted thanked all those who have served on the boards and agencies and acknowledged the work done over the past 8 years.

15. Disciplinary petitions to the Northern Europe and Eurasia Book of Discipline – adaptations and amendments

15.1 ¶ 347. Transfers

The petition was adopted.

15.2 ¶ 404. Provisions for Episcopal Areas

The petition was adopted.





15.3 ¶ 405. Election and Consecration of Bishops

The petition was adopted.

15.4 ¶ ~~541.542~~ Composition

Regarding agenda point 15.4: §541542 Composition: Focus Group 1 move to adopt the motion with the amendment proposed by Jørgen Thaarup, so it writes: (Amendment to amendment in bold)

§~~541.542~~ Composition

1. a) The central conference shall be composed of clergy and lay members in equal numbers, the clergy members elected by the clergy members of the annual conference and the lay members by the lay members thereof. Their qualifications and the manner of election shall be determined by the central conference itself, subject only to constitutional requirements. Each annual conference and provisional annual conference shall be entitled to at least two clergy and two lay delegates, and no other selection of delegates shall be authorized that would provide for more than one clergy delegate for every six clergy members of an annual conference; except that a majority of the number fixed by a central conference as the ratio of representation shall entitle an annual conference to an additional clergy delegate and to an additional lay delegate.

Each missionary conference and mission is are authorized to elect and send one of its members to the central conference concerned as its representative, said representative to be accorded the privilege of sitting with the committees of the central conference, with the right to speak in the committees and in the regular sessions of the central conference, but without the right to vote. Representatives of missionary conferences or missions shall have the same claim for payment of expenses as is allowed to members of the central conference.

b) In the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference the number of delegates to which an Annual Conference or Provisional Annual Conference is entitled is one clergy and one lay delegate for every six clergy member in the annual conference or Provisional Annual Conference, and one extra additional clergy and one lay delegate. ~~shall be computed on a two-factor-basis: the number of clergy members of the Annual Conference or Provisional Annual Conference, and the~~





~~number of members of local churches in the Annual Conference or Provisional Annual Conference, as follows:~~

~~—— (1) One clergy delegate and one lay delegate for each 75 clergy members of the Annual Conference or Provisional Annual Conference or fraction thereof, and~~

~~—— (2) One clergy delegate and one lay delegate for every 700 confessing members in the local churches in the Annual Conference or Provisional Annual Conference or fraction thereof.~~

~~—— (3) If the number of delegates from each of the categories clergy and lay are more than two plus two, it has to be checked that there are no more than one clergy delegate for every six clergy members of an Annual Conference or Provisional Annual Conference. Should this be the case, the number of delegates has to be reduced accordingly~~

(4) The Uniting Church in Sweden shall, as stated in our signed agreement, be entitled to two delegates, one clergy and one layperson with all rights and privileges of delegates including membership in committees, except the right to vote. The Church Leader of the Uniting Church in Sweden may also be invited to the Central Conference by the bishops of the conference.

The petition as amended by the group was adopted.

15.5 ¶ ~~543~~ 544. Powers and Duties

Focus Group 1 presented the amended text with their amendments in bold.

1. To a central conference shall be committed for supervision and promotion, in harmony with the Discipline and interdenominational contractual agreements, the missionary, educational, evangelistic, industrial, publishing, medical, and other connectional interests of the annual conferences, provisional annual conferences, missionary conferences, and missions within its territory and such other matters as may be referred to it by said bodies or by order of the General Conference; and it shall provide suitable organizations for such work and elect the necessary officers for the same.

2. A central conference, when authorized by a specific enabling act of the General Conference, may elect one or more bishops from among





the traveling elders of The United Methodist Church. The number of bishops to be elected by each central conference shall be determined from time to time by the General Conference.

3. When a central conference shall have been authorized to elect bishops, such elections shall be conducted under the same general procedure as prevails in the jurisdictional conferences for the election of bishops. A central conference shall have power to fix the tenure of bishops elected by the said central conference.²¹

4. The General Council on Finance and Administration shall determine the apportionment amounts for the annual conferences of the central conferences for the succeeding quadrennium based on calculation methodology approved by the General Conference upon recommendation by the Council. This determination shall be informed by consultation with the Council of Bishops.

5. A central conference, in consultation with the bishops of that central conference, shall fix the episcopal areas and residences and make assignments to them of the bishops who are to reside in that central conference. The bishops of a central conference shall arrange the plan of episcopal visitation within its bounds.

6. A central conference shall have authority to elect and support general officers in all departments of the work of the Church within the boundaries of the central conference but may not determine the number of bishops.

7. A central conference shall have power to make such changes and adaptations of the Book of Discipline as the special conditions and the mission of the church in the area require, especially concerning the organization and administration of the work on local church, district, and annual conference levels, provided that no action shall be taken that is contrary to the Constitution and the General Rules of The United Methodist Church, the Doctrinal Standards and Our Conference-approved theological statements, including By Water and the Spirit, This Holy Mystery, and Sent In Love, and provided that the spirit of connectional relationship is kept between the local and the general church. Subject to this restriction, a central conference may delegate to an annual conference within its boundaries the power to make one or the other of the changes and adaptations referred to in this paragraph, upon the request of such annual conference.²²





8. A central conference shall fix the boundaries of the annual conferences, provisional annual conferences, missionary conferences, and missions within its bounds, proposals for changes first having been submitted to the annual conferences concerned as prescribed in the Discipline of The United Methodist Church. No annual conference shall be organized with fewer than thirty-five clergy members except as provided by an enabling act for the quadrennium, which shall not reduce the number below twenty-five. Nor shall an annual conference be continued with fewer than twenty-five clergy members except as provided by an enabling act for the quadrennium.²³

9. A central conference may advise its annual conferences and provisional annual conferences to set standards of character and other qualifications for admission of lay members.

10. A central conference shall have power to make changes and adaptations in procedure pertaining to the annual, district, and charge conferences within its territory and to add to the business of the annual conference supplementary questions considered desirable or necessary to meet its own needs.

11. A central conference shall have authority to examine and acknowledge the journals of the annual conferences, provisional annual conferences, missionary conferences, and missions located within its bounds and to make rules for the drawing up of the journals as may seem necessary.

12. A central conference shall have authority to adopt rules of procedure governing the investigation and trial of its clergy, including bishops, and lay members of the Church and to provide the necessary means and methods of implementing the said rules; provided, however, that the ordained ministers shall not be deprived of the right of trial by a clergy committee, and lay members of the Church of the right of trial by a duly constituted committee of lay members; and provided also, that the rights of appeal shall be adequately safeguarded.²⁴

13. A central conference is authorized to prepare and translate simplified or adapted forms of such parts of the ritual as it may deem necessary, such changes to require the approval of the resident bishop or bishops of the central conference.

14. A central conference shall have the power to conform the detailed rules, rites, and ceremonies for the solemnization of marriage to the statute laws of the country or countries within its jurisdiction.





15. A central conference shall have authority 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 central conference may delegate the same authority to each of the annual conferences within its boundaries.

a. The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference delegates the above mentioned authority to each of the annual conferences within its boundaries.

b. When an annual conference translates the social principles, it may make such changes to ¶162D that are needed to align the wording with its standards ~~and policy~~; **policy, and civil law** regarding marriage.

16. A central conference shall have authority to set standards for ordination and the license for pastoral ministry within its jurisdiction, 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 central conference may delegate the same authority to each of the annual conferences within its boundaries.

a. The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference delegates the above mentioned authority to each of the annual conferences within its boundaries.

17. Subject to the approval of the bishops resident therein, a central conference shall have the power to prescribe courses of study, including those in the vernaculars, for its ministry, both foreign and indigenous, including local preachers, lay servants, Bible women, deaconesses, teachers - both male and female - and all other workers whatsoever, ordained or lay. It shall also make rules and regulations for examination in these courses.

18. A central conference shall have authority to edit and publish a central conference Discipline, which shall contain in addition to the Constitution of the Church such sections from the entire Church and also such revised, adapted, or new sections as shall have been enacted





by the central conference concerned under the powers given by the General Conference.

a. The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference publishes a supplement which together with the Book of Discipline 2020/2024 serves as our Book of Discipline.

b. Each annual conference may in consultation with the bishop translate the parts of the Social Principles they consider relevant and applicable to their context.

19. In a central conference or provisional central conference using a language other than English, legislation passed by a General Conference shall not take effect until 18 months after the close of that General Conference in order to afford the necessary time to make adaptations and to publish a translation of the legislation that has been enacted, the translation to be approved by the resident bishop or bishops of the central conference. This provision, however, shall not exclude the election of delegates to the General Conference by annual conferences within the territory of central conferences or provisional central conferences.

20. A central conference is authorized to interpret Article XXIII of the Articles of Religion (page 71) so as to recognize the governments of the country or countries within its territory.

21. A central conference shall have power to authorize the congregations in a certain state or country to form special organizations in order to receive the acknowledgment of the state or country according to the laws of that state or country. These organizations shall be empowered to represent the interests of the Church to the authorities of the state or country according to the rules and principles of The United Methodist Church, and they shall be required to give regular reports of their activities to their respective annual conferences.

22. A central conference may, with the consent of the bishops resident in that conference, enter into agreements with churches or missions of other denominations for the division of territory or of responsibility for Christian work within the territory of the central conference.

23. A central conference shall have the right to negotiate with other Protestant bodies looking toward the possibility of church union; provided that any proposals for church union shall be submitted to the General Conference for approval before consummation.





A motion by Veli Lopenen to remove 15a did not pass. The paragraph remains as printed in the conference materials.

After this decision the motion 15.5 as amended by the group, was approved.

15.6 ¶ 548. Conference Agencies

The petition was adopted.

15.7 ¶ ~~549~~ 550. Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Council.

Focus Group 1 presented their amended petition. Amendment to the amendments in bold

The council executes assignments given by the central conference and administers running business between central conference sessions as well as prepares central conference sessions. It is amenable and accountable to the central conference and reports to the central conference. The purpose of the council is for the discernment and articulation upholding of the vision for the church, sharing of experience and good practices, and channeling of connectional resources and mutual help promoting connectional exchange and cooperation. The council reports to the central conference and prepares central conference sessions.

a) Membership

(1) Members of the council are the bishops ex officio and the following number of representatives:

4 members, both clergy and lay, from Norway

2 members from Denmark

~~2 members from Estonia;~~ 1 member each from Latvia and Lithuania

1 member each from Finland S and Finland F

~~1 member each from Central Russia, Northwest Russia and Belarus, South Russia, East Russia and Central Asia, and Ukraine and Moldova.~~

1 member from Ukraine/Moldova.





All members shall be involved in the national leadership of the church.

Substitutes shall be elected by the same number and in numerical order. Substitutes are not personal.

(2) Membership recommendations. All conferences shall seek equal representation between men/women, clergy/lay, and further seek to ensure representation of young people under the age of thirty-five. A Minimum of one member from each annual and national district conference must be a member of its conference council

(3) Membership term

The members and substitutes are elected for the quadrennium, serving from the adjournment of the ordinary central conference session in the beginning of the quadrennium until the adjournment of the following ordinary session.

~~b) Area groups—The members are divided into two groups, arranged by episcopal areas.~~

~~e) b) Meetings—The full council meets normally in the spring and fall each year. In the fall, the area groups meet separately in their respective area. Other arrangements can be agreed upon if the budget allows.~~

~~c) d) Officers—Each area group elects its own chairperson and secretary in the fall meetings. The bishops agree among themselves who is chairperson. The other bishop and the two area chairpersons are all vice chairpersons of the council. The council elects a chairperson and a secretary for the quadrennium among the elected members of the council. A council secretary is elected for the quadrennium by the council. All elections are for the quadrennium.~~

~~d) e) Office—The office of the chairperson bishop is also the Office of Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference.~~

~~f) e) Presidium~~

~~1) The chairperson, the chair of the committee on episcopacy, the bishop and the secretary the three vice chairpersons, and the assistant to the chairperson, form the presidium of the council. Until other officers are elected, the two bishops and the assistant to the chairperson carry the responsibilities of the presidium.~~





(2) The presidium prepares meetings of the council and assigns matters to working groups ~~the area groups~~.

(3) If necessary, the presidium can decide upon matters that cannot wait until ~~next the~~ the next meeting of the council.

~~g)~~f) Council responsibilities - It is the responsibility of the council

(1) To elect treasurer for the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Fund, the Episcopal Fund, and all other funds under its jurisdiction.

(2) To receive and approve annual financial reports for the funds mentioned above, audited by a certified public accountant auditor.

(3) To give an annual report to the annual and national district conferences and receive an annual statistical summary from these.

(4) To present a quadrennial summary of the financial reports of the funds mentioned above to the central conference for approval.

(5) Either to publish The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church in Northern Europe & Eurasia (NEEBoD) each quadrennium or in other ways make changes and adaptations available.

(6) To set time and select place for central conference sessions.

(7) To deal with matters assigned to them by the council or its presidium. Decisions with impact on matters outside the respective area require confirmation by the council or its presidium.

~~h) Area group responsibilities—It is the responsibility of the area groups to deal with matters assigned to them by the council or its presidium. Decisions with impact on matters outside the respective area require confirmation by the council or its presidium.~~

~~(1)~~ (8) To function as the committee on episcopacy (§ 5501).

~~(2)~~ (9) To function as the episcopal residence committee with the responsibility:





(a) To make recommendations to the annual conferences regarding the purchase, sale, or rental of an episcopal residence.

(b) To prepare an annual budget covering the cost of providing the episcopal residence, which may also include utilities, insurance, and normal costs of upkeep in maintaining the residence.

(c) To supervise the expenditure of funds allocated from all sources for expenses related to the provision of the episcopal residence and to account for such expenditures annually to each annual conference in the episcopal area.

(d) To give oversight in all matters related to upkeep, maintenance, improvements, and appropriate insurance coverage for the episcopal residence.

(3) (10) To be responsible for the necessary administration, in case of vacancy in the office of bishop due to death or other reason, until the vacancy is filled (§ 407).

(4) (H) To develop annual budgets for the episcopal fund (Eurasia Episcopal Fund and the Nordic and Baltic Episcopal Fund respectively) to be submitted to the General Council on Finance and Administration for approval.

~~(5) To elect treasurer for each Area's Episcopal Fund, Area Funds and other funds under its field of responsibility.~~

~~(6) To receive and approve annual financial reports for the funds mentioned above, audited by a certified public accountant.~~

~~(7) To present a quadrennial summary of the financial reports of the funds mentioned above to the central conference, which grants discharge of liability for the period for approval.~~

i) g) Subcommittees—In order to support and perform its duties, the council can organize ad hoc subcommittees to fulfil its purpose and any of its permanent tasks

j) h) Economy

(1) The travel expenses of the council, **accommodation and travel meals (per diem)** including its area groups, are covered by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Fund. ~~Accommodation and travel meals (per diem) are paid by the respective conference.~~





(2) Apportionments to the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference are paid by the annual and national district conferences based on a formula set by the Central Conference.

(3) The formula is a percentage of the total gross salary of all clergy under appointment in the local church on conference and district level and in institutions fully or partly owned by the church or a church entity. The gross salary includes the full salary (before taxes), all employee benefits and the value of free housing.

(4) The apportionment percentage for 2017–2020 2025-2029 is 0,75 1 %, starting from 2026.

The petition as amended by the group was adopted.

15.8 ¶ 550 1. Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Committee on Episcopacy

The petition was adopted.

15.9 ¶ ~~551~~ 552 Other central conference work

The group move to adopt the amendments with the editorial addition of an “and” to the amended text between the words “Children” and “Youth”

The petition was approved.

15.10 ¶ ~~552.553~~ Apportionments into the Episcopal Fund and the General Administration Fund

The petition was adopted.

15.11 ¶ 553.554 European Methodist Council

The petition was adopted.





15.12 ¶555 The Baltic Annual Conference

The petition was adopted.

15.13 ¶ 611. (Names of Annual Conference Councils).

The petition was adopted.

15.14 ¶ 613. Responsibilities of the annual conference council.

The petition was adopted.

15.15 ¶ 635. Conference Administrative Review Committee

The petition was adopted.

15.16 ¶ 2501. Requirement of the Trust Clause for All Property

The petition was adopted.

15.17 ¶ 2703. Composition of the Committee on Investigation

The petition was adopted.

15.18 Addition to the Historical Statement

Focus Group 4

We recommend the whole of the Historical Statement be thoroughly revised.

The proposed additions include a comprehensive description on developments in Ukraine and Moldova conference, whereas the long history of Norway and Denmark are covered with one chapter. Our recommendation is to describe the history of Norway and Denmark at more detail and have the history Finland and Russia in separate paragraphs.

Amendment to amendments in bold

Methodism in Northern Europe & Eurasia:

Methodist ministry in Scandinavia began in Stockholm as an outreach of British Methodism. In 1830-42 Scottish Methodist pastor George





Scott ran a rather comprehensive operation, which had a significant influence upon the initiation of Free Church life in Sweden. George Scott's activities broke down due to opposition of a dramatic nature.

The Northern European Countries were experiencing a period of strife and immense change. The increased population could no longer be supported neither agriculturally nor be incorporated into the new industries of the growing cities. Health and welfare standards were low, and social needs were great. Radical changes in society created a longing to find better living conditions in America. Likewise, many people became occupied with the search for help in spiritual values.

The arrival of the Methodist Church to Northern Europe was linked to immigration across the Atlantic, particularly among seamen who sailed to America. In the 1830's and the following decades, all Protestant denominations in the United States were influenced by the Second Great Awakening. In the same period, immigration from the countries of Northern Europe to America began growing at a massive rate towards the turn of the century. In the 1830's and 40's the first Scandinavian speaking Methodist churches were established in the United States, and conferences were eventually organized, utilizing the Scandinavian languages in worship services, newsletters, books and all matters of administration.

Bethel Ship John Wesley

At the initiative of a Swedish sailor, a seaman's church was established in New York in 1832 in order to serve the harbour's sailors and to bring the gospel to the many emigrants there. The floating church – "Bethel Ship John Wesley" – became a significant instrument in bringing Methodism to the Nordic residents. Olaf Gustaf Hedström, of Sweden, led the mission in New York harbour for over 30 years, beginning in 1845. Many seamen and emigrants who had experienced conversion carried the Methodist revival with them to other parts of the United States, as well as to their home countries in Northern Europe.

Norway

In Norway, the story of Methodism began with seaman Ole Peter Petersen's preaching in 1849 and the years ahead. In 1851, O.P. Petersen established the Norwegian-Danish Methodist Church in America. In





1856, Danish-American Christian Willerup was sent to Scandinavia as a superintendent in order to lead the church, which had emerged spontaneously. The first Methodist church was founded during the same year, thereby making the establishment of the Methodist Church in Norway a reality. In 1876, the church in Norway received status as an Annual Conference. There were 29 pastors, 19 congregations and 2,798 members, and the conference got its own superintendent, Martin Hansen.

Denmark

During a family visit to Copenhagen in 1845, Christian Willerup conducted the first public meetings. In 1856, when he was sent to Scandinavia as superintendent, the ministry began to take shape, and from 1858, when Willerup moved to Copenhagen, there were regular meetings. The first congregation was established in 1859, and in 1865 the church received official approval by the state, according to The Royal Constitution. In 1911 the Methodist ministry in Denmark received status as an Annual Conference, at the time there were 53 pastors, 27 congregations, 127 preaching stations and 3,634 members.

Sweden

Various Methodist preachers operated in Sweden in the 1850's. This led to the establishment of the Methodist Church in Sweden in 1868. The work grew rapidly, and in 1876, the church was able to form as an independent Annual Conference with 55 pastors, 97 congregations, 249 preaching stations and 4,123 members. During the same year, the church received official approval by the state as an independent church. Victor Witting was appointed superintendent in Sweden.

In 2012, the Annual Conference in Sweden left the connection and merged with the Baptist Church of Sweden and the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden, and created a new denomination, The Uniting Church in Sweden (Equmeniakyrkan). Former United Methodist district superintendent Lasse Svensson was elected as the first church leader of the denomination. The Uniting Church in Sweden and the United Methodist Church signed an agreement of full communion in 2015 both on a global and on a central conference level. This agreement was ratified by the 2016 General Conference.

Approximately 100 members including 12 clergy desiring to remain United Methodist joined the Finland Swedish provisional Annual Conference and formed a district in Sweden. The 2012 Central





Conference decided to extend the border of the Finland Swedish Provisional Annual Conference to include Sweden. In 2015 the United Methodist Church and the Uniting Church in Sweden (Equmeniakyrkan) signed an agreement of full communion.

Finland and Russia

On the Finnish side of the Bay of Bothnia, Methodist preaching began to be heard by 1859 and the subsequent years. Gustaf Lervik, a coxswain who had returned to his homeland, began to preach in his home country after being converted aboard the Bethel Ship in New York. Later, the Bärnlund brothers joined in as preachers. In the 1880's impulses from Sweden led to a new start for Methodism in Finland, the first congregation was established in 1881. Methodism in Finland fell under the Swedish Annual Conference and had status as a district under the leadership of Superintendent B.A. Carlson. In 1887 the first Finnish-speaking congregation was founded, and two years later B.A. Carlson established a mission to Russia, with meetings held in St. Petersburg.

At that time Finland was part of the Russian empire, but ruled as a separate Grand Duchy with its own legislation. In 1891 the Finnish Senate recognized the Methodist church as a legal minority church in the country. In light of the situation the Swedish Annual Conference organized "The mission in Finland and St. Petersburg" the following year. By 1906 the Russian authorities had given official legal permission for Methodist preaching in St. Petersburg. In 1907, German-American Dr. George A. Simons (son of Frisian immigrants from the island Sylt in Schleswig) was appointed as superintendent in St. Petersburg. The link to Sweden weakened, and under his leadership the work developed rapidly with ramifications for Russia and Estonia. The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 put a stop to all possibilities for church growth, yet, in spite of opposition, the work continued into the 1920's. The Methodist church gathered for the first time as an independent Annual Conference in 1911. The church had 1,568 members. In keeping with the development in Finland after its independence, the work was separated in a Swedish-speaking and a Finnish-speaking conference in 1923. Finnish-speaking Methodism suffered greatly during World War II, since 60 % of its members lived in regions that were incorporated into the Soviet Union.

The Baltic Countries

Methodism in the Baltic Countries can be traced back to the beginning of the 1900's. From the north, Methodism travelled from St. Petersburg





to Saaremaa (Ösel) and the Estonian mainland. From the south, the inspiration came from German Methodism, partly from the Methodist Church and partly from the Evangelical Association and The Christian Brethren Church. At the time of World War II the Evangelical Association and Brethren Church in Lithuania and Latvia were connected with Germany via the Königsberg District, while the Methodist Church's ties were with the Nordic Countries. In Estonia, Methodist preaching began in 1907, and the first congregation could be established in 1910. Vassili Täht was sent by the Methodists in St. Petersburg, in Estonia he met Karl Kuum and together they were integral in starting up the Methodist congregation in Kuressaare (Arensburg at the time), on the island Saaremaa.

The Northwest German Conference appointed the first Methodist minister to service in Kaunas, Lithuania in 1905. In 1900, Pastor Heinrich Ramke of Königsberg had already preached in Kaunas, and during his stay discovered that a group in Kaunas, over several years, had been in contact with the Methodist Publishing House in Bremen. In 1911, the first church building was built in Kaunas, which was the first Methodist edifice built in the Baltics. The Evangelical Association from the Königsberg District started evangelistic work in Riga, the capital of Latvia, in 1908, with the establishment of the first church in 1912. From this point, the work developed into the formation of congregations in Kuldiga and Liepaja. German Methodism started work in Riga with the appointment of George R. Durdis in 1910. This led to the establishment of the first Methodist church in Riga in 1912. In 1911, the Methodists came into contact with the Moravian Brethren missionary Alfred Freiberg, who had founded the congregation in Liepaja, which in turn became a Methodist church.

The three Baltic Countries attained independence after World War I, and the work developed rapidly, with American support. Riga became the centre for Methodism in the Baltics with the establishment of a theological seminary and residence for superintendent Dr. George A. Simons. In 1924, there were 47 Methodist pastors in the Baltics: 24 in Estonia, 15 in Latvia and 8 in Lithuania. The Baltic Annual Conference was organized in 1929, and each of the 3 countries received status as districts. The work in the Baltics grew, so that by 1939 there were around 3,000 registered members. During the same year, 13 Methodists pastors were registered serving 15 congregations in Estonia, 17 Methodists pastors serving 19 congregations in Latvia, and 7 Methodist pastors serving 7 congregations in Lithuania. At that time, the Evangelical





Association had 3 pastors and 3 congregations in Latvia, as well as 7 pastors and 7 congregations in Lithuania. The Evangelical Association tallied around 1,000 members in Latvia and Lithuania.

The incorporation of the Baltic Countries into the Soviet Union after World War II was catastrophic for the Methodist Church. Systematic persecution of pastors and congregations, as well as confiscation of buildings destroyed a great deal of the work. Only Estonia was successful in maintaining the work of the church, due to notable national leaders such as Alexander Kuum.

The Baltic Countries re-established their independence in 1991. In Latvia, a small group of earlier Methodists remained, and in 1991 these contacts led to the resurrection of the United Methodist church of Latvia, while the district was formally re-established in 1992 with three congregations. In 1995, the Methodist church of Lithuania resumed in Kaunas and a year later in Siauliai. The United Methodist church in Lithuania was formally re-established in 1996.

~~The work in all three Baltic countries has been characterized by growth. New congregations have been founded, and the operations have spread from the indigenous languages and peoples to the Russian-speaking population. In Tallinn, there was already a Russian-language outreach in the 1950's, and in the 1980's, the Russian-language outreach likewise commenced in various places. The church in Estonia is an Annual conference. In Until 2023 Latvia and Lithuania, Methodism has had the status as district conferences within the Estonia Annual Conference. In 2023 the name of the Estonia Annual Conference was changed to the Baltic Annual Conference, later the same year the Estonia District left the United Methodist Church over the issue of homosexuality. The Estonia Methodist Church signed an agreement of mutual recognition as a prerequisite to be able to disaffiliate, and the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary still offers scholarship to two students from Latvia and Lithuania. yet function by way of their registration as denominations within their respective countries and as annual conferences in praxis.~~

Europe

The Depression during the 1930's caused further weakening of the ties to the church in America. Methodism in Northern Europe belonged to the Methodist Episcopal Church, under the auspices of the General





Board of Missions, but the Unity conference of 1939 gave Methodism in northern Europe an altered affiliation to the Mother church. Until that time, the work in the Northern European countries had been a branch of the Methodist Episcopal Church, similar to the work in other Central European countries. After World War I, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South had established extensive mission organizations in war torn Europe where no other Methodist churches were established: Belgium, Poland and Czechoslovakia (today's Czech and Slovak Republics).

In addition to the two American Methodist churches, British Methodism, also called Wesleyan Methodism, had made inroads on the European continent with outreaches in French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and German speaking areas. Wesleyan Methodism was organized as part of the British Annual conference. Furthermore, the Methodist church tradition was represented in force by several small churches, which were all related to the United Brethren in Christ and The Evangelical Association. A series of church unions led to the uniting in church structure of the entire Methodist church family on the European continent, which organically is part of the larger United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Church is, by way of her membership in the Methodist church's World council, part of the massive cooperation between churches in the Methodist and Wesleyan traditions.

By the end of World War II, the European continent could organise two central conferences: The German and the Northern European. In addition, there were ten Annual conferences and two Missions conferences from the former German area organised under episcopal supervision of the southeast Jurisdiction of the Methodist Church in the United States.

After World War II, there was an attempt to form a single European central conference. The attempt failed, and in 1954, a central conference for Central and Southern Europe was formed in addition to the other two central conferences, Germany and Northern Europe. The European Council of Central Conferences of the Methodist church was founded after negotiations under the Methodist world conference in Oslo in 1966. In 1980, the name was changed to the European council of the United Methodist Church. Plenary sessions with the British and Irish Methodist churches led to the 1993 formation of the new European Methodist Council, where all Methodist traditions in Europe were united for the first time within the same organization. Affiliates of the European Methodist Council included:





- 1.The consultative conference of the European Methodist churches, which commenced in 1957
- 2.The European Methodist Youth council, and
- 3.The World Federation of Methodist and Uniting church Women - Europe, and The World federation of Methodist and Uniting Women - Britain and Ireland.

In 2016 the member churches of the European Methodist Council signed a Community agreement.

Eurasia

After the dismantling of the Soviet Union, The General Board of Global Ministries initiated a contact with Russian Orthodox Church and Soviet/ Russian Peach Fund to assist in the re-establish education and organize help sending. At the same time several individual initiatives lead to the formation of congregations in several areas within Russia and Ukraine, mostly as the result of new contacts to Methodism in the United States. The first new congregations were established in Moscow, Samary and Yekaterinburg. Methodism was formally re-established in this part of the world in 1992 under the name The United Methodist Mission in The Commonwealth of Independent States, 100 years after the Methodist-Episcopal Mission in Finland and St. Petersburg was organized.

Ukraine

The earliest Methodist movement in Ukraine dates to the late 1920's when two churches in the Transcarpathian region - Uzhhorod and nearby Kamyanytsa - made the decision to affiliate with the Methodists and the Czechoslovakian Methodist Conference began relating to them officially. By 1940 the area fell to the control of Hungary, and by the end of WWII it fell under Russian Occupation. At that time members were forced to become Baptists – the only officially recognized protestant organization of the Soviet regime.

Post Soviet Union

After the fall of the Soviet Union, United Methodists Congregations began to spring up in the former CIS including Ukraine, as small congregations emerged in the Crimean cities of Sevastopol, Simferopol, and Kerch and the northwest-northeast city of Kharkiv.

In 1991, Rüdiger Minor, bishop of the former East Germany Central Conference, was assigned as episcopal coordinator of Methodism in Eurasia.





The General Conference decided in 1992 to make Eurasia a separate Episcopal Area. The General Conference authorized the Northern Europe Central Conference, which had had oversight over the Methodist ministry in the former Soviet countries, to elect a bishop to carry out the work in the new area. With representatives present from the Russian United Methodist churches, the Central Conference of 1993 elected Rüdiger Minor as Bishop of Eurasia, with residence in Moscow. The next step was taken in 1996 when Russia Provisional Annual Conference was formed, which was confirmed by the Central Conference in Pärnu in 1997. Pastoral education was established in Moscow in 1997.

In 2001 Eurasia became an Annual Conference with full rights. The new conference consisted of 70 clergy members and 81 local churches. In 2003 the United Methodist Church in Eurasia was divided into four conferences: The Central Russia Annual Conference consisted of 923 members, 39 clergies and 33 local churches. The Northwest Russia Provisional Annual Conference consisted of 453 members, 21 clergies and 20 local churches. The South Russia-Ukraine-Moldova Provisional Annual Conference consisted of 759 members, 30 clergies and 30 local churches. The East Russia-Kazakhstan Provisional Annual Conference consisted of 416 members, 19 clergies and 14 local churches.

The central conference was, for the first time, held in Moscow in 2005. Ukraine was now separated from the South Russia Provisional Annual Conference to form its own Ukraine and Moldova Provisional Annual Conference.

Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

In 2014 Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine. ~~As of today, October 2016, the conflict still exists. As a consequence, some~~ A few churches from the Ukraine and Moldova provisional annual conference have been were transferred to the South Russia Provisional Annual Conference in 2016. ~~These transfer are due to the special circumstances considered~~ However the transfers were not approved by the Ukraine Moldova Provisional annual conference, which **requested** to be transferred from the Eurasia episcopal area to another episcopal area. After Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, an extra session of the central conference decided to change the borders of the episcopal areas and include Ukraine and Moldova in the Nordic and Baltic episcopal area. Despite the war, the church in Ukraine is caring for internally displaced and continues to develop and expand its ministry.





Global Pandemic

In the beginning of 2020 the entire world was hit by a global pandemic causing far-reaching lockdowns and severe restrictions, which lead the churches to move their ministry to online platforms and explore new approaching to community. After the end of the pandemic the church has experienced a decline in attendance by 30%, in particular the childrens' and youth ministry has been affected - the church is only slowly recovering.

Disaffiliations

Listening to several churches desiring to separate from the denomination due to disagreements on human sexuality, an extra session of the central conference in the spring of 2023 decided to approve a process for local churches to separate from the denomination under certain circumstances and conditions. In the summer of 2023 the entire Estonia district disaffiliated from the connection, and during the following year another two local churches in Norway disaffiliated.

Having followed the process for annual conferences wishing to leave the United Methodist Church, the Central Russia, the Northwest Russia and Belarus Provisional, the South Russia Provisional, and the Eastern Russia and Central Asia Provisional Annual Conferences were given permission by General Conference to disaffiliate and reorganize as an autonomous Methodist Church. The 2025 the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference voted to declare the relationship between the four Eurasia annual conferences and the United Methodist church dissolved.

World War I weakened the connection between Europe and America, thus a substantial independence of continental European Methodism from the Mother church in the United States became necessary. In 1920, the General Conference decided to divide Europe into several episcopal areas. The Northern Europe Episcopal Area, including Methodism in the Nordic countries, was established and put under the supervisions of the Danish Bishop, Anton Bast.

Though Methodism in the North European countries was tied together historically, the new structure meant that the church in this region, to an even greater extent, would forge closer ties and fellowship in order to facilitate their new and greater independence. In 1924, the North Europe Episcopal Area organized as a central conference, and the





Baltic-Slavic Annual Conference became integrated. In 1924, pastoral education for Scandinavian language candidates, which until that time took place in their respective annual conferences, became consolidated at the Nordic Theological Seminary, Överås, in Gothenburg. This common Nordic seminary continued until 1971, when a theological seminary was established in Bergen for Norwegian candidates. In 2008 the Sweden Annual Conference joined the interdenominational Stockholm Theological Seminary, THS, and the pastoral training for Methodist pastors moved from Överås to THS. Pastoral education for the Baltic Area was re-established in 1994, with the opening of the Baltic Methodist Theological seminary in Tallinn.

With the geographic expansion, beginning with the “Glasnost” period in Soviet Union, the name of the Central Conference has changed from Nordic to Northern Europe (1989), and to Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference (2009), which ~~now~~ until 2025 consisted of the two Episcopal Areas - Nordic and Baltic, and the Eurasia Area.

Since World War II, the Central Conference has been led by bishops elected by the Central Conference itself: Theodor Arvidsson of Sweden (elected in 1946); Odd Hagen of Norway (elected 1953); Ole E. Borgen of Norway (elected 1970); Hans Växby of the Finland Swedish conference (elected 1989); Rüdiger Minor of the East Germany Central Conference (elected 1993); Øystein Olsen of Norway (elected 2001, the Nordic and Baltic Area); Hans Växby of the Finland Swedish conference (elected 2005, the Eurasia Area); Christian Alsted of Denmark (elected 2009, the Nordic, and Baltic and Ukraine Area) and Eduard Kheday of Central Russia Annual Conference (elected 2012, the Eurasia Area). ~~Name of new bishop to be inserted~~ **Knut Refsdal of Norway** (elected 2025).

Motion from Ole Birch: CC 25 decides to remove the historical statement from our supplement BoD.

The motion was rejected.

Motion from Veli Lojonen: I move to remove the words «and Russia» from the last headline on the page 154.

The motion was adopted.

Motion from Vesa Tolin: Add «Methodism in» in front of every country regarding their history, pages 157-161.

The motion was rejected.





Motion from Hilde Sanden Bjønnes: Add «for the Nordic, Baltic and Ukraine area» behind Knut Refsdal.

The motion was rejected.

The petition as amended by the focus group was adopted.

15:19 Ecumenical Agreements in the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference

The petition was adopted.

15:20 Educational Standards for Clergy

Jørgen Thaarup gave a presentation.

The petition was adopted.

15.21 Reading Guide to the Book of Discipline to adapt to the context of the central conference.

The petition was adopted.

16. Non-disciplinary petitions – resolutions, motions etc.

16.1 Motion to increase the apportionment percentage to the Central Conference Fund to 1% of the gross salary of all the clergy in the annual conferences.

The motion was adopted.

17. Elections.

The Central Conference Council:

Proposed and elected as listed below.

Denmark: Clergy: Ole Birch, Lay: Bettina Pedersen. Alternates: Jørgen Thaarup, Andreas Morsbøl.





Finland F: Clergy: Jori Brander. Alternate: Veli Loponen

Finland S: Clergy: Sarah Tiainen. Alternate: Catarina Ekman-Niemi-Kaija

Baltic: Clergy: Zinta Zintare LV, Remigijus Matulaitis LT. Alternate: Laine Guzlena LV.

Norway: Clergy: Albert Andersen Gjølstøl, Hilde Marie Øgreid Movafagh. Lay: Karen Kristine Rasmussen, Martin Vestøl. Alternate: Hilde Tveter, Hanne Thorgersen, Steinar Hjerpseth, Svein Veland.

Ukraine: Lay: Kateryna Vuksta. Alternate: Yulia Starodubets

The Northern Europe and Eurasia Yand Children's Council

Motion: We elect the chairs or representatives from children and youth organizations. They will meet online convened for the first meeting by the bishop's assistant.

The motion was adopted

Representatives to the European Methodist Council

Bishop Knut Refsdal, Rev. Sarah Tianien, Dariia Zhukovska

Alternates: Ole Birch, Laine Guzlena

Funds for Mission in Europe

Bishop Knut Refsdal. Alternate: Anne Ng Forster

The Central Conference Judicial Court

Denmark: Clergy: Keld Munk, Lay: Mads Kamp Hansen

Finland: Lay: Adwoa Brewu, alternate: Andreas Forsbäck

Ukraine: Clergy: Lyubomyr Rudko, alternate: Volodmyr Prokip

Norway: Clergy: Steinar Hjerpseth, alternate: Lay: Martin Vestøl

The European Board on Alcohol and Drug Concerns

Karen Brogaard, deacon, Denmark.





The European Lay Seminar:

Vigdis-Merete Rønning (lay Norway).

The World Methodist Council:

Bishop Knut Refsdal, Ingull Grefslie (Norway), Thomas Risager (Denmark).

The Conference on European Chursches

Bishop Knut Refsdal.

The Committee on the Book of Discipline:

Bishop Knut Refsdal, Veli Lopenen (Finland), Jørgen Thaarup (Denmark).

The Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe:

Bishop Knut Refsdal.

18. Information regarding Judicial Court decisions.

Jørgen Thaarup asked if the conference was satisfied with the result of the process concerning Judicial Court decision 2025 - addressing a question raised at the March 18 2023 extra session of the central conference, regarding the eligibility of a delegate from the Northwest Russia and Belarus Provisional Annual Conference, who also was a member of the transitional board of the Global Methodist Church. There was no response from members of the conference.

19. The site for 2029 Central Conference:

The Finland Swedish provisional annual conference and the Finland Finish provisional annual conference welcomed the central conference to Finland in 2029.

The invitation was accepted by acclamation.





20. Other matters

Information was shared on the School of Congregational Development that takes place in Oslo between September 18. and 21. 2025.

21. Closing

Bishop Christian Alsted and Hilde Marie Øgreid Movafagh thanked the outgoing members of the Central Conference Council for their service.

Bishop Christian Alsted thanked the guests for being a part of our conference. He then led us in a closing prayer and declared the 23. regular session of the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference adjourned.





In Memory of Bishop Hans Våxby 1944 - 2025

On Sunday, March 30, Bishop Hans Våxby passed away at the age of 80 after a few weeks of illness.

Bishop Våxby served as a beloved leader in the Nordic and Baltic countries for 12 years, from 1989 to 2001. This was a time of significant expansion following the fall of the Iron Curtain, and Bishop Hans played a leading role in rebuilding the Methodist Church in Latvia and Lithuania after it had been closed for decades during the Soviet occupation. He was also involved in the early restart of the Methodist Church in Russia.

After his term as bishop ended, Hans Våxby returned to pastoral ministry, and he and his wife Kaikka were appointed to Christ Church UMC in Helsinki.

In February 2005, he was elected bishop for the second time, this time overseeing Eurasia (including Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan), a position he held until his retirement in 2012.

Bishop Våxby was known for his rare ability to communicate the Gospel and the Christian way of life in an inspiring, profound, and relevant manner, both in writing and through devotional radio programs. Throughout the years, he was a valued partner in ecumenical relations and dialogue, and he served as an exemplary representative of the Methodist Church.

I vividly remember, when Hans became our bishop – he brought a fresh wind of the Spirit.

I was one the young pastors (27 years old) – and he saw us, he encouraged us, and he trusted us. His teaching and preaching, and his presence with us focused us on Christ and helped us to see and believe, with Christ all things are possible.

Even after retirement, both Hans and Kaikka Våxby remained active, playing leading roles at Christ Church UMC in Helsinki.

With over 55 years of service as a pastor and bishop, Hans Våxby profoundly impacted the lives of thousands. Many appreciated his warm, straightforward leadership and his insightful, Jesus-centered preaching and teaching.





Bishop Hans lived with the assurance of belonging to Jesus Christ, and he passed away peacefully with his wife Kaikka and sons Anssi and Henri by his side. We hold the entire family, which also includes four grandchildren, in our prayers.

Bishop Hans truly was a servant leader, and he served faithfully all the way until the very last weeks of his life. We are many who will thankfully remember him with great joy and affection. The Finland Swedish United Methodist Church, as well as the United Methodist Church in Northern Europe and Eurasia, has lost a great leader and friend. We thank God for the life, ministry, and witness of Bishop Hans Våxby, grateful for the deep and lasting impact he made.

May Bishop Hans Våxby rest in the peace of God and rise in His eternal glory.

Christian Alsted

bishop





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- (A): Nominated by the bishop and elected by the General Conference or The Council of Bishops
- (B): Nominated by the bishop elected by the Central Conference.
- (C): Nominated by the Annual Conferences and elected by the Central Conference
- (D): Nominated by the Central Conference Council elected by the Central Conference
- (E) : Nominated by the annual conferences elected by the Central Conference Council
- (F): Elected by the annual conferences

The way the election has been made is indicated in the directory.





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Alternate: Veli Loponen (clergy)

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Alternate: Catarina Ekman-Niemi-Kaija (lay).

Baltic: Zinta Zintare LV (clergy), Remigijus Matulaitis LT (clergy).

Alternate: Laine Guzlina LV (lay).

Norway: Albert Andersen Gjæstøl (clergy), Hilde Marie Øgreid Movafagh (clergy), Karen Kristine Rasmussen (lay), Martin Vestøl (lay).

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Ukraine: Kateryna Vuksta (lay).

Alternate: Yulia Starodubets (clergy).





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Clergy: Lyubomyr Rudko, alternate: Volodmyr Prokip

Norway: Clergy: Steinar Hjerpseth, alternate: Lay: Martin Vestøl

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The Central and Southern Europe Central Conference committee on investigation

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