

The 23. regular session  
of the  
Northern Europe and  
Eurasia Central Conference



April 2. - 6. 2025  
Copenhagen, Denmark

# Table of contents

“Receive the Holy Spirit” Central Conference 2025 .....	5
Welcome to Copenhagen .....	6
Practical Information .....	7
Addresses for Hotel, Conference and Church .....	7
Transportation.....	7
Parking .....	8
Meals .....	8
Meeting Rooms .....	8
Offerings.....	8
Program Overview .....	9
Program of the Central Conference 2025 .....	10
Agenda.....	12
1 Opening .....	12
2 Approval of the financial report of the Eurasia Episcopal Fund .....	13
3 Motion .....	13
1b Delegates members and official guests .....	17
Delegates .....	17
Members with voice but no vote. ....	18
Official Guests .....	19
1h Plan of Organization and Rules of Order .....	20
Christian Conferencing.....	24
3 Non-disciplinary petition.....	27
4 The laity Address .....	30
Darija, Ukraine. ....	30
Andreas Morsbøl, Denmark. ....	32
Meeli Tankler, Estonia .....	35
Instructions regarding the focus groups .....	39
Focus Groups leaders, secretaries and members. ....	40
Agendas of the Focus Groups .....	41
5a Information Pack on the Election of a New Bishop.....	43
Nomination and election of a new bishop .....	43
The next bishop of the Nordic, Baltic, and Ukraine area .....	45

Specific Responsibilities of Bishops .....	46
Presentation of nominees for episcopacy .....	49
5b1 Thomas Risager .....	50
5b2 Knut Refsdal .....	52
<b>8 Personal report from the bishop 2016-2025 .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>9 Committee on Episcopacy .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>10 Central Conference Council .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>11 Financial Reports.....</b>	<b>75</b>
Financial reports – introduction and notes .....	75
11a The Central Conference Fund .....	77
11b The Episcopal Fund Nordic, Baltic and Ukraine .....	79
11c The Area Fund .....	81
11d The Nordic Means for Theological Education .....	83
11e Auditors Report.....	85
<b>12 Statistical Report .....</b>	<b>87</b>
Norway.....	87
Denmark.....	87
Finland F.....	88
Finland S.....	88
Latvia .....	89
Lithuania .....	89
Ukraine.....	90
<b>13 Ecumenical reports.....</b>	<b>91</b>
13a The Conference of European Churches .....	91
13b The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe .....	92
13c The European Methodist Council 2016-2025.....	94
13d European Commission on Mission .....	95
13e The World Methodist Council.....	96
<b>14 Collective report from our representatives on general agencies.....</b>	<b>98</b>
14a Standing committee on Central Conference Matters .....	98
14b General Commission on Finances and Administration .....	99
14c General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW) .....	101
14d General Board of Global Ministry.....	102
14e General Board of Church and Society .....	112
14f The Connetional Table.....	114
14g Africa University .....	115

14h Commission on the General Conference .....	116
14i Commission on Central Conference Theological Education Fund .....	117
14j United Methodist Communications 2025 .....	118
14k Methodist e-Academy Europe .....	119
<b>15 Disciplinary petitions to the Northern Europe and Eurasia BoD.....</b>	<b>122</b>
15.1 ¶ 347. Transfers—.....	122
15.2 ¶ 404. Provisions for Episcopal Areas .....	124
15.3 ¶ 405. Election and Consecration of Bishops.....	124
15.4 ¶ 541.542 Composition .....	126
15.5 ¶ 543 544. Powers and Duties— .....	127
15.6 ¶ 548. Conference Agencies.....	131
15.7 ¶ <del>549</del> 550. Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Council.....	134
15.8 ¶ 550 551. Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Committee on Episcopacy—.....	138
<b>15.9 ¶ <del>551</del> 552</b> Other central conference work .....	139
<b>15.10 ¶ <del>552</del>.553</b> Apportionments into the Episcopal Fund and the General Administration Fund .....	139
15.11 ¶ 553.554 European Methodist Council .....	140
15.12 ¶ <del>554</del> The future of the United Methodist Church in the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference .....	140
¶ 555 The Baltic Annual Conference .....	140
15.13 ¶ 611. ....	146
15.14 ¶ <b>613</b> . Responsibilities of the annual conference council. ....	147
15.15 ¶ <b>635</b> . Conference Administrative Review Committee .....	147
15.16 ¶ <b>2501</b> . Requirement of the Trust Clause for All Property .....	148
15.17 ¶ <b>2703</b> . Composition of the Committee on Investigation.....	151
15.18 Addition to the Historical Statement.....	153
15:19 Ecumenical Agreements in the NEECC .....	162
15:20 Educational Standards for Clergy .....	163
<i>Rationale: Specifies educational standards for clergy in the central conference.</i>	167
15.21 Reading Guide to the Book of Discipline .....	167
<b>16.1 Motion to increase the apportionment into the Central Conference Fund .....</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>17 Elections.....</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>18 Information regarding Judicial Court Decisions .....</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>The Faith We Sing .....</b>	<b>175</b>

# “Receive the Holy Spirit” Central Conference 2025

Welcome to 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Welcome to all the elected delegates and members of the conference, to the European United Methodist bishops, to our retired bishops, to bishops and leaders from our full communion partner churches, to ecumenical secretaries, to guests from the world wide denomination, and to guests from the annual conferences.

A special welcome to bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank, who is the official guest from the Council of Bishops and will preside at the episcopal election.

Several guests will lead bible study and devotions.

I look forward to meeting delegates and guests, and for us to engage in Christian conferencing discerning Christ’s path for us as United Methodist in Northern Europe and Eurasia.

Due to the expected disaffiliation and upon the request of the four Eurasia annual conferences, the opening session will be in a hybrid format and include: Presentation, the vote to declare the present relationship between the United Methodist Church and the Central Russia, the Northwest Russia and Belarus Provisional, the South Russia Provisional, and the Eastern Russia and Central Asia Provisional Annual Conferences dissolved, and final greetings, prayers and goodbyes.

The four Eurasia annual conferences participating online will then leave the conference to reorganize as an autonomous Methodist church, and our central conference will continue its work.

I will deliver my last episcopal address, and three laypeople will share the laity address.

We will elect a new bishop for the coming eight years.

We will discuss many reports and proposed adaptations to Book of Discipline.

We can look forward to an engaging future oriented central conference.

I am grateful to our host the Denmark annual conference and Jerusalemkirken UMC, Copenhagen. - They will bless us with music and good hospitality.

To all of you, welcome to wonderful Copenhagen!

*Christian Alsted*  
*bishop*

## Welcome to Copenhagen

The Methodist Church in Denmark and the Copenhagen Methodists have been looking forward to greet all the representatives and guests to Copenhagen for the 2025 Central Conference. We hope you will have inspiring and productive days here in our beautiful city. We will try to serve with all the best we have to offer, hospitality, good food, great music and shared faith in the future of our connection.

The Methodist Church in the Copenhagen area consists of Solrød Frikirke situated South of the city, Golgata, a new faith community in Frederiksberg, Jerusalem Church in the center of Copenhagen, and The International Congregation predominantly made up off Ghanaian immigrants.

The ministries of these communities focus on music (African/American gospel) worship with children and parents, small group ministry, ministry with immigrants, scouts and a variety of worship stiles.

Copenhagen is also home to the Methodist Central Mission with both traditional and innovative programs to reach out to people in need.

We all pray that God's grace, the teachings of Jesus Christ, and the wisdom of Holy Spirit will guide your work these busy days and evenings.

Welcome in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

Ole Birch

# Practical Information

## Addresses for Hotel, Conference and Church

Representatives and guests will stay at; CABINN Metro, Arne Jacobsens Allé 2, 2300 København S.

E-mail: metro@cabinn.com. Tlf: (+45) 3246 5700.

Conference meetings will be held at; CABINN Apartments, Arne Jacobsens Allé 4, 2300 København S.

E-mail: apartments@cabinn.com. Tlf: +(45)32465710

Worship will be at Jerusalem Church, Rigensgade 19, 1316 Copenhagen K. E-Mail: koebenhavn@metodistkirken.dk. +45 28866444.

## Transportation

When you arrive at Jerusalem Church and register you will receive an electronic ticket card for the Copenhagen regional trains, S-train, metro and bus services. The card is valid from Wednesday through Sunday and for travel in two zones. This is all you need to travel between the hotel and Jerusalem Church. On Sunday when you go to the airport you need to buy an additional ticket (Danish: tillægsbillet) for one extra zone.

**Important: You must always scan the card at “Check in” when you start your trip and at “Check ud” when you finish your trip.**

There are two train and Metro stations near Jerusalem Church. Nørreport Station has direct Metro and regional train (Oresundtoget) to the Ørestad St. close to our hotel. Østerport St. has direct Øresunds Train to Ørestad St. but with the Metro you need to change at Kongens Nytorv St.

### **Travel from Jerusalem Church to the hotel:**

Walk to Nørreport St. (16 min.). Take the Metro line M1 (Green line) direction Vestamager St. and get off at Ørestad St. Then walk 10 min. to the hotel.

Or:

Walk to Østerport St. (8 min.) Take the Metro line M4 (Blue line) direction København Syd St. or M3 (Red line) direction “via Kongens Nytorv” and get off at the second stop (Kongens Nytorv). Then change to Metro line M1 (Green line) direction Vestamager St. and get off at Ørestad St. Then walk 10 min. to the hotel.

Or:

Walk to Østerport St. (8. Min.) Take The regional train (Oresundstoget) direction København Lufthavn and Sweden. It runs 2-3 times per hour from platform 3. Check [www.rejseplanen.dk](http://www.rejseplanen.dk). The train stops at Ørestad St. Then walk 10 min. to the hotel.

**Travel from the hotel to Jerusalem Church:**

Walk to Ørestad St. Take the Metro line M1 (Green line) direction Vanløse St. get off at Kongens Nytorv St. Change to Metro line M3 or M4 to Østerport St.

Or:

Walk to Ørestad St. Take the regional train "Oresundstoget" direction Helsingør and get off at Østerport St. Then Walk to the church.

**Travel from Jerusalem Church to the airport:**

Walk to Østerport St. Buy the additional ticket. Take the Metro line M4 (Blue line) direction København Syd St., or M3 (Red line) direction "via Kongens Nytorv, and get off at the second stop (Kongens Nytorv). Then change to the Metro line M2 (Yellow line) direction Københavns Lufthavn St. (Copenhagen Airport St.).

**Parking**

The hotel offers parking. If you contact the reception desk at Capinn Apartments and say that you are partaking in our conference the price is 50 D.kr. per day.

**Meals**

Dinner on Wednesday and Friday and lunch reception on Sunday are served at Jerusalem Church. All other meals are served at the Capinn Apartments restaurant.

**Meeting Rooms**

The meeting rooms are situated on the ground floor of Capinn Apartments, next door from the hotel. Walk through the reception, pass the restaurant and turn left.

**Offerings**

Three times during this conferences you will be asked to support the work of God through the United Methodist Church. Wednesday evening, we take up an offer for the work with children and families of Jerusalem Church. Friday evening, we take up an offering for the churches in Los Angeles that was devastated by fire in January. These churches belong to the episcopal area of bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank, who will be preaching. Finally on Sunday morning the offering will be to the Methodist Church in Ukraine.



# Program Overview

## The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference 2025

Time	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7.30		<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Breakfast</b>
08.00		<b>Bible study</b> 1. Kor. 1: 10-25. Bishop Stefan Zürcher	<b>Bible study</b> 1. Kor. 1: 26- 2:5. Bishop Harald Rückert.	<b>Bible study</b> 1. Kor. 2: 6-16 DS Louise Aaen	
08.45		<b>Plenary Session</b> -Opening matters - Final decision on Eurasia leaving the CC.	<b>Plenary</b> : Election of new bishop.	<b>Plenary</b> : Reports from the Focus Groups	Departure for the church
10.00		Coffee/tea	Coffee/tea	Coffee/tea	<b>Worship</b> at The Jerusalem Church.
10.30		-The Episcopal Address -The Lay-peoples Address	<b>Focus Groups</b>	<b>Plenary</b> : Reports from the Focus Groups	Consecration of the new bishop. Preacher: New Bishop.
12.00		Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	“Receive the Holy Spirit. Joh. 20: 1923.
13.30		<b>13.00 Meeting of focus group leaders and secretaries.</b> <b>13.30 Plenary</b> -The report of the CCC -The future of UMC in Europe. Contributions from European bishops	<b>Focus Groups</b>	<b>Plenary</b> Reports from the Focus Groups	<b>Reception/Lunch</b> at the Jerusalem Church.
15,30		Coffee/tea	Coffee/tea	Coffee/tea	
16.00	<b>Registration</b> at the Jerusalem Church.	<b>Presentation</b> of the Candidates for Episcopacy. Questions in plenary. Interview by delegations.	<b>Focus Groups (Final)</b> 17.00 Trip to Copenhagen City. Guided walk around the City.	<b>Plenary</b> Reports from the Focus Groups Elections	
18.00	<b>Dinner at the church</b>	<b>Dinner</b>	<b>20.00 Dinner at the church</b>	<b>Dinner</b>	
18.45	<b>Introduction</b> to the Central Conference.				
19.30	<b>Opening Worship</b> Preacher: Bishop Christian Alsted.	<b>Focus Groups</b> (19.30-21.00) <b>The Episcopal and Laity addresses.</b> Evening prayer. Rev. Jonathan Hustler.	<b>21.00 Gospel celebration</b> at the Church. Preacher: Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank	<b>20.00 Celebrating</b> the ministry of bishop Christian Alsted.	
21.00	Coffee, then departure for the hotel		22.00 Departure for the hotel.		

# Program of the Central Conference 2025

## **Wednesday April 2.**

Jerusalem Church will be open from 16.00 and from 18 to 19 we will serve dinner.

**At 18.45 you can participate in an introduction to the work of the central conference.**

At 19.30 pm we will celebrate the opening worship together. Bishop Christian Alsted will be preaching, and the gospel choirs Kefas and Jacobs Ladder will sing with us. Offering to work with children and families in Jerusalem Church.

After the service there will be coffee/tea and then departure for the hotel.

## **Thursday April 3.**

After breakfast we start our work with a bible study by bishop Stefan Zürcher from the South and Central Europe Central Conference.

The first session of the morning is dedicated to opening matters and the final farewell to the four Eurasian annual conferences.

The next items will be the main reports of the bishop the laity, and input from the bishops of the other European central conferences.

Note that if you have been appointed as leader or secretary of a focus group you are called to at short briefing on your tasks at 13.00.

In the late afternoon the committee on episcopacy will present the candidates for Fridays election of a new bishop. The presentation is scheduled like this:

- Personal presentation by the candidates (A total of 30 min).
- Prepared questions in plenary (30 min).
- Interview by delegations (3x20 min. in separate rooms). We ask the delegations to contact Meeli Tankler if they wish to make use of this opportunity. [mtankler@gmail.com](mailto:mtankler@gmail.com).

After dinner the Focus Groups will meet for the first time and discuss the addresses that were given during the day.

The day ends with a devotion by Revd. Dr Jonathan Hustler from the Methodist Church in Britan.

## **Friday April 4.**

After breakfast we have bible study with bishop Harald Rückert from the German Central Conference.

The first session of the day is dedicated to the election of a new bishop and will be led by the representative of the Council of Bishops, bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank.

The rest of the day we work in focus groups.

At 5 pm we gather in groups to go to Copenhagen for guided walks around the old city center. We end up back at Jerusalem Church for dinner at 8 pm, followed by a gospel celebration and a sermon by bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank. Offering to the churches devastated by fire in Los Angeles.

### **Saturday April 5.**

After breakfast we have bible study with Rev. Louise Aaen.

Most of the sessions of the day are dedicated to working in plenary with the reports from the focus groups. Towards the end of the day, we will elect members of the Central Conference Council and representatives for a number of boards for the next quadrennium.

Dinner is at 18.00 and immediately after dinner we depart for Jerusalem Church, where we gather for an evening program to celebrate the ministry of bishop Christian Alsted.

### **Sunday April 6.**

After breakfast we depart for Jerusalem Church, you must bring your luggage. Worship with consecration of our new bishop begins at 10.00. Please be ready a few minutes before so as not to disturb the possession. Offering to the Methodist Church in Ukraine.

After the worship we have a reception in honor of the new bishop. The reception ends at 2 pm. If you are going to Copenhagen Airport, remember to buy an additional one zone ticket (tillægsbillet).

THE END

# Agenda

The 23rd regular session of the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference

## 1 Opening

- a. Welcome
- b. Roll call
- c. Quorum and the bar of the conference
- d. Chairs: Bishop Christian Alsted, bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank
- e. Election of other officers:
  - i. Secretary: Ole Birch
  - ii. Assistant secretary: Ingerid Hoggen

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

- f. Elections
  - i. Tellers:

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

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

- g. Presentation of guests – greetings are given throughout the conference -
- h. Plan of organization and Rules of Order
- i. Approval of agenda
- j. Election of officers of the Focus Groups

### Focus Group 1

1. Chair: Jenny Jansson FS.
2. Secretary: Andreas Morsbøl DK.

### Focus Group 2

3. Chair: Audun Westad NO.
4. Secretary: Veli Loponen 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

(only available online)

### 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.**

- k. Introduction
- l. 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.
- m. Greeting bishop Christian Alsted
- n. Greeting bishop Eduard Khegay
- o. Greeting and prayer bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank

### 4. **Addresses**

- a. The Episcopal Address
- b. The Laity Address

### 5. **Episcopal Election**

- a. Presentation of candidates for Episcopacy
- b. Hearing
- c. Episcopal Election

### 6. **Christian Conferencing in Focus Groups**

### 7. **Reporting from the Focus Groups**

- a. The Episcopal Address – debate based on reports from the Focus Groups
- b. The Laity Address – debate based on reports from the Focus Groups

#### **c. Report Focus Group 1**

##### **Addresses**

- 1. The Episcopal Address
- 2. The Laity Address

##### **Reports and motions**

**d. Report Focus Group 2**

**Addresses**

1. The Episcopal Address
2. The Laity Address

**Reports and motions**

**e. Report Focus Group 3**

**Addresses**

1. The Episcopal Address
2. The Laity Address

**Reports and motions**

**f. Report Focus Group 4**

**Addresses**

1. The Episcopal Address
2. The Laity Address

**Reports and motions**

**8. Personal report from the bishop**

**9. Report from the committee on Episcopacy**

**10. Report from the Central Conference Council**

**11. Financial reports – covering 2017-2023**

- a. The Central Conference Fund
- b. The Episcopal Fund Nordic, Baltic and Ukraine
- c. The Area Fund
- d. The Nordic Means for Theological Education
- e. Auditor Report

**12. Statistical report – covering 2017-2023**

**13. Ecumenical reports**

- a. The Conference of European Churches
- b. The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe
- c. The European Methodist Council
- d. European Commission on Mission
- e. The World Methodist Council

**14. Collective report from our representatives on general agencies**

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

15.1 ¶ 347. Transfers

- 15.2 ¶ 404. Provisions for Episcopal Areas
- 15.3 ¶ 405. Election and Consecration of Bishops
- 15.4 ¶ ~~541~~.542 Composition
- 15.5 ¶ ~~543~~ 544. Powers and Duties
- 15.6 ¶ 548. Conference Agencies
- 15.7 ¶ ~~549~~ 550. Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Council.
- 15.8 ¶ ~~550~~ 1. Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Committee on Episcopacy
- 15.9 ¶ ~~551~~ 552 Other central conference work
- 15.10 ¶ ~~552~~.553 Apportionments into the Episcopal Fund and the General Administration Fund
- 15.11 ¶ ~~553~~.554 European Methodist Council
- 15.12 ¶ 555 The Baltic Annual Conference
- 15.13 ¶ 611. (Names of Annual Conference Councils).
- 15.14 ¶ 613. Responsibilities of the annual conference council.
- 15.15 ¶ 635. Conference Administrative Review Committee
- 15.16 ¶ 2501. Requirement of the Trust Clause for All Property
- 15.17 ¶ 2703. Composition of the Committee on Investigation
- 15.18 Addition to the Historical Statement
- 15:19 Ecumenical Agreements in the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference
- 15:20 Educational Standards for Clergy
- 15.21 Reading Guide to the Book of Discipline to adapt to the context of the central conference

**16. Non-disciplinary petitions – resolutions, motions etc.**

- a. Motion to increase the apportionment percentage to the Central Conference Fund

**17. Elections.**

**18. Information regarding Judicial Court decisions.**

**19. The site for 2029 Central Conference:**

**20. Other matters**

**21. Closing**





## 1b Delegates members and official guests

Roll Call

### Delegates

#### **Denmark clergy**

Jørgen Thaarup

Thomas Risager

Louise Aaen

#### **Denmark lay**

Shantii Digebjerg

Andreas Morsbøl

Jonatan Steinvig

#### **Norway clergy**

Knut Refsdal

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

Magnus Løvland

Anders Isnes

Camilla Garn Røed

Ingerid Hoggen

Ove Braathen

Sven Tore Dreyer Fredriksen

#### **Finland S clergy**

Sarah Tiainen

Leif Göte Björklund

#### **Finland S lay**

Jenny Jansson

Thomas Westerbom

#### **Finland F clergy**

Veli Loponen

Jori Brander

Mika Partanen

#### **Finland F lay**

Säde Loponen

Vesa Tolin

Kreetta Heiskari

**Baltic clergy**

Edgars Sneiders  
Remigijus Matulaitis  
Zinta Dzintara

**Baltic lay**

Ināra Avotina  
Meeli Tankler  
Kristina Matulaitienė

**Ukraine clergy**

Yulia Starodubets  
Oleg Starodubets

**Ukraine lay**

Dariia Zhukovska  
Eugenia Fedorova

**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

**Central Russia clergy**

Sergey Nikolaev  
Olga Kobzeva

**Central Russia lay**

Irina Margulis  
Aleksy Voronov

**South Russia clergy**

Alexandr Pererva  
Nadezhda Kiseleva

**South Russia lay**

Irina Mitina  
Natalin Nizhegorodova

Members with voice but no vote.

**Members of Central Conference Council**

Rev. Ole Birch.  
Bettina Pedersen.

Per-Endre Bjørnevik.  
Rev. Ingull Grefslie.  
Rev. Svein Veland.  
Sergei Pugachev.  
Svetlana Tsoy.

**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.

**Delegates from the Uniting Church of Sweden**

Rev. Karin Wiborn, Church Leader.  
Rev. Bengt Ekelund.

**Official Guests**

**All days**

Bishop Hans Växby, NEECC. (retired).  
Bishop Øystein Olsen NEECC. (retired).  
Bishop Patrick Streif, South and Central Europe. (retired).  
Bishop Harald Rückert, Germany. (retired).  
Bishop Stefan Zurcher, South and Central Europe.  
Bishop Werner Philipp, Germany.  
Rev. Jonathan Hustler, Secretary of Conference, The Methodist Church in Britain.  
Rev. Dr. Aleze Fulbright, Secretary of the General Conference.  
Rev. Øyvind Helliesen, Judicial Council.  
Üllas Tankler, Regional Secretary Europe General Board of Global Ministry.

**Saturday and Sunday**

Bishop Thomas Reinholdt Rasmussen, Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Denmark.  
Bishop Matti Repo, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.  
Bishop Sunniva Gulver, Church of Norway.  
Rev. Henrik Erhard Hermansen, General Secretary Christian Council of Norway.  
Rev. Emil Bjørn Hilton Saggau, General Secretary National Council of Churches in Denmark.

## 1h Plan of Organization and Rules of Order

From the days of John Wesley, the “People called Methodist” have gathered for Christian conferencing. The early Methodists, even as they attended to practical needs of the movement, focused primarily on spiritual matters. The spiritual affairs of the Church and its mission are always before the body whether or not they are apparent in the passions of debate on temporal concerns. Through Christian conferencing the Church comes together, seeking unity in the midst of diversity, always desiring to know the mind of Christ.

The purpose of the Plan of Organization and the Rules of Order is to help us as the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference to discern God’s will and to strive for Christ-like wisdom in all of our decisions.

### Organization

1. **Presiding officers** – The bishops of the Central Conference. Other United Methodist bishops present may be asked to preside by the Presidium.
2. **Secretary** – Secretary and assistant secretary/secretaries are elected at the opening of the conference.
3. **Language** – The conference language is English. Delegates are expected to be able to understand and speak English. With the assistance of other delegates translation from a delegate’s first language into English and vice versa may be possible.
4. **Focus groups** - there shall be focus groups to whom all properly submitted petitions and reports shall be assigned. The presidium of the Central Conference Council shall set the number of focus groups and the assignment of petitions and reports to those committees. Officers of the focus groups are elected by the Central Conference on the nomination of the presidium of the Central Conference Council. Members are assigned to the focus groups by the presidium of the Central Conference Council.
5. **Meeting of focus groups** – all focus groups shall meet at a time stated in the program of the central conference and must finish their business before 17.00 on the afternoon before last day with plenary session.
6. **Unfinished business** – all un-finished business is referred to the Central Conference Council.
7. **Motions involving expenditure of unbudgeted funds** - any actions proposed to the Central Conference plenary involving expenditure of unbudgeted funds must include a plan for funding. If no plan for

funding is included the matter will be referred to the Central Conference Council for consideration.

8. **Publishing of the 2025 Northern Europe and Eurasia Book of Discipline and of the minutes of the 2025 Central Conference** – The Central Conference will upon a motion from the Central Conference Council decide how the 2025 Northern Europe and Eurasia Book of Discipline and how the Minutes of the 2025 Central Conference shall be published.

### **Election of bishop**

9. Nomination and election for the episcopacy – The Central Conference follows the provisions of the NEECC 2016-supplement to The Book of Discipline ¶ 404 and 405 (after Judicial Court Decisions no 2023-1 and 2023-2), and The Book of Discipline ¶ 543. The following procedure is approved by the Central Conference Council:
  10. Presentation of nominees. All nominations, when submitted to the Central Conference Committee on Episcopacy, shall be accompanied by a presentation of the candidate in writing – half a page A4 (500 words, 30 lines). The chairperson of the Committee must approve the presentation before further distribution and obtain a curriculum vitae and a picture from the nominees.
  11. 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.
  12. The nominees will be presented in a press release together with pictures sent out from the bishop's office in Copenhagen.
  13. Nominations, including presentations submitted before 31 December 2024, will be included in the pre-conference material. The Northern Europe United Methodist magazines will follow the nomination process on their own initiative from a journalistic perspective. Nominators as well as nominees can make themselves available for additional information. At the Central Conference
  14. Nominators shall, after discussion with the Central Conference Committee on Episcopacy, make it possible for the nominees to be present at the central conference.
  15. A public hearing will take place at the Central Conference, and all annual conference delegations will have the opportunity to interview each candidate.
  16. Debate and election speeches are allowed.

17. Election is by written ballot and takes place in a session set by the central conference.
18. A bishop assigned by the Presidium presides at the election.
19. Tellers assigned by the conference will count the votes.
20. The ballot is closed and personal. Delegates cannot be bound to vote for any specific nominee.
21. Two thirds of given and valid votes are necessary to elect a bishop.

## **Rules of order**

### **1. Members of the conference**

- a. Elected clergy and lay delegates shall have the right to speak, petition and vote on all matters.
- b. Members of the Central Conference Council who are not delegates shall only have the right to speak.
- c. Official guests of the Central Conference can be granted the right to speak by the plenary.

### **2. Opening Matters – at the opening of the conference:**

- a. A roll call is made, and the quorum and the bar of the conference are set.
- b. Officers are elected
- c. Tellers are elected
- d. A Plan of Organization and Rules of Order is approved
- e. Officers of the focus groups are elected.
- f. The agenda is approved

### **3. Time limits for nominations and petitions – The deadline for nominations and petitions is set by the Central Conference Council.**

### **4. Speech**

- a. A delegate who wishes to speak raises his/her numbered voting sign. When he/she is recognized by the chair, he/she goes to the nearest microphone.
- b. The delegate begins his/her speech by stating name and conference, and his/her business. “I wish to speak in favor off...” “I wish to speak against...” “I wish to ask a question...” “I wish to comment....”

### **5. Length of speech**

- a. No delegate shall speak for longer than three minutes, unless that time is extended by the body. Time of translation shall not count against the three minutes' limit.
- b. Motions shall be presented within the limit of three minutes.
- c. For presentations the time must be agreed on by the presiding officer.
- d. Each delegate can speak twice on a matter; the second speech shall be no longer than two minutes.
- e. The three-minute rule on delegate's speeches may be amended by a majority vote of the body at any time and for any length of time.

#### **6. Point of order**

A delegate wishing to raise a point of order shall address the presiding officer and say "Point of order..." The presiding officer shall then direct the delegate raising a point of order to state the point as briefly as possible, citing the rule invoked in the point of order. The delegate shall not presume to decide the question or argue the point. A point of order is decided by the presiding officer without debate unless in doubtful cases the presiding officer submits the question to the body for advice or decision.

#### **7. Business procedure** - the presenters from the focus groups move:

- a. Reports
  - i. To receive the report and add it to the minutes
  - ii. To receive the report with recommendations
  - iii. To receive the report and to refer it to the annual conferences and/or to the Central Conference Council for further consideration.
  - iv. To refer the report to the reporting entity or to the Central Conference Council
- b. Motions/petitions
  - i. To dismiss the motion
  - ii. To adopt the motion.
  - iii. To adopt the motion amended by the focus group
  - iv. To reject the motion
  - v. To refer the matter to the Central Conference Council

#### **8. Motions/petitions** – the two terms are used interchangeably

- a. A motion is a request that something be done or that something is the opinion or wish of the group.
- b. All motions concerning reports and amendments to petitions must be delivered in writing and signed to the conference secretary.
- c. Only one motion should be placed before the group at one time. It is debatable and amendable.
- d. The presiding officer re-states the motion before the plenary votes.

#### **9. Conclusion of the debate**

- a. The presiding officer has the right to give notice of the conclusion of the debate. This means that all delegates who wish to speak must show this by lifting their voting card before the end of the next speech.

Before the conclusion of a debate the presiding officer shall restate the motion,

- b. Further amendments cannot be made after the conclusion of the debate.

#### **10. Voting**

- a. Voting is by voice – “aye/no”; by show of voting card; or by written ballot
- b. Voting by written ballot must take place if at least one delegate requires it.
- c. Unless the provisions of the Book of Discipline require otherwise votes are decided by simple majority, meaning that more than 50% of the votes are in favor of the motion, delegates abstaining from voting are included in this calculation.

#### **11. Motion to reconsider**

A motion to reconsider a decision previously made at the 2016 Central Conference can be made, however only by a delegate who previously voted on the prevailing side. The motion is not debatable, and it requires 2/3 majority to pass.

### **Christian Conferencing**

Charged with oversight of the church, United Methodists from across half of the world are coming together for five days in Copenhagen, Denmark to join in Christian Conferencing before the Triune God, discerning God’s way for the small part of the kingdom we affectionately call the United Methodist Church.



## **This is who we are**

The Methodist Conference began when John Wesley invited a small number of preachers in the connection to join him in discerning God's will for the movement. They utilized experiences from their classes and bands for the purpose of helping the participants to grow in their relationship to Jesus Christ and in their walk with him.

Wesley developed a few basic principles to guide the conferencing, based on questions from the classes but applied to the task of the preachers: What to teach? How to teach? What to do? In this way they addressed content, method and strategy. "Christian Conference" on the American shores came to inform life *at every level*, functioning (1) to animate and shape governance, (2) to enliven and 'discipline' all gatherings of those who claimed the Methodist name, and (3) to encourage evangelistic outreach to those needing the Gospel of every race, nationality and color. These three basic practices in more denominational parlance constituted polity, unity and revival—that was to be conference for Methodism.

When we gather in conference in each charge, annual conference, jurisdictional and central conference, or every 4 years on a worldwide level as the General Conference we apply the same principles. Our purpose is to make certain the connection remains true to its calling as we seek to focus on what God is doing in the world and to renew and nurture our commitment to take part in God's mission.

At Central Conference we collectively exercise leadership of the church in Northern Europe and Eurasia through Christian Conferencing. This implies that Christian Conferencing includes all we do at Central Conference and is not just a method or process used at certain times on specific issues.

## **What do we mean by Christian Conferencing?**

Christian Conferencing is so much more than polite disagreement or mere civility in the midst of controversy. It is not a feel-good way of being together nor has it always been productive of embracing one another fully as brother or sister. Christian Conferencing is a way of being church in the world shaped by scripture and growing together in worship, prayer and conversation. It is a commitment to listen, discern and grow together.

Christian Conferencing is a means of grace which implies that God is always present in this practice. God conveys grace to us as we take spiritual, theological and practical counsel together and engage in an intentional and prayerful dialogue. We look and listen for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

## **It is challenging**

Discerning God's will has always presented a challenge to the church. We learn from the New Testament that even in the earliest days of the church

there were tensions, disagreement and conflict over issues the Christian movement was facing.

Today tension can build when United Methodists engage in conversation and decision making, particularly when we speak about ideas and subjects about which we feel strongly. We can get irritated and even angry at someone who doesn't see things our way. We can begin to see each other as opponents rather than brothers and sisters in Christ. Wesley was well aware of the challenges related to conferring on all issues in the life of the church, and especially on matters about which we hold strong convictions. He said:

*Are we convinced how important and how difficult it is to order our conversation right?*

*Is it always in grace?*

*Seasoned with salt?*

*Meet to minister grace to the hearers?*

*Do we not converse too long at a time? Is not an hour at a time commonly enough?*

*Would it not be well to plan our conversation beforehand?*

*To pray before and after it?*

(Wesley, Works, 10:856-857)

While we tend to perceive decision-making as a primary purpose of our conferencing, the practice of Christian Conferencing is more occupied with the process and spiritual discipline leading to a conclusion. Christian Conferencing may even lead us to put matters aside until they are picked up again at an appointed time. From beginning to end Christian Conferencing in the Wesleyan tradition is to grow together in holiness as disciples.

### **Many different minds**

The delegates that form the 2016 Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference comprise a highly diverse assembly. Across the connection delegates represent a wide variety of knowledge, experience, concern and perspective. The spiritual, social and theological discourse in Kazakhstan, Russia, Latvia and Norway is not the same. Even on the same episcopal area, there is a richness in variety. This implies that any pre-conceived perception and pre-formulated theory must be put aside and seen as antagonistic if it prevents delegates from listening to one another - a necessary task even when others hold a position that is diametrically opposite to one's own.

### **Becoming a community of faith**

Discerning God's way for the church must be a shared desire as it is a shared responsibility if we are to be a community of faith during our time here in Copenhagen. In the midst of our many conversations in committees and in plenary we must keep an open mind and listen for God's guidance, realizing the Holy Spirit may convey new insight and deeper understanding as delegates from our worldwide connection share insights and perspectives.

We pray and expect that what individually we see only dimly may become clearly visible as we engage in Christian Conferencing.

### **Summary**

As we begin to engage in Christian Conferencing it is important to remember:

1. Christian conferencing is according to John Wesley a means of grace—which implies that God is always present in this practice and conveys grace to us as we engage in it.
2. The purpose of Christian Conferencing is to grow together in holiness as disciples.
3. Through Christian Conferencing we seek to discern God’s voice through sharing insights with each other.
4. Christian Conferencing is not polite disagreement or mere civility in the midst of controversy. We are to speak honestly, openly and respectfully with one another—speaking and telling the truth in love.
5. Christian Conferencing should be carefully planned.
6. Christian Conferencing is a process and a spiritual practice which does not necessarily have to lead to a conclusion. A matter can be put aside and rest until we pick it up at an appointed time.
7. Christian Conferencing should always be in a spirit of prayer.
8. Christian Conferencing as a means of grace is part of our Methodist heritage and a practice we should celebrate and employ.

*They who ‘walk after the Spirit’ are also led by him into all holiness of conversation. Their speech is ‘always in grace, seasoned with salt’ with the love and fear of God. No corrupt communication comes out of their mouth, but (only) that which is good; that which is ‘to the use of edifying’ which is ‘meet to minister grace to the hearers’. And herein likewise do they exercise themselves day and night to do only the things which please God; in all their outward behavior to follow him who ‘left us an example that we might tread in his steps’; in all their intercourse with their neighbor to walk in justice, mercy, and truth; and ‘whatsoever they do’, in every circumstance of life, to ‘do all to the glory of God.’*

(Wesley, Works, 1:236)

## **3 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.

## 4 The laity Adress

Darija, 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.

—

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 felt 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 un-reasonable 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 Remmel 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.

# Instructions regarding the focus groups

First a big “thank you” that you are serving the Body of Christ in this important role! Here are the tasks we ask you to perform.

## Leader

**Your first job is to facilitate the conversation of the group.**

- Let the members introduce themselves to the group.
- Present the agenda items
- Help the group focus on the issues.
- Help the more silent members share their opinions.
- Help the group get the job done within the allocated time.

**Your second job is to help the group make decisions.**

When working with a report the group must come to a conclusion and report this to the plenary according to the “Plan of Organization and Rules of Order” of the CC.

*Business procedure - the presenters from the focus groups move:*

*a. Reports, including financial statements/reports.*

- *To receive the report and add it to the minutes*
- *To receive the report with recommendations*
- *To receive the report and to refer it to the annual conferences and/or to the Central Conference Council for further consideration.*
- *To refer the report to the reporting entity or to the Central Conference Council*

*b. Motions/petitions*

- *To dismiss the motion*
- *To adopt the motion.*
- *To adopt the motion as amended by the focus group.*
- *To refer the matter to the Central Conference Council*

## Secretary

**Your first job is to record the decisions of the group.**

Please create a new word-document of your minutes and name it “minutes of working Group number?”. Note that we do not want minutes of conversations. We need the decisions and motivations only.

If your focus group works with amendments to the Book of Discipline, and wishes to make changes to the proposed amendments, we need the full text of the original amendment (it can be found on the central conference website

[www.umc-ne.org](http://www.umc-ne.org)) with your changes presented like this: Deleted text is marked with a line through the text. Added text with a line under the text.

**Your second job is to take the minutes to the secretariat of the Central Conference.**

Send your minutes to [ole.birch@metodistkirken.dk](mailto:ole.birch@metodistkirken.dk) no later than Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> at 5. pm.

## Focus Groups leaders, secretaries and members.

### **Focus Group 1. Reports concerning our Central Conference and the Council.**

Leader: Jenny Jansson FS. Secretary: Andreas Morsbøl DK.

Members: Jørgen Thaarup DK, Knut Refsdal NO, Helen Byholt Lovelace NO, Jan Magne Linnsund NO, Magnus Løvland NO, Jori Brander FF, Edgars Sneiders BT, Meeli Tankler BT, Eugenia Fedorova UA, Ingull Grefslie NO.

### **Focus Group 2. Reports from Boards and Agencies + Europe.**

Leader: Audun Westad NO. Secretary: Veli Loponen FF.

Members: Thomas Risager DK, Frøydis Grinna NO, Camilla Garn Røed NO, Leif Göte Björklund FS, Vesa Tolin FF, Kristina Matulaitienė BT, Yulia Starodubets UA, Bettina Pedersen DK, Jon Erik Bråthen NO.

### **Focus Group 3. Ecumenical Reports + Europe.**

Leader: Shanti Digebjerg DK. Secretary: Ola Westad NO.

Members: Jonatan Steinvig DK, Hilde Sanden-Bjønnes NO, Ingerid Hoggen NO, Sarah Tiainen FS, Säde Loponen FF, Zinta Dzintara BT, Oleg Starodubets UA, Svein Veland NO. Remigijus Matulaitis BT, Anders Isnes NO.

### **Focus Group 4. Reports on the Episcopal Ministry.**

Leader: Christina Thaarup NO. Secretary: Kreetta Heiskari FF.

Members: Louise Aaen DK, Hilde Marie Øgreid Movafagh NO, Sven Tore Dreyer Fredriksen NO, Thomas Westerbom FS, Mika Partanen FF, Ināra Avotina BT, Dariia Zhukovska UA, Per-Endre Bjørnevik NO, Steinar Hjerpseth NO, Ove Braathen NO.



# Agendas of the Focus Groups

Thursday evening all groups work on Laity and Episcopal Address. Friday, see below.

## **Focus Group 1. Reports concerning our Central Conference**

### **Agenda Items**

- 10 Report of the Central Conference Council (except the last part on The Future of our Central Conference)
- 11a Central Conference Fund
- 11c Area Fund
- 11d Nordic Theological Means
- 11e Auditing report
- 15.4 BoD ~~541~~ 542 Composition
- 15.5 BoD ~~543~~ 544. Powers and Duties
- 15.7 BoD ~~549~~ 550. Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Council.
- 15.8 BoD ~~550~~ 551. Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Committee on Episcopacy
- 15.9 BoD ~~551~~ 552 Other central conference work
- 15.20 Educational Standards
- 16a Motion to increase the apportionment percentage to the Central Conference Fund
- 

## **Focus Group 2. Reports from Boards and Agencies + Europe**

### **Agenda items**

- 10 “The Future of our Central Conference” last part of the CCC report.
- 14 Standing committee On Central Conference Matters.
- 14 General Commission on Finance and Administration.
- 14 General Commission on the Status and Role of Women.
- 14 General Board of Global Ministry
- 14 General Board of Church and Society
- 14 Connnetional Table
- 14 Africa University
- 14 Commission on the General Conference
- 14 Commission on Central Conference Theological Education Fund
- 14 United Methodist Communication.
- 15.6 BoD 548. Conference Agencies
- 15.10 BoD ~~552~~ 553 Apportionments, the Episcopal Fund and the General Administration Fund

- 15.18 BoD ¶ 2501. Requirement of the Trust Clause for All Property.

### **Focus Group 3. Ecumenical Reports + Europe**

#### **Agenda items**

- 10 “The Future of our Central Conference” last part of the CCC report.
- 13 Conference of European Churches
- 13 World Methodist Council
- 13 European Methodist Council
- 13 Community of Protestant Churches in Europe
- 15.1 BoD 347 Transfers
- 15.11 BoD ~~553~~ 554 European Methodist Council
- 15.12 BoD 555 The Baltic Annual Conference
- 15.13 BoD 611 (Names of Annual Conference Councils)
- 15.14 BoD 613. Responsibilities of the annual conference council.
- 15.19 Ecumenical Agreements in the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference

### **Focus Group 4. Reports on the Episcopal Ministry**

#### **Agenda items**

- 8 Bishops personal report
- 9 Report on the Committee on Episcopacy
- 11. b. Episcopal Fund
- 11. e. Auditing report
- 15.2 BoD 404. Provisions for Episcopal Areas
- 15.3 BoD 405. Election and Consecration of Bishops
- 15.15 BoD 635. Conference Administrative Review Committee
- 15.17 BoD 2703. Composition of the Committee on Investigation
- 15.18 Historical Statement
- 15.21 Reading Guide

# 5a Information Pack on the Election of a New Bishop

## Nomination and election of a new bishop

### **The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference 2025**

Paragraph 405 of The Northern Europe and Eurasia supplement to the Book of Discipline amended after the Judicial Court Decisions no 2023-1 and 2023-2 para 405 and 547.

#### ¶ 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 United Methodist Church in Northern Europe and Eurasia 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) A nomination must be made distinctively for one of the two areas. c) 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. d) 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. e) The Northern Europe and European United Methodist magazines and web pages will follow the nomination process on their own initiative from a journalistic perspective. Both nominators and nominees can make themselves available for additional information. f) Nominators, in cooperation with the central conference committee on episcopacy, shall make it possible for the nominees to be present at the central conference. g) A public presentation and hearing will be held at the central conference. h) Debate and election speeches are allowed until the nomination is closed.

4. Process—a) Election is by closed ballot and 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 bishops 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.

## The next bishop of the Nordic, Baltic, and Ukraine area

Statement by the Committee on Episcopacy concerning the 2025 episcopal election.

Being the bishop of our area is a challenging ministry and the unique historical, geographical, missional, and cultural circumstances of this area puts high demands on the capacity of our episcopal leader. The Committee on Episcopacy has developed this list of “tasks and challenges” to supplement the general description of the “Specific Responsibilities of Bishops” that can be found in the 2016 Book of Discipline § 414-416 (page 339). We encourage all nominators and nominees to study these paragraphs prayerfully, but also to consider the specific leadership expectations that is connected to the issues in the list below.

### **Tasks and challenges of our future bishop**

#### 1. Lead the church in mission.

Through all the annual conferences of our area the United Methodist Church is working hard to find forms of ministry that can bring growth to people’s life, to local churches and to our connection. We hope for a bishop that will use his or her office to strengthen this effort, to encourage pastors, deacons, and lay workers, and to help us love God and our ministry anew.

#### 2. Leadership in different cultures

The bishop is an important spiritual and administrative leader in different church cultures and six different countries. To be cross culturally competent is just the beginning of this challenge. The bishop must work with and through local leaders and understand their challenges as well. He or she must get to know the local culture and how it influences the ministry of the UMC. A certain level of leadership adaptation to local traditions is necessary. This daunting task also includes being the front figure for our annual conferences in their ecumenical contexts and in response to issues in the different societies. We expect the bishop to be a leader of the highest integrity and accountability who keeps a good balance between his work in and for the different annual conferences.

Apart from his or her own native language the bishop must be fluent in oral and in written English. If the bishop speaks more languages, that will be a clear advantage.

#### 3. A leader for all

From the October 2023 consultation in Riga, we have a momentum towards mutual recognition between different theological positions. Throughout the episcopal area there are different theological understandings of several topics among those, human sexuality. We wish and hope to be able to live together in one church, where each Annual Conference can decide its own policy on

matters relating to human sexuality. All our people independent of their theological position need to know that their ministry is welcomed and appreciated in the church. We need a bishop that supports this mutual respect and helps us find a way forward together.

#### 4. A European leader

The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference is approaching a situation where the annual conferences no longer have the number of pastors required to be a full central conference. Our next bishop must, together with the central conference council, work with the other European central conferences and their bishops, and the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, to create proposals for a new structure for the UMC in Europe, possibly including other methodist churches. Detailed knowledge of the connectional structure of the UMC will be of great benefit to our future bishop.

#### 5. Leading in a time of war and humanitarian crisis

Since April 2022 our episcopal area contains the Ukraine and Moldova Provisional Annual Conference. Our bishop is therefore the leader of a church in a war-torn part of Europe. The next bishop must be prepared to offer spiritual and practical leadership under these very troublesome circumstances. We pray that the war will end and the efforts of rebuilding the church and its ministry can be expanded, also by the ministry of our new bishop.

## Specific Responsibilities of Bishops

United Methodist Church – 2016 Book of Discipline, section IV.

### **¶ 414.** *Leadership—Spiritual and Temporal*

1. To lead and oversee the spiritual and temporal affairs of The United Methodist Church which confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and particularly to lead the Church in its mission of witness and service in the world.
2. To strengthen the local church, giving spiritual leadership to both laity and clergy; and to build relationships with people of local congregations of the area.
3. To guard, transmit, teach, and proclaim, corporately and individually, the apostolic faith as it is expressed in Scripture and tradition, and, as they are led and endowed by the Spirit, to interpret that faith evangelically and prophetically.
4. To travel through the connection at large as the Council of Bishops (¶ 422) to implement strategy for the concerns of the Church.

5. To teach and uphold the theological traditions of The United Methodist Church.
6. To provide liaison and leadership in the quest for Christian unity in ministry, mission, and structure and in the search for strengthened relationships with other living faith communities.
7. To organize such missions as shall have been authorized by the General Conference.
8. To promote and support the evangelistic witness of the whole Church.
9. To discharge such other duties as the *Discipline* may direct.
10. To convene the Order of Deacons and the Order of Elders and work with the elected chairperson of each order.
11. To promote, support, and model generous Christian giving, with special attention to teaching the biblical principles of giving.

**¶ 415. *Presidential Duties***

1. To preside in the General, jurisdictional, central, and annual conferences.
2. To provide general oversight for the fiscal and program operations of the annual conference(s). This may include special inquiry into the work of agencies to ensure that the annual conference and general church policies and procedures are followed.
3. To ensure fair process for clergy and laity as set forth in ¶ 2701 in all involuntary administrative and judicial proceedings through monitoring the performance of annual conference officials, boards, and committees charged with implementing such procedures.
4. To form the districts after consultation with the district superintendents and after the number of the same has been determined by vote of the annual conference. Any district may be designated to be a mission district, and the district superintendent of that district, or his or her designee, shall be the agent in charge of the mission status, nature, and goals of the district. If there is a district missionary organization, or if funds for the district are anticipated from a conference organization, those bodies shall also be asked to approve the method of organization for a mission district. A mission district may be designated when any of the following conditions exist: 1) Membership opportunities and resources are limited and not likely to result in regular status for an extended period of time. 2) A strategic demographic, cultural, or language opportunity for serving a limited population is present. 3) It is expected that long-term sustaining funding from sources outside the district will be necessary to enable the district to exist. 4) The district is geographically located in a remote location from other districts of the annual conference. When any of these conditions exist, the bishop, in consultation with the congregational development area of the annual conference, may designate

any district a mission district. The mission district may be organized in the same manner and have the same rights and powers as any district.

5. To appoint the district superintendents annually.

6. To consecrate bishops; to ordain elders and deacons; to commission deaconesses, home missionaries, and missionaries; and to see that the names of the persons commissioned and consecrated are entered on the journals of the conference and that proper credentials are furnished to these persons. As these services are acts of the whole Church, text and rubrics shall be used in the form approved by the General Conference.

7. To fix the appointments of deaconesses, home missionaries, and missionaries and to see that the names and appointments are printed in the journals of the conference.

**¶ 416. *Working with Ordained, Licensed, Consecrated, and Commissioned Personnel***

1. To make and fix the appointments in the annual conferences, provisional annual conferences, and missions as the *Discipline* may direct (¶¶ 425-429).

2. To divide or to unite a circuit(s), station(s), or mission(s) as judged necessary for missional strategy and then to make appropriate appointments.

3. To announce the appointments of deaconesses, diaconal ministers, home missionaries, and laypersons in service under the General Board of Global Ministries.

4. To fix the charge conference membership of all ordained ministers appointed to ministries other than the local church in keeping with ¶ 344.

5. To transfer, upon the request of the receiving bishop, clergy member(s) of one annual conference to another, provided said member(s) agrees to said transfer; and to send immediately to the secretaries of both conferences involved, to the conference boards of ordained ministry, and to the clearing house of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, written notices of the transfer of members and of their standing in the Course of Study if they are undergraduates.

6. To appoint associate members, provisional members, or full members to attend any school, college, or theological seminary listed by the University Senate, or to participate in a program of clinical pastoral education in a setting accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education or another accrediting agency approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Such appointments are not to be considered as extension ministry appointments.

7. To keep and maintain appropriate supervisory records on all district superintendents and other records on ministerial personnel as determined by the bishop or required by the *Discipline* or action of the annual conference.



When a district superintendent is no longer appointed to the cabinet, the bishop shall give that person's supervisory file to the superintendent of record. Supervisory records shall be kept under guidelines approved by the General Council on Finance and Administration. The supervisory records maintained by the bishop are not the personnel records of the annual conference.

## Presentation of nominees for episcopacy

The answers to the questions below must not be longer than one A4 page.

For the presentation to be part of the pre-conference material that will be made public March 1, 2025, the information must be sent to episcopal office no later than December 31, 2024.

E-mail of the episcopal office: [office@umc-ne.org](mailto:office@umc-ne.org)

- Name and picture
- Address and E-mail address
- Education
- Speaks the following languages
- Annual Conference
- Year of ordination
- Appointment history
- Present appointment
- Important roles/ministry outside appointments
- Literary production
- Particular skills and interests
- Vision for our church?

## 5b1 Thomas Risager

Born June 17, 1969

Alexandragade 8, 5000 Odense C, Denmark

Phone: +45 29786088, Mail:

thomas.risager@metodistkirken.dk

Married (1997) to Mette Risager. Children: Marie (03) and Kamille (06)



### **Education:**

Blaagaard Statseminarium 1990-1992 (Teacher's education, partial)

Diploma from Överås, the UMC Theological Seminary 1996

Advanced course of study for ordained ministry 1996-98

Master of Divinity from Överås, 2001

Doctor of Ministry, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington DC, 2012

### **Languages:**

Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, English, German

**Annual Conference:** Denmark

**Year of ordination:** Ordained Deacon 1996. Ordained Elder 1998

### **Appointments in the United Methodist Church:**

Frederikshavn 1996-2000, Esbjerg 2000-2002, Svendborg 2004-2006

**Odense 2000-present**

**District Superintendent 2017-present**

### **Important roles/ministry outside appointments:**

Chair of National United Methodist Scouts Organization, 1995-2002

Board member of National Children and Youth Organization (MBUF), 1995-2005

Board of Överås, the UMC Theological Seminary in Gothenburg, Sweden, 1993-1996

Annual Conference Board, 1999-2000 & 2017-present

Board of Ordained Ministry, 2001-2017; Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry, 2008-2017

Methodist E-Academy, Member of the Board, 2012-present

Central Conference Theological Education Fund, Member of Screening Committee, 2016-2024

School of Congregational Development, Faculty Member, 2013 & 2019; Part of Organizing Team, 2019

Delegate to Central Conference, 2012, 2016, 2020, 2022, 2023, & 2025

Reserve Delegate to General Conference, 2012, 2016, 2020 (Attending as Reserve Delegate in 2024)

Member of the Central Conference Round Table Conversations, 2019-2020

Participant in the Meeting on the Future for The United Methodist Church in Our Area, Riga, October 2023

National Committee of Evangelical Alliance, 2007-2009 and 2022-present  
The Danish Church Council, 2023-present  
World Methodist Conference 2024, Local Planning Committee, and Worship Team, 2016-present  
World Methodist Council, from August 2024  
The Royal Danish Ballet School, Odense, Board Member, 2019-2022

**Publications:**

*Sing Unto the Lord*. Doctor of Ministry thesis, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC, 2012  
*Singing Gospel Music Increases Faith*. Nordic Perspectives on Methodism - What is Methodist Identity Today? 2015  
Article: *Gospelmusik giver større tro*. National magazine for the Baptist Church in Denmark, 2015  
*Summit Devotions 2009*, Contribution to special edition of the Upper Room for the COP15 summit, Copenhagen  
*Discerning Clues for the Future*. Lewis Center for Church Leadership - Leading Ideas, Sep 23, 2009  
Foreword to Danish edition. Bill Hybels: *The Power of a Whisper*, 2010

**Particular skills and interests:**

I am very interested in understanding how faith, Methodist theology, and our church connect to culture and contribute fruitfully to our societies and the people we meet. I am especially pondering how to preach to people in a secular context. I am always trying to understand our culture and every aspect of it. **Keywords:** Visionary and goal-oriented leadership, openness in decision-making and planning, cooperation in teams. On my own time, I love running, sea kayaking, reading, and spending time with family and friends.

## 5b2 Knut Refsdal

- Date of birth: May 6, 1969.
- Family: Married to Åshild Skiri Refsdal. Children: Andreas (1991), Fredrik (1997-98) and Astrid (2001).
- Conference: Norway (Deacon: 1992. Elder: 1994).
- Languages: Norwegian (Danish/Swedish), English and German (basic).

### **INTERESTS, SKILLS, PASSIONS and PRIORITIES**

- To follow Jesus by participating in God's mission for a better world.
- To explore United Methodist identity through vital theology, preaching and worship.
- To seek where the Spirit is at work and joining in through fresh expressions of church.
- To promote inclusiveness, involvement, and collaboration through relationship-oriented leadership.
- To release resources for ministry through sufficient and effective organization and administration.



### **EDUCATION**

- Master in Theology, UMC Theological Seminary/MF Norwegian School of Theology, 1989-94/2003-06 (300 ects).
- Business and Economics, Østfold University College, 1994-98 (60 ects).
- Personnel Management, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, 2000 (30 ects).
- Conflict Management, VID Specialized University, 2007-08 (30 ects).
- Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, 2010-13 (60 ects).
- Experience-Based Master Theology, MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2013-17 (90 ects).
- Religious Studies (religionsvitenskap), MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2017-18 (30 ects).
- Value-based Leadership, MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2019-20 (10 ects).
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PPU), Østfold University College, 2020-22 (60 ects).

### **APPOINTMENTS**

- 1992-2002 Pastor, Sarpsborg.
- 2002-05 Senior Executive Officer/Project leader, Christian Council of Norway.
- 2005-09 Assistant to the Bishop, UMC Nordic and Baltic area.
- 2009-12 Affiliate professor, UMC Theological Seminary.
- 2012-18 General Secretary, Christian Council of Norway.
- 2018-23 District Superintendent (2022-23 also Pastor, Moss).
- 2024- Parish pastor, Jeløy (Church of Norway).

**OTHER ROLES and MINISTRIES** (excerpt)

- Mentor, Natural Church Development, 2000-07.
- Department Manager/Coach, Personalpartner (vocational rehabilitation) (full time), 2009-12.
- Mediator, National Mediation Service (Konfliktrådet), 2009-12.
- Chair Board, Norwegian Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and Stillbirth Society (LUB), 2010-12.
- Member Board of Trustees, Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary, 2011-12.
- Director Board, UMC Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relations, 2008-16.
- Member Stakeholders' Forum, Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome, 2015-17.
- Member Board, Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities in Norway, 2012-18.
- Chief Executive Officer, Mount of Olives Foundation, 2012-18.
- Member, Central Conference Round Table Conversations, 2019-20.
- Teacher in Religion and Ethics, Kirkeparken high school (part time), 2020.
- Secretary, UMC Norway, Liturgy Committee, 2006-09/2018-23.
- Chair Board, Moss Athletics, 2019-23.
- Podcast editor, Fresh Expressions of Church, 2020-23.
- Member Board, European Methodist Council, 2021-23.
- Member/Vice Chair Board, Blue Cross Norway, 2016-24.
- Member/Chair Board, Norwegian Church Academies, 2022-.
- Delegate, World Methodist Council, 2024-.

**LITERARY PRODUCTION** (excerpt)

- «Ord om tro» (sermons), 1996.
- «Læreforkynnelse» (in Teologisk Forum), 1996.
- «Liv i gudstjenesten – gudstjenesten i livet» (in Teologisk Forum), 1996.
- «Legg ut på dypet» (sermons), 2001.
- «Feltprestekorpset som økumenisk aktør» (in Pacem, with Lars-Erik Nordby), 2003.
- «Dere vet hvilken tid det nå er (master thesis), 2006.
- «Bibelord ved sykeseng» (daily devotions), 2015.
- «Økumenikk: Å fremme liv i fellesskap og forsoning» (master thesis), 2015.
- «Bibelen» (in Troshåndboka, Vårt Land forlag), 2020.
- «God's role in times of crisis» (UM News), 2020.

## 8 Personal report from the bishop 2016-2025

From the very beginning, the Methodists have enthusiastically inspired people to follow Jesus Christ. I experienced this when I was 16 years old, and it grabbed my heart. Today, when I read in our Theological Task: “We preach no personal gospel that is not expressed in relevant social issues, and we preach no social gospel that does not include the personal conversion of sinners.”, that same heart is beating, and I know, I am, where I need to be.

Does this mean I believe the church is always right, and the General Conference always follows God's will and makes the right decisions – no not at all. But we are trying - despite all our shortcomings and limitations, to honestly, sincerely and humbly be the church God has called us to be in the 21st century.

At our best, I see this life unfolding in churches. I see faith, compassion, genuine love, bold creativity, enthusiastic commitment, persistent discipleship, courageous mission, determined passion and joy. - It happens every single day, and I am grateful for it.

We have so much to do living in countries, which have abandoned the Christian values and behavioral patterns that once shaped them. In many ways our societies have become rootless and lost their ethical compass.

And there is much to do in a Europe, where Ukraine is fighting for its freedom against the Russian invaders, while the rest of Europe is closer to war than we have been in the past 80 years.

And there is much to do in a world tormented by conflicts, hunger, poverty, war, displacement and climate crisis.

The perspective is wide - wider than our local congregation or our annual conference. At the same time, the local church embodies and lives the gospel and is the main arena for disciple-making.

### **How have I stewarded my responsibility?**

For 16 years, I have had the privilege and responsibility of being a bishop in the Nordic and Baltic region, and since spring 2022 also in Ukraine. - I have had great influence and together with others I have had the opportunity to shape the development, set direction, prioritize, influence and lead... So how have I stewarded my responsibility?

This is the question I am trying to explore in this report. I will share my priorities, my thinking and my experiences – I will let others determine the answer.

It is the Christian leader's most important task, rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ, to keep the big picture and look ahead, and to stay focused on what is

most important, and to help the church move forward in God's mission. -  
That's how I see it.

I know some of what it means to lead, when crises arise. Serious breaches of trust, clergy committing crime, deep conflicts, terrorist attacks, global pandemic, division, splits and war are some of the disruptions and challenges we have experienced in the Episcopal area over the past 16 years.

While leadership in the pseudo-world of social media is often evaluated along the lines of personal preference and advantage, reality is significantly more complex. In many situations, decisions are based on information unknown to the majority. Sometimes, the choice is not between a good and a bad decision, but rather between two bad ones. And only in the excruciatingly clear light of hindsight are able to realize you should have acted differently.

### **The privilege of serving with great leaders**

During the past 16 years, I have been privileged to serve with excellent, competent and dedicated leaders on the cabinet: Taavi Hollman, Robert Tserenkov, Edgars Sneiders, Gita Mednis, Remigijus Matulaitis, Bill Lovelace, John Campbell, Oleg Starodubets, Timo Virtanen, Pasi Runonen, Jori Brander, Soile Kasi, Tom Hellsten, Mayvor Warn Rancken, Björn Elfving, Leif Göte Björklund, Camilla Klockars, Nils Gustav Sahlin, Bimbi Ollberg, Åke Svensson, Lasse Svensson, Alf Englund, Thore Hildingsson, Øyvind Helliesen, Vidar Sten Bjerkseth, Svein Veland, Steinar Hjerpseth, Ingull Grefslie, Knut Refsdal, Keld Munk, Ole Birch, Jørgen Thaarup, Thomas Risager, and Louise Aaen. And I have had the privilege to serve with so many other skilled and deeply committed lay people, pastors and deacons in different contexts. We have shared responsibility and lead together – we have celebrated the successes and taken responsibility for the losses.

The area cabinet meets every six months, functioning as a learning community as well as a strategic leadership team, while the cabinets in each annual conference have met more frequent, often in collaboration with one of the other cabinets. I am pleased the number of women on the cabinet has increased - in the coming quadrennium half of the district superintendents will be female.

When preparing new district superintendents for their ministry, I have often used a cartoon to explain the essence of our task: It's the pastor who has a visit from the pastor parish relations committee, and apparently they are presenting a problem, the response is: "I'm sorry you say the congregation is not happy with my leadership. But let me remind you that the Lord did not send me here to make the church happy, but to make the church healthy and Him happy."

### **My priorities**

My ministry during the past years has been guided by the following priorities:

- Personal spiritual health to care for and lead the episcopal area.
- Keeping the big picture perspective helping the church to stay focused its mission and priorities as part of the United Methodist Church
- The mission and development of the church – working with the cabinet, conference leadership, clergy and local churches in each of the annual conference
- Starting new faith communities, developing principled Christian leaders.
- Community outreach and diaconal ministries
- Since the spring of 2022 special attention has been given to supporting the church in Ukraine.
- Upholding the unity of the church, while dealing with issues related to disaffiliation and the denominations struggles in relation to human sexuality and how to be in ministry with all people.

I have not always been successful in staying true to the priorities, and I admit that at times crisis management and problem solving have taken too much focus and demanded too many resources.

#### Developing principled Christian leaders

Since 2007 the School of Congregational Development has had significant impact on the episcopal area.

The seventh School of Congregational Development took place in 2019 in Tallinn, Estonia, with themes like developing young leaders, music ministry, and ministry with Muslims, multicultural churches, mentoring, new church starts and much more.

The eight-school themed “Catch on Fire” will be in 18-21. September in Oslo, with subthemes Purpose, Challenge, Adventure and Hope, will take on reaching new generations, dealing with tough questions, fresh expressions of spirituality and church, and responsible living.

A number of leadership seminars and training programs for diverse audiences have been utilized and developed in the annual conferences.

#### **We need pastors.**

All conferences, with the exception of Latvia and Finland Finnish, have a shortage of pastors or will have a shortage of pastors within the coming 5 to 10 years.



We struggle to keep up with the overall salary level in the countries, and fewer local churches can afford a full-time appointment. We are exploring the potential in different models of cooperative parishes, and we have introduced part time “tentmaker appointments”. We also need to realize that we cannot long-term retain the requirement of a master’s degree in theology for elders and deacons, if we are not able to offer a full-time appointment.

Another aspect is the changing ministry contexts that put new demands on clergy. We will need a robust conversation about the church’s needs, and how we may better equip pastors to become missional leaders and enablers for the future.

I have had several gatherings with young clergy in the area under the age of 40. The young-clergy retreats have equipped, connected and built community among the young clergy, who will be serving and leading together in many years to come.

### **New Church-starts**

We have started a number of new faith communities in the episcopal area. Almost all conferences have recent experiences of starting new churches, and we continue to engage lay and clergy in seminars and other teaching experiences to inspire, support and cultivate leaders for this purpose. Particularly in Finland new faith communities have emerged among migrants, and almost all churches across the episcopal area have some ministry with migrants.

We now have pastors in both Finland, Norway and Denmark from Africa and the Middle East. Ukraine has ambitious plans for starting new churches in the coming years.

A new program to train young missional leaders is being initiated as a collaborative effort between Norway and Denmark. The aim is to build a community of mutual growth, learning and support, for committed young leaders with a burning heart to engage in bold missional ministry and to start new faith communities.

The Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary in Tallinn has worked with Asbury Theological Seminary to create a program in Church Planting and Intercultural Studies.

### **Community outreach and diaconal ministries**

Social diaconal ministries continue to develop in all annual conferences. Even relatively small local churches have significant impact on the community. United Methodists pay attention to their community, they see the needs and they respond often in creative ways. We saw it everywhere during the pandemic. We see it in caring for migrants and refugees. We see it in offering fellowship to single mothers and at-risk families. Camps for children and youth from families with few resources. Giving food packages and gifts for

Christmas to low-income families. Sending trucks with gifts and humanitarian aid from Sweden to Lithuania, Ukraine and Romania. -And the list goes on and on and on....

Being in ministry with marginalized people with few resources is at the heart of our Methodist DNA – John Wesley saw a direct connection between, what he called “ministry to the poor” and the Methodist revival. “We preach no personal gospel that is not expressed in relevant social issues, and we preach no social gospel that does not include the personal conversion of sinners.”

### **International responsibilities**

United Methodist bishops are general superintendents, meaning they are bishops in the entire worldwide denomination, which include taking on leadership responsibilities throughout the connection.

From July 2016 until December 2022, I served as chair of the Connectional Table, the denominations leadership body that bring together leaders from across the world-wide connection to discern and articulate a shared vision, stewarding the mission, ministries, and resources entrusted to the church.

I am grateful to have had this opportunity to serve and to lead the Connectional Table towards a more global scope while focusing on its main mandate to discern and articulate the vision of the church and to steward the church’s resources.

Since 2016 I have served on the executive committee of the Council of Bishops, and from May 2023 until May 2024 I stepped in as a member of the commission on general conference.

Since 2015 I have served on the executive committee of the European Methodist Council, four years as co-chair.

I have taken intensive part in the planning of the World Methodist Conference in Gothenburg, which due to the global pandemic ended up being an almost 8-year planning process.

I have presided and preached in the annual conference in Sierra Leone, and in the Philippines, I preached and presided at the central conference when they elected three new bishops, one of them the first female bishop in the Philippines.

### **Major disruption - the Global Pandemic**

The Covid 19 pandemic was almost two years of change, adaptation and intense learning of new behavioral patterns, skills and new ways of doing ministry.

Our high tech and well ordered societies, and our shielded lives were shaken by a microscopic virus. We faced our own vulnerability, as we discovered that all

our knowledge and scientific advancements were incapable of protecting us from a dangerous and potentially deadly disease.

Our governments all responded with far-reaching lockdowns and severe restrictions. For extensive periods of time, we were unable to worship in our churches and to offer our regular ministries, and we all had to adapt to changing rules and restrictions.

With very few exceptions, our governments didn't consider the Christian churches to be a resource in offering hope and comfort to a population in need of help to live through the crisis.

The cabinets worked hard to support our clergy and to navigate and interpret the everchanging rules.

I was impressed and proud of the way our pastors, deacons and local churches handled the crisis. Quickly they shifted to online church, live streamed worship, messages and devotions. Churches exhibited an inspiring wealth of creativity in finding new ways to reach out and serve the people. We experimented and made important learnings exploring fresh expressions of church that we will take with us into the future.

We promised each other that the new online ministry would continue. I wrote things like: "Only the naive believe, we will simply go back to normal. Normal doesn't exist. What is the new reality going to be, and what will the opportunities for mission and ministry look like."

### **A slow return**

New behavioral patterns emerged. Covid had accelerated negative trends in several places, most noticeable in areas like leadership, worship attendance and children and youth ministry.

The return after Covid was slow. Most churches were at 60 to 80% of pre-Covid worship attendance, and some still haven't recovered. At the same time there seems to have been a healthy move away from activity and ministry focus to an emphasis on fellowship and community.

Sadly, most churches have fallen back into their old worship patterns and abandoned their excellent creative work in using video, live streaming and other kinds of online presence.

### **The challenging unity**

During General Conference 2016, I became one of the Council of Bishops representatives in a meeting with leaders from different caucus group in the church. It was an abrupt wake up call.

As it turned out, we were attending a meeting about how to avoid splitting the church. Some of the leaders in the meeting were ready to let it all blow up, while others tried with all their might to keep things together and maintain unity. The conversation led to a public call for the bishops to initiate work that

would lead to a plan for the future of the church to be dealt with at an extra session of the General Conference. The work was named “A Way Forward”.

From that day on, UNITY became a major theme in the church and in my ministry. I got to participate in several initiatives to preserve the unity of the church both in the whole church and in the Central Conference. I also participated in an initiative to make it possible for local churches that cannot live with the theological breadth of the church to leave the church.

Through all this, I have been inspired by the descriptive guidance given in the Book of Discipline (§ 402-403) about the leadership of the bishop expressed through the disciplines of spiritual vitality, learning and teaching, vision for the church and the mission, upholding the order and discipline, a prophetic commitment and a passion for the unity of the church. “The role of the bishop is to be the shepherd of the whole flock and thereby provide leadership toward the goal of understanding, reconciliation, and unity within the Church.”

It has been my aim to serve as bishop all people in the entire episcopal area, which includes members, leaders and pastors with divergent opinions on many things including human sexuality. This is the reason why I abstained from stating my position on the issues before us, and why I didn’t push for a certain position or understanding. I know different groups have wanted me to exercise what they prefer to label as either “prophetic leadership” or “biblically faithful leadership” depending on their position.

I have led in close collaboration with the district superintendents, and as far as possible with other leadership entities in the annual conferences. Amid the anxiety and uncertainty in the church, I have together with the cabinet intended to be a non-anxious presence in the church and to convey hope and trust in God’s future.

I have worked for as much unity and as much missional strength as possible and done my utmost to emphasize God’s mission and to focus us on the task of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

### **Like riding two wild horses**

Taking the middle ground, I realize, I was not considered conservative enough for the conservatives and not progressive enough for the progressives. I admit, working for church unity has at times been like riding two wild horses heading in opposite directions.

For many years I have emphasized the words in Jesus’ prayer (John 17), where He prays that we may be one like He and the Father are one. Jesus makes our mutual love (John 13) the supreme sign that we are his disciples and invites us into a unity comparable with the unity in the Trinity.

Despite the General Conference now guaranteeing freedom of conscience for both congregations and pastors in relation to same-sex marriage, some still

find that disagreement over biblical ethics outweigh Jesus' prayer for unity and therefore legitimizes division and separation.

In a divided and fragmented world, unity is never a given, not even among Christians. Jesus knew this, and His prayer continues to call us to work on preserving the unity of the spirit with the bond of peace.

Despite our diversities and differences, Nordic and Baltic United Methodists have managed to be in a committed relationship in one church for more than 100 years. We have lived through two world wars together, and we have overcome the separation by the Iron Curtain during the Soviet occupation. Through the years we have built relationships and friendships, we have shared and exchanged ministries, we have supported each other, and we have worshipped and prayed together.

Repeatedly, I have encouraged our people despite our differences not to make assumptions about each other's sincerity of faith, appreciation and respect of the Word of God, or of our perception of God's grace and love.

Mindful of the diversity in the episcopal area and the divisive potential of our diverse understandings, a roundtable process was initiated to seek common ground for the future. Sadly, during the second face to face gathering it became clear that our efforts would not be fruitful, and we ended the process.

I am grateful that a joint gathering in the fall of 2023 in Riga proved to be much more productive in laying a foundation for future respectful co-existence and fellowship in ministry. Throughout the weekend the atmosphere was warm, respectful, and loving, and many went home with renewed hope for a common future.

### **Separation**

The disaffiliation process in Estonia is described in the report of the central conference, allow me to add a personal comment.

From my personal perspective the conference in Estonia in 2023 was a very difficult and painful event. Some laypeople and pastors expressed grief over the decision, nevertheless, the decision to disaffiliate was very clear. Most of the conference appeared to have forgotten, how much the Methodists in Estonia owe to the prayers and the support of the United Methodist Church.

Signing an agreement of mutual recognition, which enables us to continue to send students to the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary from the Baltic countries and from Finland, was a valuable expression of respectful relationship.

I can confidently say, I did my utmost to treat everyone with fairness and respect and to serve the Estonia district conference to the last day, and with some challenges at the seminary even for some extra days.

Two local churches in Norway, have decided to disaffiliate as well as some members and a few pastors.

Especially following the 2024 General Conference there has been some tension in the two annual conferences in Finland and in Latvia.

### **Bishop of Ukraine**

Since the central conference in the spring of 2022 handed the episcopal supervision of the Ukraine and Moldova Provisional Annual Conference to me, Ukraine has been an important focus in my ministry, and during the three years I have visited Ukraine 12 times.

My emphasis has been on presence physical and online – affirming that Methodists across the world care, pray and stand with our church in Ukraine, while getting to know people, gaining a deeper understanding of the situation and offering pastoral and strategic leadership.

I meet almost weekly with the district superintendent Oleg Starodubets, and I meet bi-monthly with the clergy and church leaders.

Much work is being done to care for internally displaced people, and the church's capacity to accommodate individuals and families is now at more than 100.

We are working on an ambitious strategic plan for the development of the United Methodist Church in Ukraine – amid the tragedy and pain of war, we are experiencing a fruitful time for the gospel. We expect to partner with some large United Methodist Churches and an annual conference in the US in the effort of planting new churches. A New faith community has been started among Ukrainian refugees in Bispingen outside of Hamburg, with strong support from the United Methodist Church in the area.

An independent church of approx. 70 members in Ukrainka outside of Kyiv is in the process of joining the United Methodist Church.

A new In Mission Together coordinator with the GBGM has been named, rev Fred Vanderwerf. In collaboration with the Minnesota episcopal area, he has been able to dedicate extra time and resources to this work, and he has already made a couple of visits to Ukraine.

In 2024 we opened a new spiritual and social center “Under the Castle” which will develop to a rehabilitation center for people suffering from PTSD. The purchase of the facility has been made possible through funds from the United Methodist Committee on Relief UMCOR.

We are establishing formal ecumenical relations, which have been absent. We will become members of the Ukraine Bible Society and of the Ukraine Council of Protestant Churches. District Superintendent Oleg Starodubets and I have had meetings with the rector of the Ukraine Evangelical Theological Seminary in Kyiv dr Ivan Rusyn to establish a memorandum of understanding to formalize our relationship. The seminary is the strongest and largest protestant theological seminary in Ukraine, and I am pleased, we will be able

to offer a solid Ukrainian theological education in Ukraine to our future pastors. We already have two students at the seminary.

Our sisters and brothers in Ukraine are daily suffering from the fear, violence, death and destruction caused by an unjust and meaningless invasion of their country. After more than three years of war, in excess of 10 million have fled their homes, 6-7 million of them are internally displaced within the country.

People are exhausted and despaired, all communities, all families and all churches are affected, thousands have died, thousands are wounded, but the Ukrainians are not about to give up. They fight for their freedom and independence, they fight for justice, they fight for their country, and they need our support and our prayers.

All our countries have received Ukrainian refugees with open arms, and in particular the countries bordering to Ukraine have extended their hospitality in radical and admirable ways. I am grateful for the ways in which United Methodists in and outside Ukraine have responded to the refugee situation. Almost all churches are involved in some way or another. One great example is the ministry of the UMC in Vasa Finland – for three years they have served and been in ministry with 50-70 Ukrainians, many of them youth.

UMCOR continues to be a great support in the work, offering financial aid and expertise. Additionally, UMCOR is working through several other partners to distribute humanitarian aid. Significant donations have been given to the UMCOR humanitarian aid account, and to the Advance for Ukraine.

I urge all of you to continue to pray for and support Ukraine and our United Methodist Church there. They need us!

### **So where are we today?**

Throughout my term as bishop, I have repeatedly said “I will deal with the problems, but I will focus on the positive and the constructive.”

I know that you can be consumed by the problems to the extent that joy and hope disappear, but by God's grace I have retained both.

We have come through some very difficult years and a long-standing disagreement has come a place where we are able to allow each other to live and serve with integrity. We can confidently say that we are a church with open hearts, open minds and open doors.

I see a lot of vitality in the church in the Nordic and Baltic countries and in Ukraine. We have a growing awareness of being sent to our communities, and we continue to explore how we can be church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We look for ways to strengthen our work with children and youth. We reach out to migrants and other marginalized groups in our society. And much more.

We have significant experiences from the Covid 19 pandemic. We have important experiences of starting new faith communities and developing new and fresh expressions of being church. We work on developing new missional leaders, we continuously strengthen the church's diaconal profile, we have many talented employees and leaders, and we are part of a resourceful European and global Methodist community. We are truly a church with heart, head and hands - well equipped for the many challenges ahead of us.

It is my prayer that my successor, together with our many gifted and committed pastors, deacons and leaders, by the grace of God will be able to lead the church in a fruitful development with less internal tension and conflict and with a strong and clear focus on being the church we are called to be - making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

There is much to do in Finland, in Latvia, in Denmark, in Lithuania, in Norway, in Sweden and in Ukraine - and in Europe and in the world. ....

### **Closing words**

I am grateful for the ministry of our pastors, deacons and leaders on local and on annual conference level – I am seeing a church rooted and grounded in Christ focused on his mission. You are serving with boldness, flexibility and commitment, while you have had to adapt to one new and challenging situation after the other.

I am grateful for the close and warm relationship among the European bishops. We have been standing together in mutual prayer and unwavering support.

I am grateful for all those I have met over the years in the episcopal area, in Europe and in the world, children, youth, adults and old - their stories and experiences and the fellowship we have shared have left a lasting impression and inspired and shaped me in my walk with Jesus Christ.

I say with Paul:

*I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. Phil 1:3-6*

It has been a wonderful joy and privilege in my life to serve Jesus Christ with you as your bishop for the past 16 years. As we enter God's future, may we together realize, the best is yet to come....

Prayerfully Submitted

Christian Alsted



## 9 Committee on Episcopacy

Report from the Episcopal Committee for the Nordic, Baltic and Ukraine Area

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

# 10 Central Conference Council

Report from the Central Conference Council to the 2025 Central Conference

## **“Receive the Holy Spirit” Central Conference 2025**

Welcome to 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 word**

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.

*Prayerfully submitted*

*Christian Alsted  
Chair of the council*

# 11 Financial Reports

## Financial reports – introduction and notes

The Nordic, Baltic and Ukraine episcopal office administers 5 different funds: The Episcopal Fund, the Central Conference Fund, the Area Fund, Nordic Means for Wesleyan Theology and the Unrestricted Liquid Cash Fund. All financial reports are audited by external auditor MER Revision and approved every year by the Central Conference Council

### **The Episcopal Fund**

The Episcopal Fund is funded by apportionments from the annual conferences and a monthly office and salary allowance from the General Council of Finance and Administration (GCFA). It pays for the episcopal office, salaries and administration in general. The bishops' travels are reported to the GCFA every month and are also covered by the GCFA.

**Note:** in 2016 the “other salary” was significantly higher than usual due to 3 months overlap of the assistants.

### **The Central Conference Fund**

The Central Conference Fund is funded by apportionments from the annual conferences and covers activities in the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference, such as the Central Conference Council meetings and memberships of the European Methodist Council and World Methodist Council.

**Note:** According to decision of March 20, 2015, in the Central Conference Council, the amount of DKK 71,000 marked “CC Concerns” is allocated to the Eurasia (25%) and the N & B Area Fund (75%).

The actual transfer of the allocations did not take place until 2018.

### **The Nordic, Baltic and Ukraine Area Fund**

Until this Central Conference, we had two episcopal areas which made it necessary to split the economy within the central conference between a Nordic & Baltic area Fund and a Eurasia Area Fund.

The Nordic, Baltic and Ukraine Area Fund deals with activities within our area such as: Baltic Pastors' Salary and Pension Support Fund, School of Congregational Development, Support to Ukraine, etc, and it pays out grants funded by the Wesleyan Theological means.

To simplify the administration, the plan is to merge the Central Conference Fund and the Area Fund starting from January 2026.

**Note:** In 2023 the “area projects” covers the cost of a meeting on the future of Methodism in our episcopal area in Riga with clergy and lay leaders from all annual conferences.

### **The Nordic Means for Wesleyan Theology**

The Nordic Means for Wesleyan Theology consists of means donated for continued studies of Wesleyan Theology during the 50'ies and 60'ies. The assets are invested in a low-risk portfolio at Nordea. Dividends are paid out via the Area Fund.

**Note:** 2022 was an extraordinarily bad year for investments in general.

### **Unrestricted Limited Cash Fund**

In January 2020, the Central Conference Council decided to transfer the excess liquid cash from the Episcopal Fund (1.200.000 DKK), the Central Conference Fund (600.000) and the Area Fund (600.000) to a low-risk portfolio at Nordea due to the negative interest rate. The amounts may be seen under assets as “fixed term deposit” in the 3 funds in question. The full financial reports may be found online with the other financial reports.

Kirsten Hastrup, February 2025

## 11a The Central Conference Fund

Central Conference Fund Income Statement 2016 - 2019 exchange rate DKK - Euro = 7,46								
DKK in black, Euro in blue								
	2016	2016	2017	2017	2018	2018	2019	2019
<b>Income</b>								
Contribution Estonia	8.569	1.149	11.216	1.503	9.427	1.264	9.442	1.266
Contribution Eurasia	25.350	3.398	10.513	1.409	11.145	1.494	9.361	1.255
Contribution Denmark	32.232	4.321	33.515	4.493	36.899	4.946	42.407	5.685
Contribution Finland F	14.603	1.958	14.536	1.949	14.701	1.971	14.241	1.909
Contribution Finland S	17.543	2.352	16.801	2.252	15.360	2.059	16.420	2.201
Contribution Latvia	4.554	610	4.458	598	0	-	9.980	1.338
Contribution Lithuania	2.428	325	2.539	340	1.508	202	1.417	190
Contribution Norway	102.282	13.711	99.471	13.334	113.108	15.162	102.033	13.677
Contribution Sweden	1.647	221	1.157	155	637	85	622	83
EMYC/NEECCYC membership				-	37.089	4.972	38.256	5.128
Other income			3.871	519	0	-	8.000	1.072
<b>Total income</b>	<b>209.208</b>	<b>28.044</b>	<b>198.077</b>	<b>26.552</b>	<b>239.874</b>	<b>32.155</b>	<b>252.179</b>	<b>33.804</b>
<b>Expenses</b>								
Central Conference Council	31.390	4.208	29.486	3.953	22.543	3.022	23.454	3.144
Nordic & Baltic Area Group	17.420	2.335	18.424	2.470	24.827	3.328	28.332	3.798
Book of Discipline supplement	-	-	10.356	1.388	0	-	-	-
World Methodist Council	11.786	1.580	13.189	1.768	11.779	1.579	-	-
World Methodist Council meetings	9.989	1.339	6.000	804	19.198	2.573	-	-
European Methodist Council	42.636	5.715	42.479	5.694	42.549	5.704	42.667	5.719
EMYC/NEECCYC	-	-	18.944	2.539	27.635	3.704	27.679	3.710
Conference of European Churches	-	-	6.350	851	16.341	2.190	6.386	856
Central Conference	78.330	10.500	-	-	0	-	-	-
Gifts	-	-	7.744	1.038	0	-	-	-
Audit	17.000	2.279	16.308	2.186	11.485	1.540	11.635	1.560
Other expenses	2.293	307	278	37	12.732	1.707	7.090	950
CC concerns transferred to Eurasia					17.911	2.401		
CC concerns transferred to N & B area					53.636	7.190		
Financial cost		-	2.729	366	1.840	247	2.931	393
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>210.844</b>	<b>28.263</b>	<b>134.399</b>	<b>18.016</b>	<b>262.476</b>	<b>35.184</b>	<b>150.174</b>	<b>20.131</b>
Net profit/loss of the year	- 1.636	- 219	63.678	8.536	- 22.602	- 3.030	102.005	13.674
Central Conference Fund Balance sheet 2016 - 2019 exchange rate DKK - Euro = 7,46								
	2016	2016	2017	2017	2018	2018	2019	2019
<b>Assets</b>								
Accounts receivable	55.241	7.405	0	-	0	-	11.508	1.543
Fixed term deposit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cash and Bank Deposits	664.404	89.062	789.323	105.807	776.721	104.118	863.918	115.807
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>719.645</b>	<b>96.467</b>	<b>789.323</b>	<b>105.807</b>	<b>776.721</b>	<b>104.118</b>	<b>875.426</b>	<b>117.349</b>
<b>Equity and liabilities</b>								
Capital Fund	589.098	78.968	652.776	87.503	635.289	85.159	635.289	85.159
Central Conference	-	-	0	-	61.734	8.275	120.162	16.108
Book of discipline NEEBoD	10.000	1.340	10.000	1.340	25.000	3.351	40.000	5.362
Central conference concerns	71.547	9.591	71.547	9.591	-	-	-	-
Conference of European Churches	20.000	2.681	20.000	2.681	11.500	1.542	11.500	1.542
World Methodist Council	12.000	1.609	18000	2.413	4.800	643	22.800	3.056
EMYC/NEECCYC	-	-	-	-	28.398	3.807	38.975	5.225
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>702.645</b>	<b>94.188</b>	<b>772.323</b>	<b>103.529</b>	<b>766.721</b>	<b>102.778</b>	<b>868.726</b>	<b>116.451</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>								
other current liabilities	17.000	2.279	17.000	2.279	10.000	1.340	6700	898
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>17.000</b>	<b>2.279</b>	<b>17.000</b>	<b>2.279</b>	<b>10.000</b>	<b>1.340</b>	<b>6700</b>	<b>898</b>
<b>Total Equity and liabilities</b>	<b>719.645</b>	<b>96.467</b>	<b>789.323</b>	<b>105.807</b>	<b>776.721</b>	<b>104.118</b>	<b>875.426</b>	<b>117.349</b>

Central Conference Fund Income Statement 2020 - 2023 exchange rate DKK - Euro = 7,46

DKK in black, Euro in blue

	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022	2023	2023
<b>Income</b>								
Contribution Estonia	9.428	1.264	9.332	1.251	9.412	1.262	4.700	630
Contribution Eurasia	9.044	1.212	9.814	1.316	0	-	-	-
Contribution Denmark	42.319	5.673	38.724	5.191	39.312	5.270	41.738	5.595
Contribution Finland F	14.495	1.943	13.788	1.848	14.108	1.891	14.774	1.980
Contribution Finland S	14.176	1.900	17.133	2.297	15.914	2.133	13.862	1.858
Contribution Latvia	4.448	596	3.950	529	1.956	262	4.989	669
Contribution Lithuania	1.603	215	2.099	281	927	124	1.516	203
Contribution Norway	107.420	14.399	107.008	14.344	109.603	14.692	99.901	13.392
Contribution Sweden	629	84	689	92	611	82	587	79
EMYC/NEECCYC membership	38.267	5.130	-	-	0	-	-	-
Other income	-	-	-	-	4.908	658	-	-
<b>Total income</b>	<b>241.829</b>	<b>32.417</b>	<b>202.537</b>	<b>27.150</b>	<b>196.751</b>	<b>26.374</b>	<b>182.067</b>	<b>24.406</b>
<b>Expenses</b>								
Central Conference Council	-	-	-	-	58.892	7.894	65.939	8.839
Nordic & Baltic Area Group	614	82	28.293	3.793	0	-	-	-
Book of Discipline supplement	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-
World Methodist Council	25.758	3.453	11.714	1.570	13.280	1.780	13.008	1.744
World Methodist Council meetings	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-
European Methodist Council	42.636	5.715	42.535	5.702	42.564	5.706	42.587	5.709
EMYC/NEECCYC	27.735	3.718	-	-	0	-	-	-
Conference of European Churches	6.357	852	6.343	850	6.348	851	6.367	853
Central Conference	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-
Gifts	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-
Audit	11.785	1.580	11.935	1.600	12.723	1.705	12.985	1.741
Other expenses	-	-	320	43	24.195	3.243	18.167	2.435
					0	-		
					0	-		
Financial cost	2.427	325	3.862	518	3.109	417	50	7
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>117.312</b>	<b>15.725</b>	<b>105.002</b>	<b>14.075</b>	<b>161.111</b>	<b>21.597</b>	<b>159.103</b>	<b>21.327</b>
<b>Net profit/loss of the year</b>	<b>124.517</b>	<b>16.691</b>	<b>97.535</b>	<b>13.074</b>	<b>35.640</b>	<b>4.777</b>	<b>22.964</b>	<b>3.078</b>

Central Conference Fund Balance sheet 2020 - 2023 exchange rate DKK - Euro = 7,46

	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022	2023	2023
<b>Assets</b>								
Accounts receivable	2.056	276	3.257	437	7.430	996	-	-
Fixed term deposit	600.000	80.429	600.000	80.429	600.000	80.429	600.000	80.429
Cash and Bank Deposits	391.187	52.438	487.521	65.351	378.988	50.803	409.382	54.877
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>993.243</b>	<b>133.142</b>	<b>1.090.778</b>	<b>146.217</b>	<b>986.418</b>	<b>132.228</b>	<b>1.009.382</b>	<b>135.306</b>
<b>Equity and liabilities</b>								
Capital Fund	636.274	85.291	636.274	85.291	671.914	90.069	694.878	93.147
Central Conference	120.162	16.108	120.162	16.108	120.162	16.108	120.162	16.108
Book of discipline NEEBoD	40.000	5.362	40.000	5.362	40.000	5.362	40.000	5.362
Eurasia Area Fund	8.000	1.072	14.000	1.877	14.000	1.877	14.000	1.877
Nordic and Baltic Area Fund	70.000	9.383	140.000	18.767	-	-	-	-
Conference of European Churches	11.500	1.542	11.500	1.542	11.500	1.542	11.500	1.542
World Methodist Council	57.800	7.748	79.335	10.635	79.335	10.635	79.335	10.635
EMYC/NEECCYC	49.507	6.636	49.507	6.636	49.507	6.636	49.507	6.636
		-				-		-
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>993.243</b>	<b>133.142</b>	<b>1.090.778</b>	<b>146.217</b>	<b>986.418</b>	<b>132.228</b>	<b>1.009.382</b>	<b>135.306</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>								
other current liabilities	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total Equity and liabilities</b>	<b>993.243</b>	<b>133.142</b>	<b>1.090.778</b>	<b>146.217</b>	<b>986.418</b>	<b>132.228</b>	<b>1.009.382</b>	<b>135.306</b>

## 11b The Episcopal Fund Nordic, Baltic and Ukraine

Episcopal Fund Income Statement 2016 - 2019 exchange rate DKK - Euro = 7,46								
DKK in black, Euro in blue								
	2016	2016	2017	2017	2018	2018	2019	2019
<b>Income</b>								
Contribution GCFA	979.579	131.311	1.029.437	137.994	1.142.651	153.170	1.135.920	152.268
Contribution Finland F	48.723	6.531	48.501	6.501	49.046	6.575	47.518	6.370
Contribution Finland S	58.527	7.845	56.060	7.515	51.213	6.865	54.738	7.338
Contribution Norway	342.611	45.926	344.388	46.165	362.064	48.534	355.114	47.602
Contribution Sweden	5.581	748	1.818	244	2.238	300	2.191	294
ContributionDenmark	107.443	14.403	111.713	14.975	122.996	16.487	141.359	18.949
Contribution Estonia	28.562	3.829	29.594	3.967	31.459	4.217	31.507	4.223
ContributionLatvia	15.579	2.088	14.861	1.992	0	-	32.913	4.412
Contribution Lithuania	8.142	1.091	8.511	1.141	5.074	680	4.746	636
Other income	-	-	-	-	0	-	18.088	2.425
<b>Total income</b>	<b>1.594.747</b>	<b>213.773</b>	<b>1.644.883</b>	<b>220.494</b>	<b>1.766.741</b>	<b>236.829</b>	<b>1.824.094</b>	<b>244.517</b>
<b>Expenses</b>								
Bishop's salary, social costs & housing	743.448	99.658	752.550	100.878	781.846	104.805	840.463	112.663
Other salary, pension, social cost	771.007	103.352	582.746	78.116	613.518	82.241	673.373	90.264
Rent office, heating, electricity	126.100	16.903	148.015	19.841	155.374	20.828	159.521	21.384
Equipmet	24.414	3.273	11.001	1.475	48.745	6.534	11.749	1.575
Office material	6.183	829	11.104	1.488	10.656	1.428	14.140	1.895
Printing & copying	5.483	735	8.924	1.196	5.152	691	7.207	966
Travel expenses	- 19.285	- 2.585	2.890	387	28.490	3.819	5.460	732
Professional entertainment	16.146	2.164	14.750	1.977	7.537	1.010	20.345	2.727
Telephone and postage	43.728	5.862	33.143	4.443	52.557	7.045	48.266	6.470
audit & accountancy assistance	15.250	2.044	13.860	1.858	18.785	2.518	19.560	2.622
miscellaneous	12.562	1.684	18.816	2.522	14.873	1.994	14.525	1.947
financial costs	416	56	5.799	777	3.494	468	6.005	805
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>1.745.452</b>	<b>233.975</b>	<b>1.603.598</b>	<b>214.960</b>	<b>1.741.027</b>	<b>233.382</b>	<b>1.820.614</b>	<b>244.050</b>
Net profit/loss of the year	- 150.705	- 20.202	41.285	5.534	25.714	3.447	3.480	466
Episcopal Fund Balance sheet 2020 - 2023 exchange rate DKK - Euro = 7,46								
	2016	2016	2017	2017	2018	2018	2019	2019
<b>Assets</b>								
Accounts receivable	85.469	11.457	83.330	11.170	79.162	10.612	130764	17.529
Fixed term deposit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cash and Bank Deposits	1.385.016	185.659	1.448.448	194.162	1.476.210	197.883	1592405	213.459
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>1.470.485</b>	<b>197.116</b>	<b>1.531.778</b>	<b>205.332</b>	<b>1.555.372</b>	<b>208.495</b>	<b>1723169</b>	<b>230.988</b>
<b>Equity and liabilities</b>								
reserved for housing	482.135	64.629	482.135	64.629	482.135	64.629	482.135	64.629
reserve fund	882.192	118.256	923.477	123.790	949.191	127.237	976310	130.873
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>1.364.327</b>	<b>182.886</b>	<b>1.405.612</b>	<b>188.420</b>	<b>1.431.326</b>	<b>191.867</b>	<b>1.458.445</b>	<b>195.502</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>								
Accounts payable	14.000	1.877	4.015	538	11.888	1.594	0	-
Taxes, Social security	40.889	5.481	57.151	7.661	42.158	5.651	192339	25.783
Salaries and holiday pay	51.269	6.873	65.000	8.713	70.000	9.383	175000	23.458
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>106.158</b>	<b>14.230</b>	<b>126.166</b>	<b>16.912</b>	<b>124.046</b>	<b>16.628</b>	<b>367339</b>	<b>49.241</b>
<b>Total Equity and liabilities</b>	<b>1.470.485</b>	<b>197.116</b>	<b>1.531.778</b>	<b>205.332</b>	<b>1.555.372</b>	<b>208.495</b>	<b>1.825.784</b>	<b>244.743</b>

Episcopal fund income statement 2020 - 2023

DKK in black, Euro in blue exchange rate 1 euro = 7,46 DKK

Income	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022	2023	2023
Contribution GCFA	1.031.706	138.298	1.063.587	142.572	1.090.721	146.209	1.164.766	156.135
Contribution Finland F	48.317	6.477	45.961	6.161	47.039	6.305	49.246	6.601
Contribution Finland S	47.234	6.332	57.088	7.653	53.046	7.111	46.206	6.194
Contribution Norway	359.941	48.249	356.099	47.734	365.742	49.027	333.255	44.672
Contribution Sweden	2.213	297	2.413	323	2.162	290	2.075	278
ContributionDenmark	141.062	18.909	129.079	17.303	131.042	17.566	139.127	18.650
Contribution Estonia	31.428	4.213	31.428	4.213	31.374	4.206	15.734	2.109
ContributionLatvia	14.826	1.987	13.168	1.765	6519	874	16.629	2.229
Contribution Lithuania	5.345	716	6.998	938	3.091	414	5.053	677
Other income	-	-	-	-	-	-	209	28
<b>Total income</b>	<b>1.682.072</b>	<b>225.479</b>	<b>1.705.821</b>	<b>228.662</b>	<b>1.730.736</b>	<b>232.002</b>	<b>1.772.300</b>	<b>237.574</b>
<b>Expenses</b>								
Bishop's salary , social costs & housing	785.946	105.355	828.801	111.099	837.544	112.271	857.735	114.978
Other salary, pension, social cost	593.804	79.598	617.572	82.784	572.729	76.773	602.758	80.799
Rent office, heating, electricity	163.293	21.889	170.185	22.813	177.208	23.754	183.715	24.627
Equipmet	4.113	551	112	15	0	-	1.111	149
Office material	15.884	2.129	7.273	975	8.788	1.178	9.865	1.322
Printing & copying	1.367	183	7.032	943	3.970	532	4.794	643
Travel expenses	5.156	691	118	16	9.739	1.305	4.032	540
Professional entertainment	1.724	231	5.639	756	11.621	1.558	17.736	2.377
Telephone and postage	44.073	5.908	71.691	9.610	75.583	10.132	63.739	8.544
audit & accountancy assistance	20.335	2.726	21.210	2.843	23.610	3.165	25.110	3.366
miscellaneous	19.497	2.614	29.479	3.952	15.367	2.060	16.068	2.154
financial costs	3.241	434	3.279	440	2.337	313	631	85
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>1.658.433</b>	<b>222.310</b>	<b>1.762.391</b>	<b>236.245</b>	<b>1.738.496</b>	<b>233.042</b>	<b>1.787.294</b>	<b>239.584</b>
Net profit/loss of the year	<b>23.639</b>	<b>3.169</b>	<b>- 56.570</b>	<b>- 7.583</b>	<b>- 7.760</b>	<b>- 1.040</b>	<b>- 14.994</b>	<b>- 2.010</b>

Episcopal Fund Balance sheet 2020 - 2023 exchange rate DKK - Euro = 7,46

DKK in black, Euro in blue

	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022	2023	2023
<b>Assets</b>								
Accounts receivable	74.987	10.052	60.554	8.117	106.725	14.306	60.688	8.135
Fixed term deposit	1.200.000	160.858	1.200.000	160.858	1.200.000	160.858	1.200.000	160.858
Cash and Bank Deposits	550.797	73.833	240.416	32.227	233.289	31.272	320.701	42.989
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>1.825.784</b>	<b>244.743</b>	<b>1.500.970</b>	<b>201.202</b>	<b>1.540.014</b>	<b>206.436</b>	<b>1.581.389</b>	<b>211.982</b>
<b>Equity and liabilities</b>								
reserved for housing	482.135	64.629	482.135	64.629	482.135	64.629	482.135	64.629
reserve fund	976.310	130.873	919.740	123.290	911.980	122.249	896.986	120.239
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>1.458.445</b>	<b>195.502</b>	<b>1.401.875</b>	<b>187.919</b>	<b>1.394.115</b>	<b>186.879</b>	<b>1.379.121</b>	<b>184.869</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>								
Accounts payable	-	-	2.444	328	100.000	13.405	110.872	14.862
Taxes, Social security	192.339	25.783	94.951	12.728	45.899	6.153	89.696	12.024
Salaries and holiday pay	175.000	23.458	1.700	228	0	-	1.700	228
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>367.339</b>	<b>49.241</b>	<b>99.095</b>	<b>13.284</b>	<b>145.899</b>	<b>19.558</b>	<b>202.268</b>	<b>27.114</b>
<b>Total Equity and liabilities</b>	<b>1.825.784</b>	<b>244.743</b>	<b>1.500.970</b>	<b>201.202</b>	<b>1.540.014</b>	<b>206.436</b>	<b>1.581.389</b>	<b>211.982</b>



## 11c The Area Fund

Area Fund, Nordic and Baltic Area 2016 - 2019								
DKK in black, Euro in blue								
	2016	2016	2017	2017	2018	2018	2019	2019
<b>Income</b>								
Baltic Salary support	297.059	39.820	158.475	21.243	149.643	20.059	285.021	38.207
School of Congregational Development	-	-	-	-	0	-	123.634	16.573
Area projects	7.000	938	-	-	53.611	7.186	5.824	781
Area Cabinet	-	-	26.222	3.515	26.460	3.547	45.419	6.088
Wesleyan Means	-	-	65.000	8.713	0	-	4.936	662
other income	-	-	-	-	0	-	13.000	1.743
<b>Total income</b>	<b>304.059</b>	<b>40.759</b>	<b>249.697</b>	<b>33.471</b>	<b>229.714</b>	<b>30.793</b>	<b>477.834</b>	<b>64.053</b>
<b>Expenses</b>								
Baltic Salary support	186.398	24.986	169.602	22.735	186.735	25.032	351.849	47.165
School of Congregational Development	9.390	1.259	-	-	0	-	278.046	37.272
Church planting	31.258	4.190	14.930	2.001	24.558	3.292	-	-
European Board on Alcohol & Drug conc	1.555	-	20.970	2.811	0	-	-	-
Grants from Wesleyan Means	-	-	25.908	3.473	57.338	7.686	69.502	9.317
Area cabinet	- 15.060	- 2.019	29.244	3.920	31.783	4.260	40.585	5.440
Area projects	-	-	-	-	4.988	669	54.261	7.274
Other costs	-	-	11.308	1.516	0	-	-	-
financial costs	-	-	6.123	821	2.945	395	2.976	399
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>213.541</b>	<b>28.625</b>	<b>278.085</b>	<b>37.277</b>	<b>308.347</b>	<b>41.333</b>	<b>797.219</b>	<b>106.866</b>
Net profit/loss of the year	<b>90.518</b>	<b>12.134</b>	<b>- 28.388</b>	<b>- 3.805</b>	<b>- 78.633</b>	<b>- 10.541</b>	<b>- 319.385</b>	<b>- 42.813</b>
Area Fund Balance sheet 2016 - 2020 exchange rate DKK - Euro = 7,46								
	2016	2016	2017	2017	2018	2018	2019	2019
<b>Assets</b>								
Accounts receivable	2.116	284	0	-	0	-	13.000	1.743
Fixed term deposit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cash and Bank Deposits	1.207.140	161.815	1.327.582	177.960	1.102.235	147.753	769.850	103.197
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>1.209.256</b>	<b>162.099</b>	<b>1.327.582</b>	<b>177.960</b>	<b>1.102.235</b>	<b>147.753</b>	<b>782.850</b>	<b>104.940</b>
<b>Equity and liabilities</b>								
Baltic Salary and Pension support	487.678	65.372	476.551	63.881	439.459	58.909	372.631	49.951
European Board on Alcohol & Drug	20.970	2.811	0	-	0	-	-	-
Nordic Theological Means	- 3.691	- 495	35.401	4.745	-24.882	- 3.335	-89.448	- 11.990
School of Congregational Development	265.341	35.568	265.341	35.568	265.341	35.568	110.929	14.870
area cabinet	48.649	6.521	45.627	6.116	40.304	5.403	45.138	6.051
area projects	-	-	-	-	171.820	23.032	133.407	17.883
Church Planting	249.681	33.469	234.751	31.468	210.193	28.176	210193	28.176
capital reserve	140.628	18.851	123.197	16.514	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>1.209.256</b>	<b>162.099</b>	<b>1.180.868</b>	<b>158.293</b>	<b>1.102.235</b>	<b>147.753</b>	<b>782.850</b>	<b>104.940</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>								
Accounts payable	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	-
Other current liabilities	-	-	146.714	19.667	0	-	0	-
	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>146.714</b>	<b>19.667</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total Equity and liabilities</b>	<b>1.209.256</b>	<b>162.099</b>	<b>1.327.582</b>	<b>177.960</b>	<b>1.102.235</b>	<b>147.753</b>	<b>782.850</b>	<b>104.940</b>

Area Fund, Nordic and Baltic Area 2020 - 2023								
DKK in black, Euro in blue								
	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022	2023	2023
<b>Income</b>								
Baltic Salary support	122.403	16.408	175.553	23.533	114.331	15.326	142.694	19.128
School of Congregational Development	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-
Area projects	2.128	285	70.000	9.383	70.275	9.420	88.040	11.802
Area Cabinet	7.000	938	25.109	3.366	16.029	2.149	47.446	6.360
Wesleyan Means	2.175	292	300.000	40.214	0	-	-	-
Support Ukraine			-	-	139.164	18.655	10.229	1.371
other income	15	2	-	-	0	-	-	-
<b>Total income</b>	<b>133.721</b>	<b>17.925</b>	<b>570.662</b>	<b>76.496</b>	<b>339.799</b>	<b>45.549</b>	<b>288.409</b>	<b>38.661</b>
<b>Expenses</b>								
Baltic Salary support	172.273	23.093	171.615	23.005	171.662	23.011	157.070	21.055
School of Congregational Development	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-
Church planting	28.695	3.847	-	-	0	-	-	-
European Board on Alcohol & Drug conc	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-
Grants from Wesleyan Means	16.844	2.258	37.020	4.962	39.420	5.284	47.955	6.428
Area cabinet	7.850	1.052	33.413	4.479	13.724	1.840	66.313	8.889
Area projects	46.298	6.206	4.609	618	14.252	1.910	196.475	26.337
support Ukraine					14.394	1.929	44.648	5.985
Other costs	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-
financial costs	1.070	143	1.898	254	2.845	381	2	0
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>273.030</b>	<b>36.599</b>	<b>248.555</b>	<b>33.318</b>	<b>256.297</b>	<b>34.356</b>	<b>512.463</b>	<b>68.695</b>
Net profit/loss of the year	- 139.309	- 18.674	322.107	43.178	83.502	11.193	- 224.054	- 30.034

Area Fund Balance sheet 2020 - 2023 exchange rate DKK - Euro = 7,46

	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022	2023	2023
<b>Assets</b>								
Accounts receivable	-	-	70.000	9.383	100.000	13.405	110.872	14.862
Fixed term deposit	600.000	80.429	600.000	80.429	600.000	80.429	600.000	80.429
Cash and Bank Deposits	66.626	8.931	297.366	39.861	349.150	46.803	136.787	18.336
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>666.626</b>	<b>89.360</b>	<b>967.366</b>	<b>129.674</b>	<b>1.049.150</b>	<b>140.637</b>	<b>847.659</b>	<b>113.627</b>
<b>Equity and liabilities</b>								
Baltic Salary and Pension support	322.761	43.266	326.699	43.793	269.368	36.108	254.992	34.181
Nordic Theological Means	- 104.117	- 13.957	156.965	21.041	114.700	15.375	66.743	8.947
School of Congregational Development	110.929	14.870	110.929	14.870	110.929	14.870	110.929	14.870
area cabinet	44.288	5.937	35.984	4.824	38.289	5.133	19.422	2.603
area projects	79.213	10.618	144.604	19.384	200.627	26.894	92.192	12.358
Church Planting	181.498	24.329	181.498	24.329	181.498	24.329	181.498	24.329
Other equity - support for Ukraine	8.969	1.202	8.969	1.202	133.739	17.927	99320	13.314
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>643.541</b>	<b>86.266</b>	<b>965.648</b>	<b>129.443</b>	<b>1.049.150</b>	<b>140.637</b>	<b>825.096</b>	<b>110.603</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>								
Other current liabilities	23.085	3.095	1.718	230	0	-	22.563	3.025
	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>23.085</b>	<b>3.095</b>	<b>1.718</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total Equity and liabilities</b>	<b>666.626</b>	<b>89.360</b>	<b>967.366</b>	<b>129.674</b>	<b>1.049.150</b>	<b>140.637</b>	<b>847.659</b>	<b>113.627</b>

## 11d The Nordic Means for Theological Education

The Nordic Means for Wesleyan Theology Income Statement 2016 - 2019								
DKK in black, Euro in blue								
	2016	2016	2017	2017	2018	2018	2019	2019
<b>Income</b>								
Dividends	89.494	11.997	321	43	69.460	9.311	41.375	5.546
reevaluation of shares (or sale)	53.926	7.229	117.012	15.685		-	278.410	37.320
interest	4	1	1	0		-	-	-
<b>Total income</b>	<b>143.424</b>	<b>19.226</b>	<b>117.334</b>	<b>15.728</b>	<b>69.460</b>	<b>9.311</b>	<b>319.785</b>	<b>42.867</b>
<b>Expenses</b>								
Trust department fee	48	6	5.742	770	13.652	1.830	15.683	2.102
deevaluation of shares (or sale)	-	-	74.067	9.929	173.762	23.292	-	-
Grants	36.795	4.932	211	28	0	-	-	-
interest expense					18	2	-	-
Audit	10.000	1.340	10.000	1.340	0	-	-	-
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>46.843</b>	<b>6.279</b>	<b>70.020</b>	<b>9.386</b>	<b>187.432</b>	<b>25.125</b>	<b>15.683</b>	<b>2.102</b>
<b>Net profit/loss of the year</b>	<b>96.581</b>	<b>12.947</b>	<b>47.314</b>	<b>6.342</b>	<b>- 117.972</b>	<b>- 15.814</b>	<b>304.102</b>	<b>40.764</b>

The Nordic Means for Wesleyan Theology Balance Sheet 2016 - 2019								
	2016	2016	2017	2017	2018	2018	2019	2019
<b>Assets</b>								
Fixed assets account 9934274	2.983.546	399.939	3.095.216	414.908	2.977.270	399.098	3.281.328	439.856
Cash and Bank Deposits	79.433	10.648	5.077	681	5.051	677	5.095	683
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>3.062.979</b>	<b>410.587</b>	<b>3.100.293</b>	<b>415.589</b>	<b>2.982.321</b>	<b>399.775</b>	<b>3.286.423</b>	<b>440.539</b>
<b>Equity and liabilities</b>								
<b>Restricted equity</b>		-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Madsen's Fund	1.178.774	158.013	1.178.774	158.013	1.178.774	158.013	1.178.774	158.013
Wahlstöm's Fund	101.199	13.566	101.199	13.566	101.199	13.566	101.199	13.566
Odd Hagen's Fund	635.174	85.144	635.174	85.144	635.174	85.144	635.174	85.144
<b>total restricted equity</b>	<b>1.915.147</b>	<b>256.722</b>	<b>1.915.147</b>	<b>256.722</b>	<b>1.915.147</b>	<b>256.722</b>	<b>1.915.147</b>	<b>256.722</b>
<b>Capital</b>		-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Madsen's Fund	442.699	59.343	442.699	59.343	442.699	59.343	442.699	59.343
Wahlstöm's Fund	48.343	6.480	48.343	6.480	48.343	6.480	48.343	6.480
Odd Hagen's Fund	137.677	18.455	137.677	18.455	137.677	18.455	137.677	18.455
<b>Total Capital</b>	<b>628.719</b>	<b>84.279</b>	<b>628.719</b>	<b>84.279</b>	<b>628.719</b>	<b>84.279</b>	<b>628.719</b>	<b>84.279</b>
For distribution, primo	412.532	55.299	509.113	68.246	556.427	74.588	438.455	58.774
grants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
allocated from income statement	96.581	12.947	47.314	6.342	- 117.972	- 15.814	304.102	40.764
<b>For distribution</b>	<b>509.113</b>		<b>556.427</b>		<b>438.455</b>		<b>742.557</b>	
<b>total equity</b>	<b>3.052.979</b>	<b>409.247</b>	<b>3.100.293</b>	<b>415.589</b>	<b>2.982.321</b>	<b>399.775</b>	<b>3.286.423</b>	<b>440.539</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>								
Other current liabilities	10.000	1.340	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Equity and liabilities</b>	<b>3.062.979</b>	<b>410.587</b>	<b>3.100.293</b>	<b>415.589</b>	<b>2.982.321</b>	<b>399.775</b>	<b>3.286.423</b>	<b>440.539</b>

The Nordic Means for Wesleyan Theology Income Statement 2020 - 2023								
	DKK	Euro	DKK	Euro	DKK	Euro	DKK	Euro
	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022	2023	2023
<b>Income</b>								
Dividends	89.628	12.014	303	41	79.397	10.643	112.476	15.077
Revaluation of shares (or sale)	67.253	9.015	313.832	42.069	0	-	145.599	19.517
interest	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-
<b>Total income</b>	<b>156.881</b>	<b>21.030</b>	<b>314.135</b>	<b>42.109</b>	<b>79.397</b>	<b>10.643</b>	<b>258.075</b>	<b>34.595</b>
<b>Expenses</b>								
Trust department fee	8.901	1.193	17.704	2.373	23.863	3.199	23.003	3.084
Devaluation of shares (or sale)	-	-	-	-	615.215	82.468	-	-
Grants	-	-	300.000	40.214	0	-	-	-
interest expense	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-
Audit	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>8.901</b>	<b>1.193</b>	<b>317.704</b>	<b>42.588</b>	<b>639.078</b>	<b>85.667</b>	<b>23.003</b>	<b>3.084</b>
Net profit/loss of the year	<b>147.980</b>	<b>19.836</b>	<b>- 3.569</b>	<b>- 478</b>	<b>- 559.681</b>	<b>- 75.024</b>	<b>235.072</b>	<b>31.511</b>

The Nordic Means for Wesleyan Theology Balance Sheet 2020 - 2023								
	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022	2023	2023
<b>Assets</b>								
Fixed assets account 9934274	3.432.842	460.166	3.429.385	459.703	2.869.597	384.664	3.104.910	416.208
Cash and Bank Deposits	1.561	209	1.449	194	1.556	209	1.315	176
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>3.434.403</b>	<b>460.376</b>	<b>3.430.834</b>	<b>459.897</b>	<b>2.871.153</b>	<b>384.873</b>	<b>3.106.225</b>	<b>416.384</b>
<b>Equity and liabilities</b>								
<b>Restricted equity</b>								
Madsen's Fund	1.178.774	158.013	1.178.774	158.013	1.178.774	158.013	1.178.774	158.013
Wahlstöm's Fund	101.199	13.566	101.199	13.566	101.199	13.566	101.199	13.566
Odd Hagen's Fund	635.174	85.144	635.174	85.144	635.174	85.144	635.174	85.144
<b>total restricted equity</b>	<b>1.915.147</b>	<b>256.722</b>	<b>1.915.147</b>	<b>256.722</b>	<b>1.915.147</b>	<b>256.722</b>	<b>1.915.147</b>	<b>256.722</b>
<b>Capital</b>								
Madsen's Fund	442.699	59.343	442.699	59.343	442.699	59.343	442.699	59.343
Wahlstöm's Fund	48.343	6.480	48.343	6.480	48.343	6.480	48.343	6.480
Odd Hagen's Fund	137.677	18.455	137.677	18.455	137.677	18.455	137.677	18.455
<b>Total Capital</b>	<b>628.719</b>	<b>84.279</b>	<b>628.719</b>	<b>84.279</b>	<b>628.719</b>	<b>84.279</b>	<b>628.719</b>	<b>84.279</b>
For distribution, primo	742.557	99.538	890.537	119.375	886.968	118.897	327.287	43.872
grants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
allocated from income statement	147.980	19.836,46	- 3.569	- 478,42	- 559.681	- 75.024,26	235.072	31.510,99
<b>For distribution</b>	<b>890.537</b>		<b>886.968</b>		<b>327.287</b>		<b>562.359</b>	
<b>total equity</b>	<b>3.434.403</b>	<b>460.376</b>	<b>3.430.834</b>	<b>459.897</b>	<b>2.871.153</b>	<b>384.873</b>	<b>3.106.225</b>	<b>416.384</b>
Other current liabilities								
<b>Total Equity and liabilities</b>	<b>3.434.403</b>	<b>460.376</b>	<b>3.430.834</b>	<b>459.897</b>	<b>2.871.153</b>	<b>384.873</b>	<b>3.106.225</b>	<b>416.384</b>

## 11e Auditors Report

The Nordic & Baltic Episcopal Area  
Rigensgade 21 A st.,  
1316 København K

Roskilde 27-02-2025

### Independent Auditors Report

To The Central conference Council of the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference

Report on the financial statements

We have audited the financial statements, which comprise a summary of significant accounting policies, income statement, balance sheet and notes for the funds. The financial statements are prepared in accordance with the Danish Financial Statements Act for the following funds in the Nordic and Baltic Area of United Methodist Church for the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2023:

- Episcopal Fund, Copenhagen, showing a total loss of DKK 135.911 (2016-2023)
- Area Fund, Nordic and Baltic, showing a total loss of DKK 293.642 (2016-2023)
- Central Conference Fund, showing a total profit of DKK 422. (2016-2023)
- Nordic Means for Wesleyan Theology, showing a total profit of DKK 149.827 (2016-2023)
- Unrestricted Liquid Cash Fund, showing a total profit of DKK 108.060 (2016-2023)

### The Council's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

The Council is responsible for the presentation and preparation of the funds financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with the Danish Financial Statements Act. This re-sponsibility includes: Designing, implementing and maintaining internal control relevant for the presentation and preparation of the Company's financial statements that give a true and fair view, free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies; and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

### Auditor's Responsibility and Basis of Opinion

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the funds financial statements based on our audits. We conducted our audits in accordance with Danish Standards on Auditing. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audits to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the funds financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the funds financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the

risks of material misstatements in the funds financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's presentation and preparation of the funds financial statements that give a true and fair view in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the funds internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the Council, as well as the overall presentation of the funds financial statements. We believe that the audit evidences we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

The audits have not resulted in any qualification.

#### Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the funds financial positions at 31 December 2023 and of the results of the funds operations for 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2023 in accordance with the Danish Financial Statements Act.

Roskilde,

Mer Revision

---

Daniel Jacobsen  
Certified Public Accountant

# 12 Statistical Report

## Norway

Document 1.1.1.1 Statistic overview Norway	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
A. Professing members	4.196	4.176	4.089	4.009	3.896	3.802	3.760	3.591
B. Baptized members under 18	1.540	1.482	1.414	1.393	1.320	1.306	1.237	1.176
C. Baptized members over 18	5.931	5.947	5.894	5.811	5.673	5.631	5.658	5.664
D. Associated and affiliated members	14	20	14	12	13	12	22	15
E. Total membership (A+B+C+D)	11.681	11.625	11.411	11.225	10.902	10.751	10.677	10.446
F. Contacts/friends								
G. Total community (E + F)	11.681	11.625	11.411	11.225	10.902	10.751	10.677	10.446
H. Children, scouts, youth ministry	1.581	1.565	1.271	1.116	925	883	1.048	698
I. Women's ministry	391	388	346	350	349	332	334	300
J. Men's ministry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
K. Lay Preachers	39	39	37	40	37	33	37	34
L. Clergy (local pastors, commissioned, elders and deacons - active and retired)	87	86	88	89	90	96	87	82
M. Local churches	47	47	47	47	45	43	43	40
N. Preaching points	48	48	48	48	46	44	44	41
O. Average Worship attendance	43	43	42	41	32	29	34	38
P. Persons in small groups	-			968	835	835	874	715

## Denmark

Document 1.1.1.1 Statistic overview Denmark	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
A. Professing members	1.228	1220	1224	1211	1159	1146	1119	1069
B. Baptized members under 18	368	410	418	419	430	437	440	407
C. Baptized members over 18	372	372	386	381	360	354	356	347
D. Associated and affiliated members	7	7	7	6	6	4	3	0
E. Total membership (A+B+C+D)	1975	2009	2035	2017	1955	1941	1918	1823
F. Contacts/friends	3765	3718	3787	3880	4197	4012	4100	3898
G. Total community (E + F)	5733	5727	5822	5897	6152	5953	6018	5721
H. Children, scouts, youth ministry	793	790	708	711	728	572	959	943
I. Women's ministry	55	51	52	57	59	51	51	47
J. Men's ministry	0	10	16	22	22	10	18	18
K. Lay Preachers	30	30	40	39	35	37	45	47
L. Clergy (local pastors, commissioned, elders and deacons - active and retired)	21	20	24	24	24	23	22	25
M. Local churches	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
N. Preaching points	13	13	13	13	13	13	14	14
O. Average Worship attendance	450	421	428	411	294	299	317	303
P. Persons in small groups	469	503	421	463	400	358	307	279

## Finland F

Document 1.1.1.1 Statistic overview Finland F	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
A. Professing members	797	799	788	773	734	730	735	730
B. Baptized members under 18	105	111	82	85	84	58	56	56
C. Baptized members over 18	15	11	15	9	10	15	10	10
D. Associated and affiliated members	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
E. Total membership (A+B+C+D)	917	921	885	867	824	803	801	796
F. Contacts/friends	1296	1166	1273	920	424	197	700	853
G. Total community (E + F)	2213	2087	2158	1787	1248	1000	1561	1649
H. Children, scouts, youth ministry	524	429	451	468	61	56	319	189
I. Women's ministry	126	105	98	86	73	98	97	101
J. Men's ministry	32	31	29	10	0	3	6	13
K. Lay Preachers	24	21	21	21	20	17	15	15
L. Clergy (local pastors, commissioned, elders and deacons - active and retired)	15	16	17	19	19	19	20	
M. Local churches	11	11	11	11	11	10	9	8
N. Preaching points	30	32	28	20	14	9	13	12
O. Average Worship attendance	315	290	281	239	226	169	196	188
P. Persons in small groups	410	539	584	416	109	139	106	92

## Finland S

Document 1.1.1.1 Statistic overview Finlands S	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
A. Professing members	675	651	608	585	566	561	549	538
B. Baptized members under 18	130	120	111	122	93	64	90	83
C. Baptized members over 18	256	276	204	190	229	149	264	212
D. Associated and affiliated members	24	37	35	14	14	13	15	13
E. Total membership (A+B+C+D)	1079	1067	1015	934	908	888	871	853
F. Contacts/friends	449	590	562	513	436	300	520	530
G. Total community (E + F)	1528	1657	1577	1447	1344	1188	1391	1383
H. Children, scouts, youth ministry	108	129	93	127	81	72	146	149
I. Women's ministry	72	40	45	18	19	13	38	32
J. Men's ministry	41	30	22	20	19	8	8	6
K. Lay Preachers	18	14	14	12	10	8	8	9
L. Clergy (local pastors, commissioned, elders and deacons - active and retired)	23	21	20	20	23	23	24	25
M. Local churches	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
N. Preaching points	19	18	19	18	18	18	18	18
O. Average Worship attendance	392	388	380	366	273	227	284	301
P. Persons in small groups	724	693	664	764	477	439	391	486



## Latvia

Document 1.1.1.1 Statistic overview <b>LATVIA</b>	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
A. Professing members	534	550	554	557	516	489	513	512
B. Baptized members under 18	222	247	266	274	274	278	280	267
C. Baptized members over 18	170	177	191	195	195	195	201	220
D. Associated and affiliated members	142	144	162	160	161	147	134	123
E. Total membership (A+B+C+D)	1.068	1.118	1.173	1.186	1.146	1.109	1.128	1.122
F. Contacts/friends								
G. Total community (E + F)	1068	1118	1173	1186	1146	1109	1128	1122
H. Children, scouts, youth ministry	222	174	180	166	127	105	92	86
I. Women's ministry	0	0	0	0	20	20	20	20
J. Men's ministry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
K. Lay Preachers	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	15
L. Clergy (local pastors, commissioned, elders and deacons - active and retired)	14	14	14	14	13	13	13	13
M. Local churches	12	12	12	12	11	11	10	10
N. Preaching points	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
O. Average Worship attendance	142	272	241	257	221	165	165	173
P. Persons in small groups	0	0	0	0	10	10	10	12

## Lithuania

Document 1.1.1.1 Statistic overview Lithuania	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
A. Professing members	439	389	386	361	330	328	308	317
B. Baptized members under 18	33	25	37	17	43	51	49	61
C. Baptized members over 18	36	19	33	81	25	82	72	57
D. Associated and affiliated members	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
E. Total membership (A+B+C+D)	509	433	456	459	396	461	430	435
F. Contacts/friends	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
G. Total community (E + F)	509	433	456	459	396	461	430	435
H. Children, scouts, youth ministry	61	50	30	22	44	21	16	12
I. Women's ministry	33	23	15	10	3	8	6	6
J. Men's ministry	0	7	7	14	4	4	0	9
K. Lay Preachers	7	5	3	3	1	3	1	2
L. Clergy (local pastors, commissioned, elders and deacons - active and retired)	6	6	4	4	4	4	3	3
M. Local churches	9	9	8	7	7	7	6	6
N. Preaching points	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
O. Average Worship attendance	165	201	118	106	79	68	74	77
P. Persons in small groups								

## Ukraine

Document 1.1.1.1 Statistic overview Ukraine	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
A. Professing members	870	875	880	870	860	855	570	587
B. Baptized members under 18	70	70	75	72	68	65	41	51
C. Baptized members over 18	565	570	560	555	550	545	320	335
D. Associated and affiliated members	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
E. Total membership (A+B+C+D)	1505	1515	1512	1493	1475	1460	931	983
F. Contacts/friends	1100	1095	1110	1120	1130	1140	770	792
G. Total community (E + F)	2605	2610	2622	2613	2605	2600	1701	1775
H. Children, scouts, youth ministry	100	95	98	102	105	107	47	59
I. Women's ministry	120	122	125	123	120	118	82	91
J. Men's ministry	70	72	74	73	71	70	33	30
K. Lay Preachers	20	21	20	22	23	23	12	13
L. Clergy (local pastors,	16	16	16	17	16	15	10	10
M. Local churches	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	11
N. Preaching points	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
O. Average Worship attendance	635	640	630	620	610	600	410	420
P. Persons in small groups	340	345	342	338	335	330	220	230

# 13 Ecumenical reports

## 13a The Conference of European Churches

### **Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference, 2025**

Sarah Tiainen

#### **Most important topics during the quadrennium**

Focus on a Just Peace in Ukraine:

Addressing the Christian response to conflicts, particularly in the context of the ongoing war, and integrating the [Pathways to Peace](#) initiative into CEC's core programming.

Climate Catastrophe and Environmental Responsibility:

Highlighting the church's role in responding to environmental challenges and advocating for action on climate change.

Refugee and Migration Issues:

Emphasizing the importance of supporting marginalized groups, including refugees and immigrants, as a key area of concern.

Christian Witness in Secularized Europe:

Discussing how churches can collaborate to present Christianity in an increasingly secularized European context.

#### **Important Information for the Central Conference**

Paradigm Shifts in Europe:

The CEC report underscored significant changes in Europe, notably the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, shaping political, cultural, and social landscapes.

Strategic Changes within CEC:

[The Call and Witness Strategy plan](#) prioritized Theology/Studies and Dialogue/Advocacy but resulted in defunding organizations like CCME and ECEN, raising concerns about neglecting practical care for creation and marginalized communities.

Charta Oecumenica:

The [Charta Oecumenica](#) is a joint document of CEC and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE). It was signed by the presidents of the two organisations in 2001 and seeks to preserve and develop fellowship among churches. Charta Oecumenica has played a crucial role in shaping the European ecumenical agenda. CEC and CCEE are now revising this landmark document to make it relevant in our current times.

## **Recommended Action Points to the Central Conference**

### **Strengthen Advocacy for Marginalized Voices:**

Advocate for continued funding and focus on practical initiatives addressing migration, refugees, and environmental issues alongside theological dialogue.

### **Enhance Inclusivity for Smaller Protestant Churches:**

There was limited representation from smaller Protestant and Wesleyan traditions during the last CEC Assembly in 2023, including the absence of the Methodist Church in Britain. This highlights a need to address inclusivity within CEC decision-making. The recommendation is to foster greater participation and influence for smaller denominations within CEC's structures to ensure balanced representation.

### **Deepen Engagement in Peacebuilding:**

Encourage churches to actively support the "Pathways to Peace" initiative and collaborate on conflict resolution efforts.

## **13b The Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe**

Our Central Conference signed the Leuenberg Concordia in 1994 and joined the Communion of Protestant Church in Europe (CPCE).

The agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, Folkekirken and the annual conference in Denmark is perceived as a local extension of the Leuenberg Concordia. While the parallel agreement in Norway was supported through the signing of the Leuenberg Concordia.

“In the light of Christ – called to hope” – this was the theme of the 9th General Assembly of the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), which took place in the early fall of 2024 in Sibiu, Romania. One hundred delegates from 70 member churches and more than 100 advisors, guests, stewards and other staff participated in the assembly. Rev dr. Jørgen Thaarup, who earlier represented the Methodist churches in Europe on the council of CPCE, participated as theological advisor, while I participated as delegate from the central conference. During the assembly we had good collaboration with other Methodist delegates as well as with the delegations from the Nordic countries.

Celebrating Sunday morning worship in local churches offered the opportunity to connect with the dynamic United Methodist Church in Sibiu.

CPCE is a living communion and a platform of the churches sharing together. A new strategy “Being Church Together in the Light of Hope” was introduced. It includes the following accents.

- (i) paying attention to issues of sustainability and resource conservation,
- (ii) practical and creative forms of reception of the results of CPCE work, and
- (iii) flexibility to respond to unforeseen events.

In a panel discussion, participants of the Assembly from Northern Ireland, Croatia, Ukraine and Russia shared their experiences and reflections on the role of the church in times of war and violent conflicts. They all highlighted the importance of embodying Christian hope in the challenges faced.

While many small national protestant churches in Eastern Europe perceive CPCE as their primary international ecumenical forum and wishes the CPCE to take on several programmatic tasks, we remain mainly interested in the theological work of CPCE.

The assembly recommended the following theological documents for study in the member churches: “Christian Speaking of God”, “Practice and theology of the Lord's Supper” and “Church and Democracy”

Discussion of these documents is likely to mainly take place in the bilateral dialogue groups between Lutherans and Methodists in the Nordic countries.

In closing, I wish to thank rev. dr. Jørgen Thaarup for his competent and longstanding commitment to the theological work of CPCE, and for his efforts to keep the church updated on recent developments.

*Christian Alsted*

## 13c The European Methodist Council 2016-2025

Important topics discussed:

**Migration:** 2016 meeting focused on the topic, and since 2017, EMC task group has provided liturgical resources including updated information about migration and refugees in Europe, as well as prayers, suggested Bible readings and hymns. The liturgy is suggested to use by all member churches of the EMC on the Sunday closest to the 20<sup>th</sup> June, which is International Refugee Day.

**Methodist/Wesleyan community in Europe:** Since 2015, EMC task group was working on the community agreement and on 10 September 2017, the leaders of the member Churches of the EMC signed the 'Community Agreement' at Wesley's Chapel in London. The need for such agreement arose out of the awareness that, despite having a constitution as a Council, there was no formal commitment to co-operation across Europe. The Agreement outlines mutual commitments to one another and will help the wider Methodist family to reflect on its future relationships as Methodist, Wesleyan and Uniting Churches as well as inform potential member churches about the EMC's identity. Becoming a member of the Council is based on the member church's willingness to sign the agreement.

**Climate change:** 2019 meeting focused on the topic and resulted on pledges on climate change.

**Wesleyan Theology in Europe:** in 2019, EMC formed a new task group facilitated by Jørgen Thaarup with the task to gather information about academic work on Wesleyan Theology in Europe. In 2021, EMC published a bibliography of theological academic works from all Wesleyan traditions in Europe.

**COVID-19 and vaccination:** Together with the European Commission on Mission (ECOM), EMC signed the document calling for Vaccine Equity in the global response to Covid-19.

To some extent, the EMC has over the last period developed some level of parallel structures to what we have in the UMC, even though it is another scale. What is special and interesting for us is that the parallel structures on the issue of Theological Education and Mission is the contextuality to Europe and the broader fellowship with several other Wesleyan traditions, first of all the British and Irish. This parallel structure might become even more important in the future, when the UMC is going into a process of regionalization, a process where we do not know today the results.

The EMC plays a crucial role in offering UMC input into broader European Methodism, balancing the influence from the US context with each region's local experience and wisdom, with regard both to theology and ministry. This is a place for mutual learning as the context is our common situation and history in Europe, and EMC joins together several Wesleyan churches coming

out of the inspiration from the British, Anglican Wesleyan theologians. EMC offers a theology of the region and a focus to be contextual, incarnational and lift up the point that the church can only grow or die on the local church level.

As the EMC is a council in Europe with member churches only from Europe, it is clear that EMC is working theologically in touch with the CPCE, Council of Protestant Churches in Europe where we also find the European context, and this context defines our communion with other church families, the Lutherans, the Reformed, and the United Churches.

Another important fact for us is the existence of Fund for Mission in Europe, a well-organized project-based support fund which facilitates local Methodist Churches helping and supporting other local Methodist Churches, all in the context of Europe.

*Submitted by Knut Refsdal, Jørgen Thaarup, and Meeli Tankler*

### 13d European Commission on Mission

The mission statement (2021 revised version) affirms that the European Commission on Mission (ECOM) is a fellowship of leaders and representatives of Methodist mission boards, mission agencies and task forces, or their equivalent in Europe, as well as the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). As such, ECOM exists, not so much as a decision-making body, but rather as a source of inspiration and mutual support in the respective missional endeavors. ECOM is furthermore regarded as a related organization within the European Methodist Council (EMC), and until 2024 has been reporting to EMC annually.

**2016 – 2024** ECOM has had annual in-person meetings in different European countries, except 2020, when due to the COVID pandemic disruptions the meeting was held on zoom. There have been other online meetings, based on the need. In 2024 there was an ECOM informal gathering during the World Methodist Conference in Gothenburg (August) and in addition a brief business session for some reporting and administrative matters on zoom in September.

ECOM meetings have emphasis on sharing, exchanging information related to European Methodist mission, and fellowship. The tradition is that each meeting also includes a theme for study, often introduced by a guest speaker from the host country.

In the last quadrennium, **the main items** that stand out in retrospect, would be

A statement on COVID-related justice „A call to Vaccine Equity for all“ in 2021 in Oslo, ending with a „... call for Vaccine Equity now, and for every person, leader and organization to do their part to ensure that access for all becomes a reality in our world today“. (September 19, 2021)

Intensified collaboration to support Ukraine in war (several online meetings and various communication during 2022)

Side meeting during the World Methodist Conference (August 2024) that offered participants of the conference opportunity to learn about European Methodists practicing partnership in mission globally

Leadership of ECOM throughout this period:

Andreas Stämpfli served as secretary until 2016. Mark Lewis was elected then and started in this position 2017 (until 2025). Bill Mullally chaired ECOM until 2020. Since then, Üllas Tankler is the chair.

### ***Recommended action points to the Central Conference***

We would like the CC consider ways the community of wider European Methodist mission could inspire the understanding, thinking and relevant practices of Methodists in this Central Conference to be engaged in mission both in their own countries as well as beyond.

Respectfully submitted by

Üllas Tankler, Mark Lewis, Øyvind Aske. 14th January 2025

## **13e The World Methodist Council**

To Northern Europe Central Conference 2025

World Methodist Council (WMC) is an inter confessional ecumenical structure for churches coming out of the Wesleyan tradition. United Methodist Church is the largest member church of WMC, but is a very small church within the WMC, where the membership counts 90 million confessing individuals.

The United Methodist Church are represented with delegates from all Central and Jurisdictional Conferences. UMC in Europe counts three church bodies, the three Central Conferences.

The most important function of WMC is representative and connectional. WMC is the global representative of the Wesleyan Church Family, giving the church-identity of our common values, history and theological tradition. However, the member churches of the WMC are not the same and have not developed the Wesleyan concept identically.

The most important activity of WMC is the quinquennium Council for delegates and church leaders, and the following Conference for all interested people. The work before the Council and Conference is where we find the inspiration from the WMC.

The last great event of WMC was the Council and Conference in Gothenburg, Sweden, August 2024, celebrated together with the Uniting Church of Sweden, one of the European member churches of WMC. This



Council and Conference was an extraordinary presentation of Scandinavian Methodism to the global fellowship of Methodist churches. And the Council and Conference gave inspiration to the many delegates from the churches of the UMC Northern Europe Central Conference. Another WMC Council and Conference will not take place in Europe in the first coming decades.

A special event of the Council and Conference is the peace price. This time one of the award recipients was Bishop Christian Alsted. This is really an honor, not only to Bishop Alsted, but also to our conference. The peace price was given as a recognition of Alsted's work in a war zone, but also as a recognition to the Methodist conference in Ukraine, that the work, they are doing, is peacemaker's work. Wesley's translation: "Happy are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" Matt. 5:9.

Three areas of work have to be recognized. First the work of ecumenism. WMC have continually ecumenical dialogues with other church bodies. On behalf of the member churches of WMC, theological Faith and Order documents have been signed after negotiations with the Roman Catholics and the Baptists. These documents are important for each of the member churches for ecumenical dialogues on European or national level.

Secondly the work with Methodist related Schools, Colleges and Universities. WMC host a very large network of institutions in the area of education, all institutions inspired by the pedagogic learning principles and didactic programs developed by John Wesley at his schools in Kingswood.

In addition to the work with higher education, Oxford Institute of Methodist Studies is a very important and independent work under the umbrella of WMC.

Thirdly the work of World Evangelism, an independent organization within the WMC. Even though the theology of evangelism and mission in this organization has not developed in line with other church organizations of mission, the World Evangelism of WMC have a great influence in many Methodist churches all over the globe.

Thank you for the opportunity to be the representatives from Northern Europe Central Conference in the last period.

Christian Alsted and Jørgen Thaarup

# 14 Collective report from our representatives on general agencies

## 14a Standing committee on Central Conference Matters

To Northern Europe Central Conference 2025

Standing committee on Central Conference Matters (StanCCM) is a body, directly organized by the General Conference, and has the same authority as the General Conference legislative committees in all legislation on Central Conference matters. The work of StanCCM is defined in the *Discipline* 2016 § 2201.

The General Conference has pointed out the intension to develop a Book of *Discipline*, where a larger part of the *Discipline* is adaptable by the Central Conferences. StanCCM has worked with the overall perspective of making a General Book of *Discipline*, paragraph by paragraph, and an adaptable Book of *Discipline*. First step is § 101 in *Discipline* 2016. Second step is already taken, but not brought to legislative level yet.

The General Conference has also taken the step to indicate that the future of the UMC has to be in a dramatic change of church structure, when regionalizing the church shall be the instrument. Because the idea of regionalization first of all are coming from the CC's power of adapting the *Discipline* in the context of the culture of the region, StanCCM is given the task to bring the paragraphs of the *Discipline* in shape to execute the regionalization of the global UMC. This is a major job, and a difficult job. A lot of this was already done before the GC 2024. It was first of all a lot of changes to the Constitution of the *Discipline*. Because changes of the Constitution are first decided when all Annual Conferences have approved the changes with high majority, all these paragraphs in the Constitution are not in the *Discipline* 2024.

StanCCM has a lot of work to do in the next quadrennium on the issue of General Book of *Discipline* and Adaptable Book of *Discipline*, and even more work to do on the issue on regionalizing the UMC, a process just started, even though we have talked about it during long time.

StanCCM has the function to help and assist those Annual Conferences that want to follow § 572 in the *Discipline* to become an autonomous Methodist Church. The Central Conference, extra session in March 2023, decided to support the four conferences in Eurasia to go into the process for being an autonomous Methodist Church, and on behalf of the General Conference, the StanCCM has assisted the four Eurasia conference to complete the process up to the approval of the General Conference 2024, and finally approval by the Northern Europe Central Conference.

In the previous quadrennium the StanCCM has looked over the function of the supervision of the UMC. The shorter wordings are: How many bishops and Central Conferences? The situation of growing churches and membership in Africa has stressed the need for more bishops and Central Conferences in Afrika, and the GC 2024 made a number of decisions to expand the function of bishops in Afrika. For the Philippines the issues about the episcopacy have also been discussed in the StanCCM.

The splitting of the UMC and the dramatic drop down of the finances and the statistics, first of all in US, has strongly lifted the critical issue: How many bishops does UMC afford in the Jurisdictions and the Central Conferences? In the US several Jurisdictions have reduced the number of bishops, and taken over the financing of some new bishops. In Africa the General Conference didn't grant the number of bishops needed for the mission of the church, and the Africans are frustrated. These changes raise a new question: What is the function of the general episcopal fund in the future UMC, and shall the Central Conferences finance some of their own bishops?

The situation in Europe is special because of the church splitting, the low statistics of all the episcopal areas, and the changes of the status of the Central Conferences to lose the power to elect bishops. StanCCM has a lot of work to do on the situation in Europe in the next quadrennium, including the future of the Northern Europe Central Conference.

Thank you for the opportunity to be board member of StanCCM from Northern Europe Central Conference in the period from 2016 to 2024.

Jørgen Thaarup

## 14b General Commission on Finances and Administration

I was elected as the European member of GCFA at the General Conference in Tampa in 2012. The first four years I served in the Committee **Legal Responsibilities and Corporate Governance**.

The committee worked with GCFA's responsibility to protect the legal interests of the denomination. Its purpose is to provide basic information about legal issues that are common to organizations throughout The United Methodist Church.

The Legal Services Department at GCFA has several disciplinary responsibilities:

- Safeguard and protect the interests and rights of the denomination
- Maintaining a file of legal briefs related to cases involving the denominational interests of The United Methodist Church

- Recommending uniform procedures for clergy housing allowances and preserving the tax-exempt status of the UMC's constituent organizations
- Supervise the use of the official United Methodist insignia, the Cross & Flame, and to supervise the use and maintain registrations of the name "United Methodist"

In 2016 I was reelected as a board member, and I served 8 years in the **Committee of Connectional outreach**. Because of the pandemic my term was prolonged as many other positions in the church.

I served as the chair of the committee.

The overall mission of the Committee is to make recommendations to GCFA on matters that will:

- encourage, enable and evaluate relationships and connections of GCFA with affiliated groups, agencies, conferences and local churches in their efforts to fulfill the Church's mission;
- facilitate and assist annual conferences and local churches in the areas of stewardship and administration,
- by providing software, data services, research, consulting, and training; and interpret the agency's work and develop specific recommendations concerning the responsibilities of GCFA as a connectional body.
- Providing, coordinating, and evaluating outreach services to annual conferences and local churches globally relating to the work of GCFA including, but not limited to
  - Information Technology
  - Data Services
  - Analysis and Research
  - Consulting Services
  - Meeting Planning
  - Financial Services

I am grateful to the church that has given me the opportunity to serv in these positions. Although many of the issues discussed in the committee and the board were related to USA, I found it meaningful to take part in the discussions and find solutions. I trierd to lift up the issues related to Europe and our challenges.

Per-Endre Bjørnevik

## 14c General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW)

Berit Westad, Drammen , Norway 2025.01.09

*What are the most important topics you have discussed during the Quadrennium?*

It has been a special period due to the pandemic, the current committee was asked to continue, in total I have served on this committee for 12 years. In the last period, there have mainly been meetings on Zoom, only once in person. The work has revolved around the committee's defined tasks such as registration of women's participation in UMC, competence building for women in accountability and leadership, and sexual ethics. Current website: [www.gcsr.org](http://www.gcsr.org)

*What is important for the Central Conference to know?*

Because of the General Conference's decision on regionalization, new opportunities open up for having a stronger focus on countries outside the United States. The expertise at GCSRW is used by some extent churches outside the UMC, but UMC-countries outside the United States have been relatively passive. This is expected to change the upcoming quad, we absolutely need their work. The understanding inside GCSRW-staff that UMC is more than the United States is increasing. This is an opportunity we must be aware and use. There should be an active strategy for this inside CC Europe as well.

*Recommended action points for the Central Conference?*

- It is the bishop who should formally be active and ensure contact with the GCSRW staff and regional representant.
- CC should be a part of the reporting system and initiate professional development in leadership, theology and sexual ethics within CC-area.
- It should be a goal for CC to invite the general secretary or other staff, depending on which subject the area want to focus to participate in every Central Conference. The goals are to build mutual understanding, respect and knowledge. They can also be used in Annual Conferences, Area Cabinets and regional gatherings.
- One possibility is to arrange at least once in the quadrennium a regional gathering focusing on the status and role of women within our area. This is particularly relevant regarding women's challenges in

leadership, pastoral role, and sexual ethics. It could be completed by a local COSROW on CC level.

- Seeking to expand the members of the committee from the Central Conferences, my area has been all of Europe and the graphic areas within Eurasia. This is nine time zones and it is completely impossible to have insight and be a spokesperson for such an area.

Greetings Gal. 3.28. "There are no difference between ..... men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus." Amen! Berit Westad.

## 14d General Board of Global Ministry

### **Rev. Øyvind Aske. Report of the two quadrenniums 2016 to 2024**

#### **2016**

We will soon gather in Atlanta to organize the board for a new quadrennium and, to reference our Mission Theology Statement, for the "Beginning of a New Mission Age." It will be the first directors' meeting at our new mission center and the first where we will plan our work around our new global connection structure involving offices in Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

This is an exciting time to be engaged in God's mission (Missio Dei) through Global Ministries and The United Methodist Church. You as directors have the opportunity to significantly impact our response to God's grace in Jesus Christ as we implement our new organizational design and set our missional priorities. God is truly leading us into a new mission age. (Thomas Kemper)

#### **Moving of Head Quarters to Atlanta**

The last quarter of 2016 marked the successful completion of a key step in Global Ministries'

regionalization plan, namely, moving the headquarters from New York City to Atlanta.

- In mid-October, the board of directors met for the first time in the renovated Midtown Atlanta facility at 458 Ponce de Leon Avenue and conducted a dedication ceremony.
- The quarter also saw a very wide range of new programmatic activities (see samples below), reflecting the Four Areas of Focus and Global Ministries' new organizational structure.
- Altogether, the quarter signaled successful culmination of Global Ministries' objectives for reshaping and relocating so that it can more fully support a worldwide church.

- Committed to stewardship and development of additional resources, Global Ministries continued forging shared agreements with other agencies, particularly related to operations.
- In December, toward the \$15 million capital costs of the headquarters, Global Ministries reported \$14.5 million secured to date, including gifts from ten first-time major donors.

**The 4 areas of focus:**

1. NEW & REVITALIZED CONGREGATIONS
2. CALLING & SHAPING PRINCIPLED CHRISTIAN LEADERS
3. MINISTRY WITH THE POOR
4. ABUNDANT HEALTH FOR ALL

**2017**

**1. NEW & REVITALIZED CONGREGATIONS**

- Highlighting a strength of being in Asia, Global Ministries' new office in Seoul, Korea, joined in March with the Asia Methodist Council to begin jointly envisioning ongoing mission in the region.
- Global Ministries' Center for Mission Innovation led in January a Fresh Expressions workshop on church renewal. More than 240 members attended from surrounding US annual conferences.
- During this quarter, Global Ministries, with Bishop Scott Jones of the Houston Episcopal Area, in a series of meetings in Laos, initiated the first steps toward registration of The United Methodist Church in Laos.

**2. CALLING & SHAPING PRINCIPLED CHRISTIAN LEADERS**

- To develop church leaders trained in fields related to the Four Areas of Focus, Global Ministries approved in March approximately \$707,000 in scholarships for US and international students.
- 220 young people have applied to the 2017 class of Global Mission Fellows, more than 100 since January, a fourfold increase since 2013. The Eurasia Youth Forum was held in St. Petersburg, Russia, in January.
- Since January, Global Ministries has provided "best practice" UMVIM trainings in the Western and Southeastern jurisdictions for mission volunteers, and in Buenos Aires for hosts of volunteers in mission.

### **3. MINISTRY WITH THE POOR**

- To support projects aimed at healthy living among the poor in DRC and Sudan, UMCOR's international offices received \$3 million during this quarter from government and other funders.
- The Center for Mission Innovation launched an “annual conference training module” to promote among conferences wisdom sharing and gleaning new best practices in ministry with the poor.
- UMCOR disaster response staff were deployed to resource annual conference staff responding to disasters in the Northeastern, Southeastern, and Western jurisdictions, and in Mozambique.

### **4. ABUNDANT HEALTH FOR ALL**

- Toward the UMC goal of life-saving interventions for one million children by 2020, Global Health projects during the first quarter of 2017 impacted over 155,000 children under five years of age.
- Over \$881,000 in grants were awarded to support health projects in food security, HIV, malaria control, and water and sanitation, spanning twelve countries and affecting 395,000 people.
- Malaria test kits and drugs were provided to 144,500 refugees in Uganda fleeing conflict and famine in South Sudan, and water and sanitation facilities were provided for 65,000 in Sudan.

## **2018**

### **1. CREATING AND SUSTAINING NEW PLACES FOR NEW PEOPLE**

#### **General Board of Global Ministries**

- To help the UMC of Burundi meet goals for doubling membership and opening 60 new churches, Global Ministries, GBHEM, and several partners announced plans to train 195 Burundian pastors by 2020.
- In October, Global Ministries approved \$811,705 for Nationals in Mission serving emerging and innovative ministries, predominantly congregational development, across 51 countries in all regions outside the US.
- Among eight missionaries commissioned in October, three will help lead a joint ministry revitalizing cross-border churches in the Argentinian Evangelical Methodist Church and the Methodist Church in Uruguay.

### **2. CALLING AND SHAPING PRINCIPLED CHRISTIAN LEADERS**



- To launch a new Missionary Practitioner Program with Candler, exposing students to 21<sup>st</sup> Century mission, Global Ministries received in October \$200,000 from the Atlanta-based Pitts Foundation.
- Methodists and ecumenical partners at the Roundtable for Peace on the Korean Peninsula, held at Global Ministries Nov 9-11, reaffirmed the church's role in making progress toward peace and denuclearization.
- In December, Global Ministries hosted in Atlanta an historic first-time Mission Ambassadors Summit for all mission leaders to share strategies strengthening Conference and jurisdictional mission collaborations.

### 3. MINISTRY WITH THE POOR

- Further building its support for Native American people, Global Ministries announced in October a new \$1 million UMCOR grant supporting safe drinking water systems for the Alaska Native Village of Newtok.
- A new class of 44 EarthKeepers, ranging widely in age from 13 to 80, was commissioned in November via an online service in Atlanta, bringing the environmental stewardship program to 132 people strong.
- Global Ministries' Seoul office, with UMCOR disaster specialists and the Korean Methodist Church, began key steps toward major relief efforts responding to earthquake and tsunami damage in central Indonesia.

### 4. ABUNDANT HEALTH FOR ALL

- Reaching 1 million children with health interventions by 2020 is a UMC goal whose success midway is impressive; in December Global Ministries reported 400,000 children in 30 countries have been treated.
- Zero HIV transmission to newborns is a UMC goal made more attainable by the Global Ministries-funded HIV education, counseling, testing, and treatment programs reaching almost 70,000 people so far in 2018.
- Imagine No Malaria, begun in the last quadrennium, is moving the world toward eradication of all malaria deaths; 344,980 people this year have been tested and treated, and 93,000 nets have been distributed.

**2019**

**GBGM`s 200 year`s anniversary celebration in Atlanta - the Methodist Mission Bicentennial Conference, “Answering the Call.”**

<https://methodistmission200.org/bicentennial-conference/keynote-speakers/>.

The first Methodist missionary society in the tradition Global Ministries continues was founded in 1819 to promote mission that crosses boundaries of culture, race, ethnicity, class and nation. Two hundred years later, such boundary-crossing mission remains central to who we are as United Methodists.

**2020**

**General Secretary Thomas Kemper:** “After much consultation with my family, I have decided that I will not stand for reelection this year as general secretary of Global Ministries. This means a new chief executive for the agency will begin this autumn.”

**The Church has Corona virus:**

Dear Directors,

We have now begun our **series of online interviews across** the UMC Connection about the church’s response to the coronavirus. You can now watch my introduction of the series here if you missed the live event.

<https://www.facebook.com/GlobalMinistries/videos/202013724555326/>

The first interview, with our very own Bishop John Yambasu of Sierra Leone, will be published Friday morning at 9 EDT in the U.S.

to [www.facebook.com/globalministries](http://www.facebook.com/globalministries).

New stories will be posted at this time every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. (Thomas Kemper)

**August 14, 2020:**

Dear Directors,

Four months ago, Global Ministries launched the “Sheltering in Love UMCOR COVID-19 Campaign” as a rapid response to emergencies caused by the coronavirus pandemic. I pulled together a group of program directors, communicators and finance administrators to oversee and support this effort. Emergency Committees of both Global Ministries and UMCOR provided weekly review and approval of the grants before they were distributed. We appreciate the help of UMCOR and others in promoting giving to the campaign. This effort, which came to a close in late July, yielded more than \$1.7 million in new funds, all of which has been spent, along with money from other sources.

We have awarded \$2,329,785 through 230 grants in 43 countries and 43 of the United States and territories. I was heartened to see the large number of local churches—105—among the recipients, congregations responding to immediate needs in their communities with imagination and compassion. Fifty-four of our 66 United Methodist Episcopal Areas are represented, as are 16 partner Methodist denominations.

The additional funds came from UMCOR undesignated accounts, and Global Ministries funds, mainly the Asian American Language Ministry Plan, the Asia Pacific Regional Office, and Human Relations Day offerings. (Thomas Kemper)

**August 16, 2020: The death of Bishop Yambasu was a great chock for the entire UMC Church, also for GBGM.** Bishop John Yambasu is irreplaceable in the life and mission of The United Methodist Church. He was the voice for health, justice and peace in all matters sacred and secular. He had keen insights into the current situation and future potential for The United Methodist Church in Africa and around the world. His lifelong experience in the church – growing up in mission schools, attending Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, serving as pastor, teacher and missionary—prepared him for outstanding leadership across boundaries.

**Roland Fernandez becomes the new Secretary General Autumn 2020. GBGM has virtual zoom meetings in 2020.**

## **2021**

**Roland Fernandez is introducing the 5 Touch Stones in GBGM strategy:**

II. Value of the Five Mission Touchstones The five mission touchstones that I described last November, which we have continued to work with that help define our collective approach to mission, are means to help us become better equipped for mission in this new age.

1. Sharpening our focus: (I have spoken of “narrowing” our focus, but “sharpening” is probably a more accurate and certainly more positive interpretation.)
2. Greater accountability
3. Collaboration
4. Measuring impact
5. Better communication

**Roland Fernandez is working on the GBGM strategy 2022-2024 with his new formed SLT team:**

Highlights from the April and May meetings of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT): • Strategic Planning. As was shared at the all-staff meeting in early April, active work with the various program units of the agency is aimed at developing a program inventory which will lead to a Strategic Plan for 2022-2024. The process includes creation of logical frameworks for each program. Current focus is with programs under Missional Priority 3, Humanitarian Relief and Recovery, and Missional Priority 4, Global Health. These cover UMCOR, Global Health and the Office of the General Secretary. This will be completed by June. The entire process covering all units is expected to be completed by year end, as I have shared before.

**Roland shares two concerns** about the running of GBGM office when it is closed during Covid: I want to discuss two items related to how we work and connect with one another.

**First**, because of the escalating rates of the Delta variant, we will further postpone the reopening of the office. We hoped to open the office for in-person business after Labor Day but are now postponing the reopening. When we have a specific timeframe, we will let you know.

**Second**, given the fact that we don't see one another face-to-face, how can we build community and foster interpersonal enrichment within the staff? What are some of the ways we can have the same camaraderie we cherished when we were able to routinely enter the building in the morning and enjoy the day in fellowship with one another?

## **2022**

**2022-2024 strategic plan:** Attached you will find seventeen documents related to the strategic planning process through which Global Ministries is cataloguing and evaluating our programs as we prepare the 2022-2024 strategic plan. Also attached is the slide listing all the seventeen programs under the four priorities that you have seen before.

The documents are program refinements and logical frameworks for all four program priorities: missionaries, evangelism and church revitalization, global health, and humanitarian relief and recovery. The development of these strategic templates started in September 2020, when the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) reviewed and catalogued our work around the four missional priority areas.

To be clear, we have not stopped or curtailed any existing programs, but have redefined and consolidated some of the programs. All of the strategic templates except for the missionary programs have logical frameworks. The missionary programs, while critical to the agency, are more personnel related and also intersect with several other program areas of the agency. Developing a logical framework would not make sense for them.

As a next step, we have begun a process to determine how to better align our regional work with our sectoral work and possibly come up with comprehensive regional strategies. (Roland Fernandez)

### **General Secretary`s report of October 18 2022:**

His report as Global Ministries` general secretary – the agency`s chief executive – to the fall 2022 semiannual meeting of Global Ministries` board of directors continued a two-year exploration of faithful service to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a “new mission age” – a time of health pandemic, climate challenge, persistent racism and internal denominational conflict. A new mission age may bring new challenges but what is sure, Fernandes said, is the constancy of God.

**Increase in number of missionaries:** Fernandes` also noted the increase of new missionaries, with 54 commissioned between April and July of 2022, and another 35 new Global Mission Fellows and 12 long-term missionaries being added this year. Four persons were commissioned for service in the United States during the October board meeting; nine more will be commissioned in person in December. Twenty-five fellows for international service will be commissioned at the April 2023 board meeting in Maputo, Mozambique.

### **2023**

#### **April 2023: Board meeting in Maputo, Mozambique**

I am looking forward to our upcoming board meeting in Maputo, April 2023. This will be our first in-person board meeting since the pandemic and the first ever board meeting held outside the United States.

Global Ministries recently hosted an Africa Mission Partners Consultation in Maputo, Mozambique, April 17-19. This was the first event of its type held in Africa in several decades and brought together African United Methodist leadership, including bishops and representatives from each of the African UMC annual conferences, representing 17 countries and even more unique cultures. These dedicated leaders were joined in worship and conversation by Global Ministries` executive committee board members and senior staff, and representatives from other United Methodist agencies, among other guests. It was a long-awaited and welcome reunion for so many of us. (Roland Fernandez)

Main reason for Maputo meeting was “Africa Mission Consultation”, meetings with all GBGM missionaries at the African Continent. This has never been done before.

#### ***End of long-standing impasse over audit issues will resume Global Ministries` mission and ministry in East Africa***

**ATLANTA (May 2, 2023)** — Pledging to move forward with mutual respect in mission and ministry together, leaders of the East Africa Episcopal Area

(EAEA) and the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church (GBGM) have moved to restore their relationship and bring an end to a more than decade-long freeze on distribution of church and mission funds begun after internal audits raised questions about the episcopal area's use of certain funds. A confidential agreement – approved by EAEA leaders and the GBGM Board of Directors – acknowledges the long-standing impasse over past audits, implements financial protocols and pledges to move forward with mutual respect.

**Missionary Service Guiding Principles – August 2-3, 2023** On behalf of the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church, Inc., (“Global Ministries”), you are formally invited to attend the Guiding Principles of Missionary Service meeting to be held in Atlanta, Georgia, USA from August 2 to 3, 2023. The expected arrival is on August 1, 2023 and the expected departure is on August 4, 2023.

The purpose of the meeting is to engage with our constituents from around the globe to meet and do an assessment of our current guidelines to better facilitate mission personnel service across The United Methodist Church connection from everywhere to everywhere. Your participation and contribution would ensure that we are able to capture different perspectives for this important work. Thank you for your availability and willingness to do this. (Roland Fernandez)

#### **Networkmeeting in Cambodia October 17-25 2023**

##### **Directors, missionaries and GBGM staff met in the Fall meeting.**

This trip was possible because of money saved during the Covid 19 time when we could not meet physically but had our meetings through Teams. Another reason was that it was almost impossible to have visas to US granted for directors from Africa and Asia.

During the days in Phnom Penh we had meetings and developed relations to missionaries from Asia; Cambodia, Nepal, Philippines, Fiji, Hong Kong, Japan, Laos, Mongolia, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam. All together 26.

We visited Cambodia Methodist Churches and worshiped with them.

##### **Alignment between GBGM and GHBEM**

**May 12:** Dear board leaders of GBGM and GHBEM: We are writing to invite you to join us for an initial meeting to talk about program collaboration and alignment between our agencies. As you know both agencies have been talking about program alignment and shared services for a while; we look forward to expanding the conversation within our boards. (Fernandez)

**August 1: the recommendation of Roland Fernandez being elected as General Secretary of GBHEM effective July 1, 2024.**

The GBHEM Board Chair, Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball made a request to the GBGM Executive Committee through our Board and Personnel Chairs, seeking your approval for them to recommend me for the GBHEM GS position. This recommendation was discussed and approved unanimously by the GBGM Executive Committee on August 1, 2023. (Roland Fernandez)

### **August 1-3 Consultation on Guiding Principles of Missionary Services, Atlanta, USA**

Thank you again for your participation in Global Ministries' Consultation on the Guiding Principles of Missionary Service, held in Atlanta, GA, USA, on August 1-3. I continue to be grateful for the engagement of everyone at that event.

As promised at the event, Global Ministries has worked to summarize and analyze the insights offered during small group discussions and plenary conversations at the consultation. (Fernandez)

## **2024**

### **5-8. March: Final Board meeting = joint Board meeting with GBGM and GBHEM**

We look forward to seeing you in Atlanta, Georgia for our final Board meeting for this prolonged quadrennium. As you know, this will be a joint Board meeting with the board of GBGM and the board of GBHEM to be held in Atlanta from March 5 to 8, 2024. The purpose of the joint board meeting is to build on both the agencies continued alignment efforts both programmatically and operationally and to determine strategic directions for the future to the extent possible at this time. During the board meeting, we will engage in conversations around strategies for General Conference 2024, review both agency strategic plans and revise bylaws to create better alignments for the two boards to work together in the future. There will be time for team building and small group conversations.

### **June 3: GBGM budget cuts – from News letter from Roland Fernandez**

The passage of regionalization is hugely significant as we strive to become a truly global church, not just a U.S church working globally. There is no doubt that the >52% budget cuts facing some of the general agencies, including Global Ministries, will be significant across the denomination. Change requires us to think creatively and work with intention through our partners. As I have said before, we do not expect significant staff cuts at this time, as the work we did between 2018-2020 helped us achieve short term financial stability. As we work on the 2025 budget, we will begin to make changes that will prepare us for the changing financial future. We are also beginning a significant fundraising campaign with a new partner. As we plan for this future, we look for new opportunities of deeper alignment and craft new fundraising strategies to build a sustained foundation of support – all so we can stay true to our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

**September 9: About the alignment between GBGM and GBHEM  
(Newsletter Roland Fernandez)**

There is a lot going on within GBGM and GBHEM as we continue to look strategically at what we are called do. We have been doing a lot of work through our cross-agency teams covering scholarships, grants and our global and regional work, as well as program mapping for both agencies. I am grateful to those leading and working on these teams. In addition, several staff in IT, operations, communications and finance have been working together toward greater alignment for a while now. We also have shared staff between both agencies as you are all aware; this trend will continue. We have been focusing our work within each agency using the five touchstones of sharpening focus, greater accountability, increased collaboration, measuring impact and enhanced communication to guide us. Clearly, there will be changes as we move ahead; changes will be made carefully and prayerfully and in response to what the church needs from us at this time.

Rev. Øyvind Aske`s 2 periods 2016-2024 as the Nordic and Baltic Central Conference representative are over.

I want to thank you for the challenge and the trust given to me. It has been a time of learning and broadening of perspectives and insight of the United Methodist Church.

## 14e General Board of Church and Society

Boardmember from 2016 – 2024, Kari S Hay.

Group-responsibilities:

**Working Area:** Education

**Task Force:** Ministries with the poor

**Administration:** The Bylaw and evaluation – committee

**Ethnic Local Church Grants – Committee**

The Agency is

*«Addressing more than 30 social issues on which The United Methodist Church has claimed a position, Church and Society communicates with policymakers and leaders around the world with the mission of transforming the world.»*



As a board member, I have had the pleasure of attending seven physical meetings:

Twice in Washington, once in New York, once in San Antonio, once in Berlin, once in Chicago, and once in Montgomery, Alabama. During the pandemic, the GBCS facilitated Zoom meetings. There have been two meetings each year during these two quadrenniums.

### **Main Activities and Achievements**

The United Methodist family from all over the globe has had the opportunity to meet and learn from each other.

GBCS has funded a number of smaller church-related community projects concerning peace and justice issues as well as social development. The Agency has focused on projects related to gender, abuse and domestic violence, immigrants, poverty, indigenous people's rights and education. A main achievement was a seminar connected to the 100th anniversary of the first steps towards a sami – parliament in Norway. Indigenous peoples from the entire UMC church-body spent a week together in Trondheim and Harstad (Soltun) Participants shared experiences, celebrated, and performed their songs and languages.

GBCS organized a witness group that visited the border between the USA and Mexico. They reported back to the Board and shared powerful testimonies about the conditions there. One of the board members worked with children who were separated from their parents at the border. This was deeply impactful and informed the entire church, contributing to an important awareness-raising effort.

Race issues were raised and discussed. It became clear that there is a difference between the European understanding of the concept of "race" and the American understanding. Black Americans have reclaimed the term and use it intentionally. Europe has taken a different path since World War II and tends to avoid the term, using expressions like "the human race" instead. In our intercontinental conversations, we must be aware of these differences.

The Board visited the historic slave sites in Montgomery and saw the bridge where Martin Luther King Jr. led the great march during the Civil Rights Movement. The Rosa Parks Museum reminded everyone of the importance of individual moral actions. Lessons learned: Change is possible! But I add, change must be maintained and fought for. The churches must not be silent.

We have worked through a revision of the Social Principles. They were finally approved by the General Conference in 2024 and are available online. Translations into various local languages are in progress.

### **What Can the Central Conference Do?**

In an increasingly polarized world, it is important to keep open all possible channels for discussion and cooperation. The United Methodist Church is a

spiritual and organizational network of national and local churches worldwide and, hence, an instrument of peace, justice, and understanding. Truth is jeopardized, and the church is more important than ever. The Central Conference must continue to provide connections and meeting places in the name of the Prince of Peace.

Yours sincerely,  
Kari Hay

## 14f The Connectional Table

“The purpose of the CT is to discern and articulate a shared vision that guides us forward, stewarding the mission, ministries, and resources entrusted to us. Led by the decisions of the General Conference and in partnership with the Council of Bishops. This means that the CT works to keep the vision of The United Methodist Church alive and relevant and that they oversee the work of the agencies. CT also works with the financial agency (GCFA) on the budget allocations for the agencies”.

This quote from the website of the Connectional Table tells us what the CT is about. Since approx. 25 % of the churches in the US have left the denomination, CT has had a difficult time implementing the budget reductions and allocations to the agencies and funds of the general church.

CT has a strong overweight of members from the US. During the last quadrennia an attempt was made to create new legislation to get a better balance that could reflect the worldwide nature of our church. This attempt failed and we still have a US dominated CT.

In the near past CT has helped formulate some of the proposals that make up what is known as the regionalization plan. Worldwide Regionalization represents an organizational vision designed to enhance adaptive evangelism, emphasize our denomination's global nature, and strengthen our connection by prioritizing our mission and ministry. This strategic plan was overwhelmingly endorsed by delegates from around the world at General Conference 2024 and now awaits ratification by our Annual Conferences.

Regionalization is important for our worldwide connection, but it has very little impact on the Central Conferences, who already have the structure and benefits that the US church is going to get from this regionalization. We have long had the right to amend legislation from the General Conference to support our mission, the US will get this. If the proposals for constitutional amendment pass the votes in the Annual Conferences all over the world.

Ole Birch

## 14g Africa University

To Northern Europe Central Conference 2025

Africa University (AU) is a major project, initiated by the General Conference in 1988, and first intake of students in 1992. This pan African university is placed in Old Mutare in Zimbabwe and has now several faculties, e.g. in agriculture, education, leadership and state administration, humanity, law school and higher theology, and all faculties have programs on Bachelor, Master and PhD level. AU is organized directly under the General Conference, and most board members are coming from Africa and USA. In addition, UMC in Europe has two representatives in the board, one of them from Northern Europe Central Conference.

AU is a very successful and progressive project. Year by year new buildings, new education programs, new professors with higher grades, and higher numbers of students give the picture of one of the most successful universities in Africa. One extra piece of information state the level of success: Now the majority of students are women!

However, as a board member during many years, the experience of the work is that still new challenges, new problems and obstacles are constantly on the biannual agenda. The leader of the AU died dramatically under the Covid-19 pandemic. The inflation in Zimbabwe came out of control and grew to over 90%, and the Zimbabwe Dollar collapsed. The state of Zimbabwe tried to restrict the intake of new students to give priority only to Zimbabwean people. Because of the grow of the AU, it was needed to get quit of the old administrative staff and find more skilled, educated and experienced staff. Now AU has a very gifted and dynamic leader in professor, rev. Dr. Peter Mageto, a Methodist from Kenya.

The AU is one of the most important projects, UMC has established in Africa. The critical shadow of AU is that all resources from the general UMC are given to AU and not to other education institutions and universities in Africa.

The financial support to AU has been in a very, very big scale. We are counting million of Dollars every year, now in nearly 40 years. The purpose from the beginning was, that some day in the future AU should be self-sustainable, or at least, AU should be sustainable within the context of the UMC Central Conferences in Africa, where the membership of the UMC soon will make Africa the largest continent of Methodism. As an outgoing board member, I think, now is the time to close down the AU institution and fundraising office in Nashville, Tennessee, and move all funds and administration to Africa and make AU self-sustainable and govern only by people from the Africa UMC. I think, it will raise the acceptance of AU in Africa. And AU is now strong and vital enough to do so.

However, all decisions on AU issues are on the agenda of the General Conference, not the board of AU, and not the Central Conferences in Africa or Europe.

Thank you for the opportunity to be board member of AU from Northern Europe Central Conference in the period from 2011 to 2024.

Jørgen Thaarup

## 14h Commission on the General Conference

*written by Audun Westad*

Member of the Commission: 2012 – 2024

Roles: Member of the Commission (2012-2024)

Vice chair, Rules committee (2016-2024)

Site selection committee (2013-14)

### **Since the last Central Conference**

During the General Conference 2012 in Tampa, FL, I was elected to serve in the commission for the time period 2012-2020. Due to the pandemic and postponed General Conferences, this period was prolonged until we were able to meet again and elect new members of the commission. As vice chair of the Rules committee in the commission, I have also served as vice chair of the Ethics committee during the General Conferences that were held during that time period.

The last few years on the commission have been more difficult than the first for many reasons. Planning for General Conferences that had to be cancelled, several digital meetings and short deadlines for major decisions made it difficult to get the full grasp of it all. In addition, the Commission and it's work was affected by those who chose to leave the United Methodist Church and that they had to be replaced by others. From my point of view, the last few years were not ideal in order to make sure we made the best possible preparations for the General Conference, but at the same time I think we landed it well.

Prior to the General Conference in 2016 we made some, in my opinion, major changes to the Rules of Order of the General Conference, especially with regards to christian conferencing at the General Conference. After they got approved, we did not have any similar work, at least not from my point of view, since we did, or in some instances at least tried to do, the changes we had felt necessary to take on straight away.

There are some things we tried for the General Conference in Portland, Or, in 2016, which is the last ordinary General Conference until last year's General

Conference in Charlotte, NC, that was discontinued, like for example with regards to food for delegates. In 2016 each delegate was in charge of getting their own food through the per diem. This was not possible to do in Charlotte, due to lack of restaurants nearby the convention center, and that put an extra responsibility upon the commission to take care of basic needs of the delegates. I hope that the new commission has a good conversation about the need and obligation of the General Conference to feed its delegates properly in order to make them able to serve at the General Conference and at the same time be healthy.

Being a commission member for the United Methodist Church is a lot of work, a lot fun, a bit frustrating at times, and an excellent way to learn more about the administrative side of our church. After 12 years in the commission I'm really looking forward to following the work they do from the outside. I am grateful for having served the United Methodist Church through this role through these years. The General Conference is the highest legislative body for the UMC, setting policies, approving budgets, and guiding church direction every four years. To have been a part of the machinery making the General Conference work as smooth as possible for the church has been an honour, and I'm thankful for this opportunity to serve the church. The UMC in Northern Europe is a minority in the worldwide UMC and therefore it's important for us to be heard on the international level of the church, and one way of doing that is through the work of the Commission on the General Conference.

I would also like to use this opportunity to wish the new Secretary General of the Commission on the General Conference, our new commission member Veli Lopenen (Fin) and the rest of the commission all the best for all the work they have coming their way. May God bless you and guide you in your work.

## 14i Commission on Central Conference Theological Education Fund

During this quadrennium, I have been representing our Central Conference as a screening committee member of the Commission on the Central Conference Theological Education Fund, which was established by the 2012 General Conference.

The Commission's aim is to strengthen theological education in the Central Conferences.

From 2016 to 2020, the Commission met annually. However, from 2020 to 2024, its work was significantly impacted by the pandemic. In early 2020, the Commission held a meeting in Orlando, but subsequent meetings were conducted online. The first in-person meeting in years took place in February 2024 in Johannesburg, South Africa. It was uplifting to reconnect in person and strengthen our global friendships and networks.

It is evident that robust theological education and the spiritual formation of pastors and educators are essential to carrying the church into the future.

Bishop Alsted is always given the opportunity to review and comment on grant applications prior to the meetings, and all applications require endorsement from the bishop of the respective area.

All granted applications are listed at <https://www.gbhem.org/education-leaders/cctef/>

I would like to remind everyone that not only theological institutions are eligible to apply for funding. Boards of Ordained Ministry (BOMs) can also apply for funding to support the development of the Course of Study.

The most recent General Conference significantly reduced funding for the CCTEF due to the decline in membership within The United Methodist Church.

It is a privilege to serve our church through this Commission.

Thomas Risager

## 14j United Methodist Communications 2025

A central point has been to reevaluate priorities as funding has been eroded. Keeping spirit up, while staff has been halved. No forced dismissals, achieved through voluntary packages and early retirements. Still, the increased focus on mission has kept the staff moral and the output impressively high.

The agency has increased its support of other agencies and church leaders for public relations. It has managed to keep its news division as an objective and trusted news source, while advocating for policies like Regionalization.

The reach of the UMCOM and its UM News division keeps growing, highlighting the need for reliable news sources in times of division. It produces about 700 articles yearly.

UMCOM adverts for UMC was seen by half a billion people in 2022.

#BeUMC reached almost 60 million people on social media.

Multilingual content continues to increase in traffic (51% in 2022 alone).

Networking and training for communicators in the Central Conferences (especially in Africa) has increased significantly.

The leadership of UMCOM visited Oslo on invitation from bishop Alsted in 2023. The meetings were good, but it has not had the effect that we hoped for so far. Our area needs more reporting, especially from Ukraine.

Karl Anders Ellingsen was elected chair of the financial committee and member of the executive committee in 2024.

Karl Anders Ellingsen

## 14k Methodist e-Academy Europe Report to the Central Conferences in Europe - 2025

### 1. New concept for 2025/2026

*“Enriching minds &  
uniting hearts to serve”*

The MeA programme has been revised and redesigned based on the wealth of experience gained since its launch in 2008 and in view of the changes at Methodist theological schools in Europe.

As in the past, MeA continues to offer a hybrid programme with online distance learning courses and intensive in-person block seminars. The courses are still running in two languages, English and German, with one course per trimester or semester.

In the new concept, the basic programme is designed at Master's level and can now be completed in just two years alongside other studies or professional activity. The English-language programme is now fully embedded in the courses offered at Cliff College, Calver (UK) and the German-language programme by the School of Theology, Reutlingen (D). In both languages, this makes it possible to complete a MA-degree in Theology at the respective institution with additional courses. The MeA courses offer the foundational topics for pastoral ministry in the United Methodist Church. They promote a reflective, Methodist identity and create relationships in a European study context.

The new course will start in English this autumn 2025. Please promote it and register for the new courses. Further information can be found in the attached flyer or on the website

<https://methodist-e-academy.org/>

### 2. New coordinators

After the previous coordinator Dr David Field was appointed to a new role as Ecumenical Staff Officer for Theological Dialogues in the Council of Bishops in summer 2021, we were grateful to have found within short notice two people with a lot of experience in Meeli Tankler (former rector of the seminary in Estonia) and Peter Caley (retired pastor, Switzerland). They were able to continue the work - still in Covid times - with the administrative support of Tina Manuelli.

In summer 2023, it was possible to find two new employees, Dr Erika Stalcup (ordained deacon, Switzerland) as academic coordinator and Susanne Schwarz (lay, Germany) as administrative coordinator, both in smaller part-time positions. Together with me as chairperson, the redesign of the training programme approved by the supervisory board was then implemented. We concluded cooperation agreements with both theological schools (Cliff and THR).

### **3. Finances and budget**

In addition to regular donations from the USA, there has been substantial support from the British Methodist Church for the costs of the coordinator for many years. The latter has ended. Global Ministries has provided scholarships for students over the years, but this amount will probably be significantly smaller in the future. We will therefore be submitting a new application for scholarships to the central conference theological education fund of the general church.

The training costs per person now include the full expenses (including coordinators and study fees at the respective institution). They have therefore become significantly higher but are still lower than in the very early days of MeA. We still have the option of scholarships. Depending on the student's background, scholarships cover the full cost of education with the exception of a small self-contribution.

### **4 Outlook and further plans**

The MeA would like to try again to offer additional modules on specific topics. However, this is dependent on clear needs that are reported to us by the churches or Boards of Ordained Ministry.

We are also considering strengthening lay training. The British Methodist Church, in collaboration with Cliff College, has broken interesting new ground here. With the rapid progress of language modules, we are looking at how such programmes can be offered in languages other than English.

### **5. Governing Board**

The MeA is a joint training platform of the Methodist churches in Europe. Accordingly, these churches (per episcopal area of the UMC or the MCB) are also represented on the governing board with two persons each, one from a Board of Ordained Ministry and one from a training centre or teaching ministry. As chairperson, I have led the MeA since its beginnings and hope that the task can be taken over by another bishop in the course of the quadrennium.

For the episcopal areas of the UMC (excluding Eurasia), the following representatives are currently on the governing board:

CC Northern Europe: Hilde-Marie Movafagh (Theol Edu); Thomas Risager (BOM)

CC Germany: Ulrike Schuler (Theol Edu); Christoph Klaiber (BOM)



CC Central and Southern Europe: Christoph Schluiep (Theol Edu); Zoltan Kovacs (BOM).

**We ask the Central Conferences to elect their representatives for the new quadrennium!**

Note from CC secretary: In the NEECC the Central Conference Council have elected our representatives,

Patrick Streiff, Bishop (retired)  
Chairperson of the MeA Governing Board

Appendix: Promotional flyer in English

# 15 Disciplinary petitions to the Northern Europe and Eurasia BoD

## 15.1 ¶ 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 ~~or as local pastors~~, with the consent of the bishops or other authorities involved, without going through the process required for ministers from other denominations. ~~The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry shall establish a list of denominations that meet this definition.~~ 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 ~~from other Methodist churches~~ shall meet the educational requirements of The United Methodist Church, ~~or the equivalent approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.~~ 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.

*Rationale: The changes clarify the transfer of clergy from denominations with which we have an agreement of full communion and lists those denominations.*

---

## 15.2 ¶ 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 for the Nordic, and Baltic Area and one for the Eurasia Area.~~

*Rationale: Makes necessary changes to the Book of Discipline following the separation of the four Eurasia annual conferences from the United Methodist Church.*

---

## 15.3 ¶ 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 ~~United Methodist Church in Northern Europe and Eurasia~~ 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) A nomination must be made distinctively for one of the two areas.~~

c) 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.

d) 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.

e) The ~~Northern Europe and European~~ 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.

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

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

h) Debate and election speeches are allowed, ~~until the nomination is closed.~~

4. *Process*—a) Election ~~is by closed ballot and~~ 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

*Rationale: Makes necessary changes to the Book of Discipline following the separation of the four Eurasia annual conferences from the United Methodist Church.*

---

## 15.4 ¶ 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. 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.

*Rationale: The changes to the formula will allow for as high a number of delegates as possible with goal of enabling the central conference to keep its status.*

---

## 15.5 ¶ 543 544. 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.<sup>21</sup>
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 connective 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.<sup>22</sup>
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.<sup>23</sup>
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.<sup>24</sup>
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 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

*Rationale: These changes will give all annual conferences within the central conference the authority to set their own policies and standards for marriage, ordination and licensing for ministry. Furthermore, it will allow the annual conferences to bring their translation of the social principles in alignment with their policy and not to translate parts of the social principles not relevant in their specific context.*

---

## 15.6 ¶ 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 on the annual conferences within the central conference ~~each, with personal substitute, from Denmark, Estonia, Finland S/F, Latvia/Lithuania, Norway, Russia C/NW/E/S and Ukraine/Moldova.~~ 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 ~~and national district~~ 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., ~~if possible, from the same country or region.~~ 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 executive committee, and the central conference committee on the Discipline, or cannot be appointed on central conference leadership level.~~ 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. ~~The committee shall make recommendations to the central conference regarding youth and young-adult organizations within its areas as well as elect delegates to the Global Young People's Convocation (¶ 1210).~~

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?"

*Rationale: Makes the composition of the judicial court more flexible. Strikes nominations for an event that no longer exists.*

---

## 15.7 ¶ 549 550. 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 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

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

~~c) 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.

~~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.~~

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

f) 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) 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.~~

~~On a permanent basis, the area groups are assigned~~

~~(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) (11)~~ 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.

h) 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

i) Economy

(1) The travel expenses of the council, ~~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.

*Rationale: Makes necessary changes to the Book of Discipline following the separation of the four Eurasia annual conferences and the Estonia district from the United Methodist Church, including the central conference changing from two to one episcopal area.*

---

## 15.8 ¶ ~~550~~ 551. Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Committee on Episcopacy—

a) There shall be a central conference committee on episcopacy, composed by the elected members of the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference Council. ~~The elected vice chairperson of the Central Conference Council is the chairperson of the committee on episcopacy, and the secretary of the Central Conference Council is the secretary of the committee on episcopacy. The committee elects a chairperson and a secretary.~~ The bishops ~~are~~ is not a members of the committee, but give 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.

*Rationale: Makes necessary changes to enable the central conference to change from two to one episcopal area.*

---

### **15.9 ¶ 551 552 Other central conference work**

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

*Rationale: Changes are implication of the central conference changing from two to one episcopal area.*

---

### **15.10 ¶ 552.553 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 by area to the respective episcopal areas 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 the General Council on Finance and Administration.

*Rationale: Updated to the current quadrennium.*

---

## 15.11 ¶ 553.554 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 ~~six~~ three members, including the ~~two~~ one bishop and ~~at least two~~ one lay the bishop, one clergy and one lay representatives. The annual and national district conferences submit nominations to the Central Conference Council, which makes the election.

*Rationale: Changes are a consequence of changes made to the composition of the European Methodist Council, which is reducing the number of seats on the council for all member churches.*

---

## 15.12 ~~¶ 554~~ The future of the United Methodist Church in the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference

### ~~¶ 555~~ The Baltic Annual Conference

~~This paragraph comes into effect on 19. March 2023 upon the adjournment of the extra session of the central conference. (The provisions of subparagraph 1, 2 and 3 expire at the opening of the 2025 regular session of the central conference and shall not be used anymore.)~~

~~1.—Local Churches disaffiliating to merge with another Methodist or another protestant church. The annual conference must decide on criteria/conditions that need to be fulfilled for the annual conference to permit a local church to disaffiliate from the UMC in order to merge with another Methodist denomination or another protestant church.~~

~~Paragraph 2547 and 2548.1 provides a framework for the process of requesting to merge with another Methodist or protestant denomination~~

and form what is or is equivalent to an interdenominational local church merger:

- a) ~~A local church makes a request to merge with either another Methodist or another protestant denomination present in the country and a member of the national council of churches. This request must be made by a two-thirds majority vote at a duly called church conference. (JCD 1379). The church conference must be called with at least a one month notice and at least 30% of the professing members must be present, for the vote to be valid. If the 30% quorum is not achieved a second church conference may be called with at least a one month notice but without any requirements for a quorum.~~
- b) ~~All members (baptized and professing) shall receive a written letter informing them of the decision that has been made and asking them to confirm in writing that they will be leaving The United Methodist Church at the effective date of the merger~~
- c) ~~The request is submitted to the resident bishop and the cabinet.~~
- d) ~~The bishop and a majority of the cabinet must give their approval.~~
- e) ~~The bishop of the annual conference informs the bishop/head of communion of the receiving denomination to clarify the process and conditions for transfer.~~
- f) ~~The approval of the annual conference by a majority vote. (in accordance with the provisions set forth and precedent established by Judicial Council Decision No. 1379):~~
- g) ~~Upon approval by the annual conference, the annual conference Council is instructed to deed the church property to the merging church.~~

## 2. Disaffiliation of districts covering an entire country in the Estonia Annual Conference

- a) *Initiating disaffiliation.* By a two-third majority vote the district conference can direct all local churches to call a church conference within a certain time frame to vote on a motion to merge with another Methodist denomination or another

protestant denomination present in the country and member of the national council of churches or to create an independent Methodist Church. In preparation of such a vote, the district conference must prepare and submit to its members all the documentation described in the conditions for the merger of local churches with another Methodist or protestant denomination. ¶1554.3

b) *Annual Conference.* If district conferences have been functioning as individual annual or provisional annual conference, no annual conference action is needed.

c) *Local churches.* Upon an affirmative vote (2/3 majority) in the district conference in favor of a process to merge with a specific Methodist or other protestant denomination or to create an independent Methodist church, all church conferences of said district can be encouraged but not requested to vote on a request to align with the decision of the district conference. The documentation prepared by the district conference shall be used for preparing the votes in the church conferences.

If a church conference approves the request to align with the decision of the district conference by a two-thirds majority, such local church has decided to disaffiliate with the United Methodist Church.

Each church conference must set a date (preferably the same) later than the close of the district conference for the decision to take effect.

d) *Further process for disaffiliation of a district conference.* If a two-thirds majority of the church conferences in said district have voted in favor of disaffiliation, the district conference may initiate the final steps of disaffiliation with its respective annual conference. Such final steps need to include all administrative and financial regulations agreed upon with the respective entities of the annual conference.

The district conference shall vote on the final motion of disaffiliation with a two-thirds majority. The motion shall contain at least the names of the church conferences that have supported the request for disaffiliation, the supporting documents on separation, the proposal for a fair proportional share of the district assets and the proposed date for disaffiliation. The motion must include a signed copy of the agreement ¶1554.2. Such final motion shall be presented to the district conference for approval.

If one or several church conferences have not voted with a two-thirds majority in favor of disaffiliation, such local churches will remain in The United Methodist Church. The district conference must give a fair proportional share of all the district assets (based on number of professing members) to the annual conference to support the remaining local churches on the district in their future mission and ministry.

*e) Implementation of disaffiliation.* The constitution and/or bylaws of the district conference/annual conference and of conference institutions must be prepared in a timely manner to enable the conference to fulfill its intentions to merge with another Methodist or protestant denomination.

*f) Transfer of district property.* At the district conference where the vote on merger is taken, the district conference may by a 2/3 majority vote instruct the district council to deed all district property to the denomination the district conference is deciding to merge with.

*g) Transfer of restricted and unrestricted funds to another denomination.* At the district conference where the vote on merger is taken, the district conference may by a 2/3 majority vote do one of the following:

- a.—Transfer all restricted and un-restricted funds of the district conference to the denomination that the local churches have voted to merge with. The transfer should take place on the effective date of the merger of the local churches.
- b.—Divide all un-restricted funds among the local churches and transfer the restricted funds to the denomination that the local churches have voted to merge with. The transfer should take place on the effective date of the merger of the local churches.

The vote must take place before the effective date of the merger of the local churches, and the transfer must be effective on the same date.

*h) Caring for members and local churches desiring to remain in the United Methodist Church.*

It is the obligation of the district superintendent to inform the bishop about members and local churches that wish to remain in the United Methodist Church, and the bishop in collaboration with the district superintendent is responsible for offering pastoral care to these members and churches.

Based on their number of professing members the local

churches remaining in the United Methodist Church will receive a proportional share of the full assets of the district conference.

*i) Agreement of mutual respectful relationships for the future.*

The parties hereto stipulate and agree that the District Conference and the Local Churches have the authority to enter into this agreement of mutual respectful relationships for the future, and they acknowledge and recognize one another based on the following agreement:

- a.—Each recognizes in one another that they are constituent members of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church as expressed in the Scriptures, confessed in the Church's historic creeds, and attested to in our common doctrinal standards rooted in our shared Methodist, United Brethren in Christ, and the Evangelical Association history.
- b.—Each recognizes the authenticity of the other's sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion
- c.—Each recognizes the validity of each other's respective offices of ordained ministry, while stipulating that each has different qualifications for set-apart ministry that members of the other may or may not meet.
- d.—Each commit to seek continued good respectful relations and, where possible, collaboration in mission and ministry and to welcome each other's members.

3. Conditions for the disaffiliation of local churches and of districts covering an entire country in the Estonia annual conference:

- a) The local church and the district, prior to the disaffiliation, shall be expected to maintain its connectional responsibilities, including, but not limited to paying apportionments and direct billed benefit costs from the annual conference, through the effective date of the merger.
- b) The disaffiliating local church would be responsible for payment of any previously documented loans from the annual conference.
- c) The disaffiliating church will be responsible for unfunded pension liability to the annual conference. If the district conference is part of the Central Conference Pension Initiative or another pension plan, the terms of separation need to be clarified with the Board of Pension of said plan and, if necessary, with Wespath.
- d) The annual conference may also assess other obligations to the disaffiliating church, such as repayment of loans to the



annual conference, reimbursement of significant financial support from the annual conference with the purpose of improving, renovating, or repairing property.

e) The disaffiliating church must also assume full responsibility for any liability or costs (including reasonable attorney fees) resulting from any claim, action, or cause of action that may exist, or that may arise in the future. This shall include, but not be limited to

a.—the acts or omissions of any clergy or other employees, volunteers, or others acting on behalf of the local church or the Conference and its respective entities or local churches (except for clergy who choose to remain with The United Methodist Church), based upon acts or omissions that occurred prior to the effective date of the disaffiliation;

b.—liability or cost incurred because of any claim, action, or cause of action for damages to persons or property resulting from the annual conference's failure to take all necessary steps as required by this agreement.

f). Each disaffiliating church is responsible for agreeing to and signing the "Agreement of mutual respectful relationships for the future". ¶554.2.i

g). The annual conference decides on if and under which conditions a local church will retain their assets.

h). Effective no later than 6 months after the date of the disaffiliation the United Methodist Logo "The Cross and the Flame" and name "The United Methodist Church" can no longer be used and must be removed from buildings, websites, social media, printed material etc.

i). Effective from the date of the disaffiliation the relationship and support from the annual conference and the UMC will end. This may include but is not limited to:

- Services from the episcopal office and the central conference office
- Missionary assignments
- NIM positions

- Grants from the Central Conference Theological Education Fund
  - Grants from the Fund for Mission in Europe
  - Support from the Central Conference
- j). Effective from the date of the disaffiliation all membership of ecumenical bodies and all ecumenical agreements end. This may include but is not limited to:
- The World Methodist Council
  - The European Methodist Council
  - The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE/Leuenberg)
  - The Conference of European Churches (CEC)
  - The National Ecumenical Council of Churches
  - Other ecumenical and interreligious bodies of which the church has been a member
  - Community Agreement of Methodist and Methodist Churches in Europe
  - National agreements with other denominations

4. 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.

*Rationale: Most of the paragraph expires at the opening of the central conference. The change restates the name of the Baltic annual conference and grants permission for the annual conference to keep its status for the coming quadrennium.*

## 15.13 ¶ 611.

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 ~~Estonia~~ Kirikuvälitsus, in Finland Kirkkohallitus (Finnish) or Kyrkostyrelsen (Swedish), in Latvia Baznīcas Valde, in Lithuania Baznycios administracinės, in Norway Hovedstyret, in ~~Russia~~ “Совет ежегодной конференции”, and in Ukraine “Рада щорічної конференції”.

*Rationale: Makes necessary changes to the Book of Discipline following the separation of the four Eurasia annual conferences and the Estonia district*

*from the United Methodist Church, including the central conference changing from two to one episcopal area.*

---

#### 15.14 ¶ 613. Responsibilities of the annual conference council.

We take this paragraph out of the supplement. The minor adaptation needed to the paragraph are addressed in the “reading guide”.

*Rationale: To keep the number of adapted paragraphs as low as possible. The necessary changes are cared for through the reading guide.*

---

#### 15.15 ¶ 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.

*Rationale: To create the necessary distance to a complainee enabling the administrative review committee to be as impartial as possible.*

---

## 15.16 ¶ 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 Estonia: Metodisti Kirik,~~

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,

~~In Russia: Религиозная Организация «Объединенная Методистская Церковь»:~~

~~The registration of the church in Belarus, Moldova, and Central Asia is pending.~~

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 Estonia: Eesti Metodisti Kirik,~~

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),

In Russia: Религиозная Организация «Российская Объединенная Методистская Церковь»

(Russia United Methodist Church):

The registration of the church in Belarus, Moldova, and Central Asia is pending.

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

In Estonia: Eesti Metodisti Kiriku x-town Kogudus (the name of the town in the correct genitive form)

In Finland: ~~Metodistkyrkan~~ Finlands svenska metodistkyrka in x-town, and Suomen Metodistikirkko, x-town Metodistiseurakunta (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 i Danmark in x-town,

In Norway: Metodistkirken i Norge in x-town Menighet,

In Sweden: ~~Metodistkyrkan~~ Finlands svenska metodistkyrka in x-town,

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

In Russia: Религиозная Организация «Объединенная Методистская Церковь in x-town»:

The registration of the church in Belarus, Moldova, and Central Asia is pending.

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) Eesti Metodisti Kirik (1940-)

————— (1) Eestimaa Piiskoplik Methodisti kogudus (1919-1935)

————— (2) Eesti Piiskoplik Metodistikirik (1935-1940)

c) Suomen Metodistikirkko

(1) Suomen Piisallinen Metodistikirkko

d) Finlands svenska metodistkyrka

(1) Metodistkyrkan i Finland, svenska avdelningen

(2) Metodist-Episkopalkyrkan i Finland, svenska avdelningen

e) Latvijas Apvienotā Metodistu Baznīca (1991-)

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

f) Lietuvos Jungtinė Metodistū Bažničia

g) Metodistkirken i Norge

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

h) Metodistkyrkan i Sverige (1939-2012)

(1) Methodist-Episkopalkyrkan

h) Религиозная Организация «Российская Объединенная  
Методистская Церковь» (Russia United Methodist Church)

i) 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.

*Rationale: Makes necessary changes to the Book of Discipline following the separation of the four Eurasia annual conferences and the Estonia district from the United Methodist Church, furthermore, it makes the ownership of property more specific.*

---

## 15.17 ¶ 2703. Composition of the Committee on Investigation

1. *When respondent is a bishop*—There shall be a committee on investigation elected by ~~each jurisdictional or 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~~ College of Bishops in consultation with the ~~jurisdictional~~ 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 ~~College of Bishops~~. 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. ~~It shall consist of four clergy members in full connection, three professing members, three alternate clergy members in full connection, and six alternate lay members, three of whom shall be diaconal ministers if available within the bounds of the annual conference.~~ 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. The committee shall be nominated by the presiding bishop in consultation with the Board of Ordained Ministry (for clergy members) and the conference board of laity (for professing members) and elected quadrennially by the annual conference. If additional members or alternates are needed before the end of the quadrennium, the annual conference may elect members to serve for the remainder of the quadrennium. Committee members shall be in good standing and shall be deemed of good character. The committee should reflect racial, ethnic, person with disabilities, economic condition, and gender diversity. The committee on investigation shall elect a chair and organize at the annual conference. ~~None of the members or alternates shall be members of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the cabinet, or immediate family members of the above.~~ 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. ~~Seven members or alternates seated as members of the committee shall constitute a quorum.~~ If the next annual conference is not scheduled to commence within 120 days following the date the judicial complaint is received by the chairperson of the committee, and if the membership of the committee at that time is insufficient to constitute a quorum, then new members, in a number sufficient to constitute a quorum, may be nominated by the presiding



bishop and elected *ad interim* by the Board of Ordained Ministry (for any additional clergy member needed) and the conference board of laity (for any additional professing member needed):

~~a) In cases of complaints against clergy members of the annual conference, clergy members on honorable location or administrative location from that annual conference, or local pas- tors, the committee shall consist of four clergy members and three professing members:~~

~~b) In cases of complaints against diaconal ministers, the committee shall consist of four clergy members and five professing members, two of whom shall be diaconal ministers if available within the bounds of the annual conference:~~

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.

*Rationale: The change creates the necessary distance to a complainee enabling the committee on investigation to be as impartial as possible.*

---

## 15.18 Addition to the 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 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 in 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 Kuldīga and Liepāja. 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 Liepāja, 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 Methodist 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 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, Samara 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 northwest 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 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.

### **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, and Baltic and Ukraine Area) and Eduard Khegay of Central Russia Annual Conference (elected 2012, the Eurasia Area). Name of new bishop to be inserted (elected 2025).

*Rationale: The changes updates the historical statement from 2017 until 2025.*

---

## 15:19 Ecumenical Agreements in the NEECC

### **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 “On 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.

*Rationale: Add two new agreements and adjust for implications after the Estonia district left the connection*

---

## 15:20 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 didactic 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 introductory 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:

	<b>Lay Speakers' level</b>	<b>Local Pastors' or ½ Bachelor level</b>	<b>Provisional clergy or Bachelor level</b>	<b>Deacon – Elder Master level</b>
Entry Qualifications		12-13 years in school	12-13 years in school	

	10 years in school	<b>and</b> Lay Speaker diploma	include high school, A-levels, college <b>and</b> Lay Speaker diploma	Bachelor's degree <b>or</b> 1½ years up-grade local pastors' education 90 ECTS + Local Pastor
Years of studies, fulltime	Part time courses <b>or</b> 1 year Bible folk high school	1½ year <b>or</b> 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

*Rationale: Specifies educational standards for clergy in the central conference.*

---

## 15.21 Reading Guide to the Book of Discipline

Reading Guide to the Book of Discipline to adapt to the context of the central conference

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. ¶1543544.7 & 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 Eurasia 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 annual conference council.
- Wespath →  
The Ukraine and Moldova Provisional Annual Conference and the Latvia District and the Lithuania District are part of the central conference pension plan and relate through their pension board 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 in NEE, with the exception of the Episcopal Fund and the General Administration Fund. However, in Northern Europe and Eurasia Ukraine the annual conferences are apportioned to the Central Conference Fund, and in Eurasia also to the Area 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 unities: 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 that 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 of study 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 ¶ 355 356 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 Introduction is not sufficient, turn to your district superintendent or bishop for further clarification and guidance. The introduction and 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 (~~¶ 547.3~~ 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 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.”

*Rationale: A few additions regarding pension plans, and a few editorial changes renumbering references to the 2020/2024 Book of Discipline*

---

## 16.1 Motion to increase the apportionment into the Central Conference Fund

The Central Conference Council moves that the apportionment into the Central Conference Fund increases from 0,75% to 1,0% of the gross salary of the clergy in the annual conference.

*The NEEBoD defines the gross salary in the following way: 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.*

*Rationale: Moving to one episcopal area with a reduced membership will put will reduce the received apportionments, simultaneously, it will enable the central conference council and the bishop to focus all attention on the episcopal area and use the available funds for development.*

# 17 Elections

## **Central Conference Council**

Nominated by annual conferences

Denmark: *Clergy: Ole Birch, Lay: Bettina Pedersen*

*Alternates: Jørgen Thaarup, Andreas Morsbøl*

Finland F: *Clergy: Jori Brander, alternate: Veli Loponen*

Finland S: *Sarah Tiainen, alternate, Catarina Ekman-Niemi-Kaija*

Baltic: *Clergy: Zinta Zintare (Latvia) alternate: Laine Guzlana  
Clergy: Remigijus Matulaitis (clergy)*

Norway: *Clergy: Albert Gjøstøl Andersen, Hilde Marie Øgreid Movafagh  
Lay: Karen Kristine Rasmussen, Martin Vestøl  
Alternates: Hilde Tveter, Hanne Thorgersen, Steinar Hjerpseth,  
Svein Veland.*

Ukraine: *Lay: Kateryna Vuksta*

## **The NEECC Youth Council from AC**

*Chairs or representatives from children and youth organizations. Meet online  
convened for the first meeting by the bishop's assistant*

## **Representatives to the European Methodist Council**

*The new bishop, one clergy and one lay*

*Nominations from each annual conference to a pool, the central conference  
council selects.*

## **Funds for Mission in Europe**

*The bishop, Alternate: Anne NG Foster*

## **NEECC Judicial Court**

Nominated from Acs one from each

Denmark: *Clergy: Keld Munk, lay: Mads Kamp Hansen*

Finland: *Lay: Adwoa Brewu, alternate: Andreas Forsbäck*

Ukraine: *Clergy: Lyubomyr Rudko, alternate: Volodymyr Prokip*

Norway : *Clergy: Steinar Hjerpseth, alternate: Lay: Martin Vestøl*

**NEECC Committee on Investigation**

*The Central and Southern Europe Central Conference committee on investigation*

**European Board on Alcohol and Drug Concerns**

*Karen Brogaard, Denmark (deacon)*

**European Lay Seminar:**

*Vigdis-Merete Rønning (lay Norway)*

**World Methodist Council**

*The bishop, Ingull Grefslie(Norway), Thomas Risager (Denmark)*

**Conference on European Churches**

*The bishop*

**Committee on the Book of Discipline:**

*The bishop, Veli Lojonen (Finland), Jørgen Thaarup (Denmark)*

# 18 Information regarding Judicial Court Decisions

The Judicial Court of the Central Conference has made 5 decisions during the past quadrennium, they can be found following this link: [Judicial Court - UMC Northern Europe](#)

The decisions are as follows:

Decision 2022-1: ¶ 537.3.a-h. On the judicial court, lost in the NEEBoD since 2001, restored.

Decision 2022-2 and clarified in 2022-2.1 and further clarified in 2023-1 ¶405.1 Episcopal election. Nomination cannot be closed before the first ballot. ¶405.3.d) Reinstated: 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.

Decision 2023-1 Subsequent clarification of decision 2022-1

Decision 2023-2 The provisions in ¶537.32 remain valid

Decision 2025-1 A delegate from the Northwest Russia and Belarus Provisional Annual Conference to the march 2018 extra central conference is in good standing, which was affirmed by his bishop, and is therefore a valid elected delegate to the central conference.

# The Faith We Sing

## **Some directions from mr. Wesley**

*Sing in time. Whatever time is sung be sure to keep with it. Do not run before nor stay behind it; but attend close to the leading voices, and move therewith as exactly as you can; and take care not to sing to slow.*

*Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.*

*Sing lustily and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength.*

## **1 Love Divine all Loves Excelling**

1. Love divine, all loves excelling,  
joy of heaven, to earth come down;  
fix in us thy humble dwelling;  
all thy faithful mercies crown!  
Jesus, thou art all compassion,  
pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation;  
enter every trembling heart.

2. Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit  
into every troubled breast!  
Let us all in Thee inherit,  
let us find the promised rest.  
Take away our power of sinning,  
Alpha and Omega be;  
end of faith, as its beginning,  
set our hearts at liberty.

3. Come, Almighty to deliver,  
let us all thy life receive;  
suddenly return and never,  
nevermore thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray and praise thee without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.

4. Finish, then, thy new creation;  
pure and spotless let us be.  
Let us see thy great salvation  
perfectly restored in thee,  
changed from glory into glory,  
till in heaven we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love, and praise!

*Charles Wesley*

## **2 Rejoice the Lord is King**

1. Rejoice, the Lord is King!  
Your Lord and King adore;  
mortals, give thanks and sing,  
and triumph evermore.  
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;  
rejoice; again I say, rejoice.

2. Jesus the Savior reigns,  
the God of truth and love;  
When he had purged our stains,  
he took his seat above.  
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;  
rejoice, again I say, rejoice.

3. His kingdom cannot fail;  
he rules o'er earth and heaven;  
the keys of earth and hell  
are to our Jesus given.  
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;  
rejoice; again I say, rejoice.

4. Rejoice in glorious hope!  
Jesus the Judge shall come,  
and take his servants up  
to their eternal home.  
We soon shall hear th'archangel's voice;  
the trump of God shall sound, rejoice!

*Charles Wesley*

## **3 The Summons**

1. Will you come and follow me  
If I but call your name?



Will you go where you don't know  
And never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown,  
Will you let my name be known,  
Will you let my life be grown  
In you and you in me?

2. Will you leave yourself behind  
If I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind  
And never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare  
Should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let me answer pray'r  
In you and you in me?

3. Will you let the blinded see  
If I but call your name?  
Will you set the pris'ners free  
And never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean,  
And do such as this unseen,  
And admit to what I mean  
In you and you in me?

4. Will you love the 'you' you hide  
If I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside  
And never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found  
To reshape the world around,  
Through my sight and touch and sound  
In you and you in me?

5. Lord, your summons echoes true  
When you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you  
And never be the same.  
In your company I'll go  
Where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow  
In you and you in me.        *John L Bell*

**4 Holy, Holy, Holy**

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;

Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,  
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,  
Who was, and is, and evermore shall be.

Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide Thee,  
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;  
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,  
Perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea;  
Holy, holy, holy; merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

### **5 How Great Thou Art**

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father;  
there is no shadow of turning with thee;  
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;  
as thou hast been thou forever will be.

Chorus:

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
all I have needed thy hand hath provided;  
great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,  
sun, moon and stars in their courses above  
join with all nature in manifold witness  
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth  
thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

**6 Lead Me Lord**

Lead me, Lord,  
lead me in thy righteousness;  
make thy way plain before my face.

For it is thou, Lord, thou, Lord only,  
that makest me dwell in safety.

**7 Bless the Lord**

Bless the Lord, my soul,  
And bless God's holy name.  
Bless the Lord, my soul,  
who leads me into life.

**8 Ubi Caritas**

Ubi caritas et amor.  
Ubi caritas, Deus ibi est.

**9 In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful,**

In the Lord I'll be ever thankful,  
in the Lord I will rejoice!  
Look to God, do not be afraid.  
Lift up your voices, the Lord is near.  
Lift up your voices, the Lord is near.

**10 The Kingdom of God is Justice and Peace**

The Kingdom of God is justice and peace  
and joy in the Holy Spirit.  
Come Lord and open in us  
the gates of your Kingdom.

**11 Laudate Omnes Gentes,**

Laudate omnes gentes,  
laudate Dominum.

## 12 Shine Jesus Shine

Sing Praises all you peoples,  
sing praises to the Lord.

Lord, the light of your love is shining  
In the midst of the darkness, shining  
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us  
Set us free by the truth you now bring us  
Shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine  
Fill this land with the Father's glory  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze  
Set our hearts on fire  
Flow, river, flow  
Flood the nations with grace and mercy  
Send forth your word  
Lord, and let there be light

Lord, I come to your awesome presence  
From the shadows into your radiance  
By the blood I may enter your brightness  
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness  
Shine on me, shine on me

As we gaze on your kingly brightness  
So our faces display your likeness  
Ever changing from glory to glory  
Mirrored here may our lives tell your story  
Shine on me, shine on me

## 13 Breathe on Me Breath of God

Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
fill me with life anew,  
that I may love what thou dost love,  
and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
until my heart is pure,  
until with thee I will one will,  
to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, till I am wholly thine,  
till all this earthly part of me  
glows with thy fire divine.  
Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
so shall I never die,  
but live with thee the perfect life

of thine eternity.

#### **14 Christ be our light**

1 Longing for light, we wait in darkness.  
Longing for truth, we turn to you.  
Make us your own, your holy people,  
light for the world to see.

Chorus

Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ, be our light!  
Shine in your church gathered today.

2 Longing for peace, our world is troubled.  
Longing for hope, many despair.  
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.  
Make us your living voice.

3 Longing for food, many are hungry.  
Longing for water, many still thirst.  
Make us your bread, broken for others,  
shared until all are fed.

4 Longing for shelter, many are homeless.  
Longing for warmth, many are cold.  
Make us your building, sheltering others,  
walls made of living stone.

5 Many the gifts, many the people,  
many the hearts that yearn to belong.  
Let us be servants to one another,  
making your kingdom come.

#### **15 10.000 Reasons**

Chorus

Bless the Lord, Oh my soul  
Oh my soul, worship his holy name  
Sing like never before, Oh my soul  
I'll worship your holy name

The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning  
It's time to sing your song again  
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me  
Let me be singing when the evening comes

Chorus

You're rich in love and you're slow to anger  
Your name is great and your heart is kind  
For all your goodness, I will keep on singing  
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

Chorus x 2

And on that day when my strength is failing  
The end draws near and my time has come  
Still my soul will sing your praise unending  
Ten thousand years and then forevermore.