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**Stefan Zürcher: “Role and Meaning of the Book of Discipline for the Church and Life of the Community of Believers in the United Methodist Church from a Leadership Perspective”**

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**Elements of a theology of marriage - Draft**

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**List of electable Elders in Full Connection for nomination as bishop**

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**Report of the Study Group on the situation of the Central Conference after the decisions of the General Conference**

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**Report of the  
71<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Executive Committee  
from March 12 - 13, 2020  
in Vienna, Austria**

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**The United Methodist Church**

Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe



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Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe

Report of the 71<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Executive Committee  
from March 12 - 13, 2020 in Vienna, Austria

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# **Facts of the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe**

## **General Information**

### **Annual Conferences of the Central Conference**

Provisional Annual Conference Bulgaria-Rumania  
Provisional Annual Conference Austria  
Annual Conference Poland  
Annual Conference Switzerland-France-North Africa  
Provisional Annual Conference Serbia-Macedonia  
Annual Conference Czech Republic-Slovakia  
Provisional Annual Conference Hungary

### **Episcopal Supervision since May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006**

Bishop Dr. Patrick Streiff

#### **Bishop retired**

Bishop Heinrich Bolleter

### **The agents of the Central Conference**

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## **The »Geneva Area«**

The "Geneva Area" was founded in 1936 and assigned to the Southeastern Jurisdiction Conference in the United States. His first bishop, Dr. John Louis Nuelsen, chose Geneva as residence. Since it is customary in the United Methodist Church to name the parish according to the respective residence of the bishop, the new parish was given the name "Geneva Area". Until 1954, all bishops resided in Geneva. In these eighteen years, the "Geneva Area" became a household name. To preserve this connection, the Central Conference in Brussels decided in 1954 to "keep the name of the Genevan Area and let the bishop have a free hand, to choose his residence, where he considers him right according to the circumstances."

### **The bishops of the Geneva Area**

John Louis Nuelsen	1936 - 1940
William W. Peele	1940 - 1941
Arthur J. Moore	1941 - 1944 and 1952 - 1954
Paul N. Garber	1944 - 1952 and 1965 - 1966
Ferdinand Sigg	1954 - 1965
Ralph E. Dodge	1965 - 1966
Franz W. Schäfer	1966 - 1989
Heinrich Bolleter	1989 - 2006
Patrick Streiff	2006 -

## **The Central Conference of Central- and Southern Europe**

The "Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe" was founded in 1954. It was formed from those Annual Conferences, Provisional Annual Conferences, and Missions left over after the dissolution of the "Central Conference of Central Europe" and the "Central Conference of Southern Europe" and summed up in the "Geneva Area".

## The Meetings of the Central Conference

- 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting from October 14 to 17, 1954 in Brussels, Belgium
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting from February 7 to 10, 1954 in Geneva, Switzerland
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting from October 13 to 16, 1960 in Linz, Austria
- 4<sup>st</sup> Meeting extraordinary from September 22 to 27, 1964 in Strasbourg, France
- 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting from September 2 to 4, 1966 in Lausanne, Switzerland
- 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting from March 5 to 9, 1969 in Berne, Switzerland  
Theme: »Die Kirche lebt«
- 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting from March 21 to 25, 1973 in Schaffhausen, Switzerland  
Thema: »Es ist in keinem anderen Heil«
- 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting from March 15 to 20, 1977 in Zofingen, Switzerland  
Theme: »Seid dankbar in allen Dingen; denn es ist der Wille Gottes in Jesus Christus an euch.«
- 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting from March 18 to 22, 1981 in Niederuzwil, Switzerland  
Theme: »Dienet einander, ein jeder mit der Gabe, die er empfangen hat, als die guten Haushalter der vielfältigen Gnade Gottes.«
- 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting from March, 13 to 17, 1985 in Zurich-Zelthof, Switzerland  
Theme: »Gott dienen - ein Leben lang.«
- 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting from March 15 to 19, 1989 in Baden, Switzerland  
Theme: »Christus der Weinstock - wir die Reben.«
- 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting from March 10 to 14, 1993 in Berne-Bümpliz, Switzerland  
Theme: »Wo der Geist des Herrn ist, da ist Freiheit«
- 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting from March 12 to 16, 1997 in Aarau, Switzerland  
Theme: »Mit Grenzen leben - in Christus überwinden«
- 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting from March 14 to 18, 2001 in Bülach, Switzerland  
Theme: »Lasst uns aber Gutes tun und nicht müde werden« (Gal. 6,9)
- 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting from April 13 to 17, 2005 in Berne-Altstadt, Switzerland  
Theme: »Furcht ist nicht in der Liebe« (1. Joh. 4, 18)
- 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting from March 11 to 15, 2009 in Bülach, Switzerland  
Theme: »Seek God and Live - the Methodist Way
- 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting from March 13 to 17, 2013 in Winterthur, Switzerland  
Theme: »Faith, Hope and Love - these three«
- 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting from March 8 to 12, 2017 in Zurich-Zelthof, Switzerland  
Theme: »Jesus is Lord«

# Rules of Order of the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe

## Paragraph 1 - Foundation

1. The United Methodist Church (Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche) in Central and Southern Europe is part of the United Methodist Church.
2. The United Methodist Church in Central and Southern Europe is issuing for its area a *Discipline* in accordance with *the Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church.
3. The United Methodist Church in Central and Southern Europe is made up of all annual and provisional annual conferences as laid out by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church.
4. The United Methodist Church in Central and Southern Europe is organized in accordance with the powers granted by the 1952 General Conference of the former Methodist Conference and in accordance with the *Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church as the "Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe". (See Constitutional Document from October 14, 1954 in the Minutes of the Central Conference 1954 in Brussels, pp. 39 - 40.)
5. The "Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe" has its office in Switzerland, Badenerstrasse 69, 8004 Zürich. In the following it will be referred to in short as "Central Conference".

## Paragraph 2 - The Central Conference

1. The Central Conference shall be composed of the Bishop, of voting delegates, delegates with advisory voice as well as guests, who have received an invitation from the conference chair or secretary. Guests may be restricted to public sessions.
2. Central Conference members with voting rights are the delegates of the annual and provisional annual conferences elected according to the provisions of the *Discipline* and the rules of order. Only regular members have voting rights.
3. Members with advisory voice are:
  - Retired Bishops;
  - Delegates of the associated Churches within the Central Conference borders;
  - The secretary, treasurer, chairperson of the judicial court, chairpersons of the working groups, if they are not already voting members.Advisory members may participate at all sessions of the Central Conference and submit motions to the Central Conference.
4. The delegates of the annual and the provisional annual conferences shall be elected according to the proportion determined by the executive committee. The provisions of the *Discipline* are to be observed.
5. The Central Conference shall convene once every four years within the twelve months following the General Conference. The Central Conference shall be convened by the Bishop in agreement with the executive committee. If the Bishop is prevented from doing this, the secretary may make notice of the conference session. If the Central Conference has not already decided otherwise, time and place of the upcoming session, the executive committee shall determine time and venue of the upcoming session. If necessary a special session of the Central Conference may be called.



6. The Bishop shall lead the meetings and is chairperson. If he or she is unable to lead the conference, the conference shall elect from the clergy members an interim chairperson.
7. A quorum shall be established when notice of the conference is extended at least one month prior to the conference and at least half of the members with voting rights are present. If there are too few members, the conference shall be postponed from day to day. If on the second day there are still too few members, on the third day without regard to the number of members in attendance the Central Conference shall have a quorum.
8. Without prejudice to specific provisions, the Central Conferences decides with a simple majority of the votes cast. Abstentions are to be ignored.
9. The official languages of the Central Conference shall be German and English. The Central Conference minutes shall be published in one of the two languages only.
10. The rights and responsibilities, which the Central Conference has received from the General Conference, are laid out in the *Discipline*. In the area of the Central Conference it shall have the sole legislative power.
11. Further tasks of the Central Conference shall be:
  - To promote the work which has been entrusted to the conference;
  - To establish all necessary rules and regulations for administration and supervision;
  - To install necessary organs and to elect their representatives;
  - To assign the tasks to the organs and to supervise their work;
  - To approve the budget for the quadrennium.
12. The Central Conference, where the laws of the land permit, can organize and incorporate itself and its institutions in order to acquire legal status and apply the appropriate legal provisions.

### **Paragraph 3 - Agents and Organs of the Central Conference**

1. The agents of the Central Conference are:
  - The Bishop;
  - The secretary;
  - The treasurer.Through nomination the Bishop can petition that a voting member of the executive committee be elected vice chair of the executive committee.
2. The Organs of the Central Conference are:
  - The Executive Committee;
  - The Office;
  - The Council on Finances and Administration;
  - The Judicial Court;
  - The Committee on Investigation;
  - The Committee on Appeals;
  - The Working Group on Episcopacy;
  - Other Working Groups.

## **Paragraph 4 - The Bishop**

1. The Bishop embodies the unity of the Central Conference with the entire United Methodist Church. He or she is supervisor (proctor) of the entire work within the Central Conference (geographical) boundaries. He or she shall represent the Central Conference outside of the conference and determines, if he or she is prevented and deems it to be prudent, a deputy. The Bishop may *ex officio* participate in all meetings of the Central Conference.
2. The Bishop shall be elected through secret ballot with a three-fifths majority of the voting delegates present. The Executive Committee may establish a preparatory process for the election of a bishop. All ordained elders in full connection, who belong to an annual or provisional annual conference of the Central Conference, may be elected.
3. The newly elected Bishop has a term of four years. When the Bishop's first term of office is closing, the executive committee shall determine whether a re-election for life or an election of a new Bishop shall take place and makes the appropriate motion to the Central Conference. For a re-election for life a three-fifth majority is required.
4. If the office of Bishop becomes vacant (due to death, retirement or resignation) the executive committee in accordance with the *Discipline* shall determine the necessary steps. The executive committee shall decide whether an extraordinary session of the Central Conference shall be announced and makes the motion to elect a new Bishop.
5. A retired Bishop shall be an advisory member of the Central Conference and the executive committee. He or she shall remain member as long as his or her residency is within the Central Conference borders. He or she is to be invited to all meetings of these organs.

## **Paragraph 5 - The Secretary**

1. Based upon the nomination of the executive committee the Central Conference shall elect a secretary for a four-year term. The candidate does not need to be a voting member of the Central Conference. Re-election is possible.
2. The term of office shall begin with the adjournment of the session during which the election occurred and continues until the closing of the next regular session of the Central Conference. The secretary shall *ex officio* be member and secretary of the executive committee and the office.
3. The secretary shall write the minutes of the Central Conference, the executive committee and the office and shall publish and mail these as required through their by-laws. In consultation with the Bishop, he or she shall manage as need dictates the correspondence for these organs and shall administer to the tasks which the *Discipline* places on him or her. The Central Conference, the executive committee, and the office may name additional tasks.
4. If the office of secretary becomes vacant during the quadrennium, an interim secretary may be appointed by the executive committee or by the Bishop.

## Paragraph 6 - The Treasurer

1. The Central Conference shall elect following nomination by the executive committee a treasurer for a four-year term. The candidate does not need to be a voting delegate of the Central Conference. Re-election is possible.
2. The term of office of the treasurer shall begin with the adjournment of the Central Conference session, during which the election took place, and continues until the conclusion of the next regular Central Conference session. He or she shall be *ex officio* a member of the executive committee.
3. The treasurer shall manage the finances following the framework of the approved budget. He or she shall annually prepare a fiscal report of all transactions, which is given to the executive committee for review. He or she shall submit motions regarding the budget of the current year as needed. He or she shall write and in consultation with the executive committee submit a budget proposal for the quadrennium to the Central Conference for approval.
4. If the office of treasurer becomes vacant during the quadrennium, an interim treasurer shall be appointed by the executive committee or by the Bishop.

## Paragraph 7 - The Executive Committee

1. The executive committee shall be composed of the following members with voting rights: the Bishop, the secretary and the treasurer, as well as one superintendent and one lay delegate from each annual and provisional annual conference, as well as the chairperson of the working group on episcopacy. Lay representatives must be elected members of the Central Conference.

Retired Bishops are members with advisory voice. If a conference consists of more than one country, then beyond the two voting delegates the superintendent of each additional country shall be a member of the executive committee with advisory voice.

Through invitation the Bishop may also invite the chairpersons of the working groups.

2. The representatives of the annual and the provisional annual conferences shall be nominated for election for the executive committee by the Bishop after consultation with the elected delegates of those annual and provisional annual conferences. Vacancies in the interim shall be filled by election of the executive committee upon nomination of the Bishop.
3. The term of office for the executive committee shall be four years. It shall begin with the adjournment of the Central Conference session, during which the election took place and continues until the conclusion of the next regular session of the Central Conference.
4. Chairperson of the executive committee shall *ex officio* be the Bishop.
5. The executive committee shall meet at least once a year. The meetings shall be announced by the Bishop, if he or she is prevented in doing this, by the vice-chairperson or the secretary. There is a quorum if half of the voting delegates are present. The executive committee shall decide through majority vote of the voting members present.
6. The executive committee shall manage the business of the Central Conference between sessions. Most particularly:
  - To attend to the completion of its resolutions and decisions and to do what is necessary to further the standing and development of the work;

- To receive the financial statement of the treasurer and to discharge him or her on the basis of the audit report;
  - To make the necessary adjustments and extensions to the Central Conference financial budget;
  - To attend to the preparation of the Central Conference sessions.
7. The executive committee elects through the nomination of the Office the persons who shall represent the Central Conference in the worldwide church bodies, as long as no other voting regulations exist.
8. The executive committee shall report to the Central Conference on its work and make the necessary motions.

### **Paragraph 8 - The Office**

1. The office shall be composed of the Bishop, the vice-chairperson, the secretary, and the treasurer. Chairperson shall be the Bishop.
2. The office can through a motion of the Bishop include a fifth person, who is elected by the executive committee from among its members.
3. The office shall have the following responsibilities:
- Preparation of the executive committee meetings and supervision or administration of its decisions;
  - The determination of the language, in which the minutes of the Central Conference shall be written;
  - Administration of all financial and personnel matters for the office of Bishop and the secretariat of the Bishop, which are not otherwise supervised;
  - Nomination of members to the Council on Finances and Administration passed on to the executive committee, which confirms the nominations;
4. In pressing situations, for which the Central Conference or the executive committee have not made any provisions, the office can act for the interim on behalf of the executive committee.

### **Paragraph 9 - The Council on Finance and Administration**

1. The Council on Finance and Administration shall be composed of three persons to be nominated by the office and confirmed by the executive committee.
2. The council shall annually examine the disbursement of funds of the Central Conference and shall submit the written report of the review to the executive committee.
3. The council shall resolve the budget issues of the Bishop and his or her office with the appropriate bodies of the General Conference. The accounting is done through the association "Hilfe im Sprengel". The council supports the Bishop and the Bishop's office in advisory capacity.
4. The members of the council are also members of the pension board of the Central Conference. The executive committee can elect further members to the pension board.

## **Paragraph 10 – The Committee on Investigation**

1. The Central Conference shall elect a committee on investigation in accordance with the disciplinary and arbitration regulation of the Central Conference, consisting of seven clergy members in full connection (if possible not more than one pastor per annual or provisional annual conference), two laity with advisory voice, and six substitutes (five clergy members in full connection and one layperson). The election takes place upon nomination by the Bishop.
2. The committee on investigation is responsible for any complaint against the Bishop.
3. The committee on investigation constitutes itself and gives itself rules of procedure and by-laws. Seven clergy members in full connection respectively their substitutes build the quorum. Members of the committee on investigation, who might be party to the dispute, are to be replaced by substitutes.

## **Paragraph 11 - The Committee on Appeals**

1. The Central Conference shall vote for a committee on appeals in accordance with the disciplinary and arbitration regulation of the Central Council, made up of five pastoral members (four in full connection and a full-time local pastor) as well as four laity, who have at least six continuous years as a professing member of the United Methodist Church, also as many substitutes. The election takes place after the recommendation of the Bishop.
2. The committee on appeals of the Central Conference is responsible for appeals in disciplinary proceedings against pastoral members.
3. The committee on appeals shall constitute itself and choose its rules of order and bylaws. Committee members, who might be party to a dispute or feel biased, shall be replaced by a substitute.

## **Paragraph 12 - The Judicial Court**

1. The judicial court shall be composed of five persons of which at least two must be clergy members in full connection. At the same time four substitutes shall be elected, two of which shall be clergy members in full connection and two lay members. The candidates shall be persons of integrity and qualified for this task. They must not for the same period of time be members of the Central Conference, the executive committee, the working groups or the organs of the disciplinary and arbitration regulation. Their election follows the nomination prepared by the executive committee.
2. The judicial court shall constitute itself and shall provide its own procedural and working rules. A quorum shall be established by the presence of three members. A tie decision shall be decided by the vote of the chairperson. A member shall be excluded from a judicial process if he or she is a member of a church body, which is party to the case.
3. The judicial court shall meet as necessity calls at a place, which the chairperson shall name. The chairperson or a substitute shall be invited to the meeting of the Central Conference.
4. The judicial court shall make all judicial decisions in accordance with the constitution, excluding the jurisdiction of the Judicial Council of the General Conference.
5. The Central Conference may charge the judicial court with additional tasks.

6. The decisions of the judicial court shall have immediate effect. The option to invoke the judicial council of the General Conference in accordance with the constitution is hereby not affected.
7. The decisions of the judicial court shall briefly outline the facts and points of controversy as well as the rationale for the decision. All parties shall receive this document as well as the secretary of the Central Conference. It shall be published in the minutes of the following Central Conference session.
8. Petitions to the judicial court may be made by:
  - The Bishop of the Central Conference;
  - At least one-third of the voting members of the executive committee;
  - At least one-fifth of the delegates with voting rights present at the Central Conference;
  - At least one-fifth of the voting members present at the annual or provisional annual conference; in provisional annual conferences, which have fewer than 25 members, half of the voting members present.

### **Paragraph 13 - The Working Group on Episcopacy**

1. The Central Conference shall elect a working group on episcopacy, which consists of one executive committee member from each annual and provisional annual conference. The nomination shall be suggested by the office. The Bishop shall choose one fifth of the members.
2. The working group meets at least once a year. It fulfills the tasks in accordance with the *Discipline* and reports directly to the Central Conference and the executive committee.

### **Paragraph 14 - Other Working Groups**

1. The Central Conference can elect further working groups and authorize them to undertake specific tasks. The members of the working groups need not be members of the Central Conference.
2. In general, the working groups shall be comprised of three members. Vacancies shall be filled by the executive committee.
3. The chairperson of the working group shall be determined by the Central Conference. Otherwise the working group shall constitute itself.
4. The chairperson shall report annually to the executive committee on the activities of the working group. The reporting has to take place in writing and in the official languages of the Central Conference.

### **Paragraph 15 - The Session of the Central Conference**

1. The session committee of the Central Committee consists of the chairperson, the secretary, the treasurer, the chairperson of the ushers (counters of votes), and the conference host. This committee shall make all decisions in all procedural or organizational questions, which are not disciplinary question or which are not otherwise regulated in these rules of order. All members of the Central Conference have the right to appeal a decision made by this committee.
2. The approved program prepared by the preparations committee of the Central Conference is the official program of the session.

3. At the beginning of the first meeting the executive committee shall place a motion for election of the following persons:
  - 6 ushers (vote counters) (3 clergy delegates and three lay delegates) and a chairperson;
  - Two auditors of the conference minutes;
  - The reporters;
4. The Office lays the to do list before the conference for acceptance.

### **Paragraph 16 - The business meetings**

1. No member of the Central Conference may be absent from the business meetings without permission, unless it is due to illness or other legitimate reason. In this case a written note indicating the reasons shall be given to the secretary in a timely manner.
2. The chairperson shall announce the presence of a quorum. The times of opening the meetings, recess, and conclusion of the day's deliberations shall be the decision of the chairperson. He or she shall preside over the deliberations.
3. The meetings of the Central Conference shall generally be public. Visitors shall sit in the area designated to them.
4. The chairperson may for selected business call for a closed meeting. He or she must announce a closed session when at least one-fifth of the members require it. Before the closed meeting begins all guests shall leave the conference room. The business of the closed meeting shall be confidential. The decisions of the closed session shall recorded in writing.

### **Paragraph 17 - Deliberations**

1. Business may reach the Central Conference:
  - By motion of the chairperson
  - Through the reports of the organs of the Central Conference named under paragraph 3;
  - By motion of the annual and provisional annual conferences;
  - By motion of members of the Central Conference.
2. For the business meetings the following rules shall apply:
  - All motions and amendments shall be submitted by a member of the Central Conference and be supported by another member;
  - All motions and amendments shall be written in one of the official languages of the Central Conference and given to the secretary;
  - When an amendment is proposed and has been supported, the chairperson may limit debate to the proposed amendment. The same shall apply to amendments to the amendment. The discussion shall follow the reverse order of the submitted amendments;
  - A motion for reconsideration after the concluding vote on a petition may be made by a member of the majority vote fraction only.
  - The following motions must be voted on immediately after consideration of the list of speakers: close of debate and motion to vote, motion to recess and postpone the meeting, point of order, matter regarding the agenda, commit to refer the matter for consideration to a Central Conference organ.

## **Paragraph 18 - Voting Procedure and Elections**

1. Unless otherwise designated, voting is public. Elections may be public or by ballot.
2. Prior to the vote the chairperson shall offer a brief review of the amendments, which are on the table. Amendments to the amendment shall be voted on prior to the vote on the amendment and the vote on the motion itself, which is voted on a last.
3. Voting shall generally be a showing of hands. Only the votes of the delegates present at the time of the vote shall be counted. Abstentions shall be ignored. When there is a tie vote the motion is defeated.
4. When elections are open, the candidates shall be voted on in the order of their nominations.
5. Ballots shall be used for secret elections. Empty and invalid ballots shall not be considered in determining the majority. The ushers shall see that each voting ballot has a different color, format or print. They shall also count the number of voting ballots passed out. If the number of voting ballots turned in to be counted is higher than the number passed out, the vote is invalid and must be repeated. The ushers shall record the result of the election as follows: number of voting members, number of invalid voting ballots, and number of empty voting ballots and distribution of valid ballots.
6. If the election is to take place without nominations, the first two votes shall be open. After the second vote no further candidates must be included. As of the third vote the Central Conference may, following a motion of a member, declare in an open vote that the candidate with the highest number of votes below the absolute majority is elected. For the election of a Bishop paragraph 4 applies.

## **Paragraph 19 - Thematic Events**

1. In regard to the tasks of the Central Conference as defined in the *Discipline* thematic events can be organized in connection with the meetings of the executive committee. The theme is selected by either the Central Conference or the executive committee.
2. Further persons who in their country work in this area or may offer further impulses to the annual and provisional annual conferences may be invited to the thematic events taking place in connection with the meeting of the executive committee. Generally not more than one person per country may be invited in addition to the executive committee members. The additional persons will be invited by the Bishop after consultation with the respective superintendent.
3. At the Central Conference the themes may be taken up again for consolidation and continuation or new themes can be initiated.

## **Paragraph 20 - The Conference Minutes**

1. All Central Conference accepted reports, petitions and decisions shall be integral parts of the conference minutes and shall be included in the minutes in full.
2. After the revision through both of the auditors of the minutes and through the chairperson the minutes are valid and will be published.



## **Paragraph 21 - Final Provisions**

1. Petitions to change these Rules of Order of the Central Conference require a two-thirds majority to pass.
2. These Rules of Order were adopted by the 2013 Central Conference and replace the previous Organizational Structure and Rules of Order from 2009. They shall take effect on March 16, 2013.
3. On March 10, 2017, the Central Conference amended the second sentence of Paragraph 4, point 2. The amendment takes effect immediately.

# **Procedural and working rules of the Judicial Court**

## ***General provisions***

### **Article 1: Jurisdiction of the Judicial Court**

The competences of the Judicial Court shall be those listed in Article 12 of the Rules Order of the CC CSE.

### **Article 2: Working mode in general**

1 Wherever possible, the Judicial Court shall do its work in writing, in particular with the help of electronic communication (e-mail).

2 If special circumstances require so, the Judicial Court shall hold a meeting. In such a case it shall be able to take decisions if at least three members are present. The president shall decide on the order of the day. In principle, meetings of the Judicial Court shall not be public.

### **Article 3: Procedure**

Without prejudice to the present rules, the Judicial Court shall proceed based on its free decision, provided that equality of treatment and fair hearing are guaranteed.

### **Article 4: Decision-making**

The Judicial Court shall decide with the simple majority of the votes cast. Abstentions shall not be taken into account for these purposes. In the case of equal votes, the president of the Judicial Court shall decide.

### **Article 5: Working languages and languages of procedure**

The working languages and the languages of procedure of the Judicial Court shall be German and English.

## ***Procedure for formal decisions of the Judicial Court***

### **Article 6: Standing**

Applications for a formal legal decision to be taken by the Judicial Court within the meaning of Article 12(4) of the Rules or Order of the CC CSE shall be brought by the persons and groups of persons listed in Article 12(8) of the same Rules of Order.

### **Article 7: Written submissions**

1 Applications for a formal procedure before the Judicial Court shall be made in writing. The written application is to be sent to the secretary of the CC CSE. An application by e-mail shall be deemed to have been received where the secretary has confirmed its receipt within 7 days after the application was sent.

2 The written application shall in any case contain the following information:

- a) Names of the parties
- b) Addresses, telephone numbers, fax numbers and (where applicable) e-mail addresses of the parties

- c) The application
- d) The grounds on which the application is founded.

3 The Judicial Court shall forthwith send to the defendant a copy of the written application. Within 30 days after the receipt of the application the defendant shall to the Judicial Court send a reasoned answer to the application in writing.

4 The Judicial Court shall forthwith send to the applicant a copy of the written submissions of the defendant.

#### **Article 8: Oral procedure and procedure in writing**

1 The formal procedure before the Judicial Court shall be conducted in writing. In special cases, the president shall be entitled to decide in favour of an oral procedure.

2 In the case of an oral procedure, the president shall decide on the place of the session and on the order of the day. At the beginning of the meeting, the Judicial Court shall appoint one of its members as secretary.

#### **Article 9: Communication with the parties**

1 Without prejudice to section 3 of the present article, the communication of the Judicial Court with the parties to the procedure shall, wherever possible, be carried out by e-mail.

2 Parties who receive e-mail messages shall immediately confirm their receipt. Absent such a receipt, the sending party shall repeat the sending of the message in an appropriate manner. Without prejudice to registered mail, the communication shall be deemed to have been received once its receipt has been confirmed.

3 The following documents shall be sent by registered mail as well, where applicable, by e-mail:

- a) The written submissions by the application (to be sent to the defendant)
- b) The written submissions by the defendant (to be sent to the applicant)
- c) The setting of any additional dates for action by the parties by the president of the Judicial Court
- d) The formal decision by the Judicial Court.

#### **Article 10: Participation of experts**

The president of the Judicial Court shall be entitled to appoint experts, in particular from among the members of the United Methodist Church who may be experts in the relevant field.

#### **Article 11: Decisions of the Judicial Court**

1 The decisions of the Judicial Court shall contain information about possibilities of appeal. They shall be sent in writing to the parties, the secretary of the CC CSE and to the Bishop of the CC CSE.

2 The decisions of the Judicial Court shall numbered consecutively and shall be published according to Article 12(7) of the Rules of Order of the CC CSE in the next protocol of the CC CSE.

### ***Further procedures***

#### **Article 12: Further tasks and informal requests**

1 Where the CC CSE assigns further tasks to the Judicial Court based on Article 12(5) of the Rules of Order of the CC CSE, the president of the Judicial Court shall decide on the procedure.

2 The president of the Judicial Court shall decide on informal requests put to it by the Bishop or by other leaders of the church.

## ***Entry into force***

### **Article 13**

The present procedural and working rules shall enter into force on 1 January 2009.

Done by the Judicial Court on 21 December 2008 and adapted on 30 March 2013 to the terminology of the Rules revised by the Central Conference 2013.

For the Judicial Court:

The president: Prof. Dr. Christa Tobler, LL.M.

# I. Minutes

## of the 71<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe

### Minutes Executive Committee from Thursday, March 12, 2020

Donnerstag, 12. März 2020, 15.00 Uhr

**Plenarsitzung in der EMK Wien Fünfhaus, Sechshausstrasse 56**

*Bischof Streiff* heisst alle Anwesenden herzlich willkommen und weist darauf hin, dass wir angesichts der reduzierten Anzahl und Muttersprache der Anwesenden die Tagung in Deutsch führen werden.

*Bischof Streiff* liest den heutigen Lösungsvers aus Psalm 119,154: «Führe meine Sache und erlöse mich; erquickte mich durch dein Wort.» Der Psalmbeter weiss darum, dass die Weisung Gottes zum Leben führt. Sie hilft dem Menschen auf dem Weg zum Leben. Der Bischof weist darauf hin, dass er an unterschiedlichste Orte der Zentralkonferenz gehen kann, in denen grosse Unterschiede vorhanden sind im Umgang mit und Verständnis für homosexuell empfindende Menschen. Aber alle betonen, dass für sie das Wort Gottes die Weisung für das Leben enthalte. Diese Feststellung gilt für alle Menschen, egal welche Haltung sie zu diesem Thema oder anderen unterschiedlichen Themen haben. Es ist daher wichtig zu wissen und zu erkennen, dass in diesem Zusammenhang nicht am falschen Ort Spannungen vermutet werden, wo sie nicht vorhanden sind. Denn alle verlassen sich auf dieses Wort Gottes als Weisung für das Leben.

Der neutestamentliche Lehrvers stammt aus Apostelgeschichte 8,30f: «Da lief Philippus hin und hörte, dass er den Propheten Jesaja las, und fragte: Verstehst du auch, was du liest? Er aber sprach: Wie kann ich, wenn mich nicht jemand anleitet? Und er bat Philippus, aufzusteigen und sich zu ihm zu setzen.» Es gehört zu unseren Kernaufgaben als Kirche, diese Frage zu stellen: Verstehst du was du liest? Oder: Wie verstehst du, was du liest? Es ist jedoch wichtig zu erkennen, dass unser Verständnis der Weisungen Gottes immer auch geprägt ist von unserer je eigenen Lebensgeschichte.

Als in der Schweiz die Dienstgemeinschaft mit den Kleingruppen in der Region angefangen hat, haben alle Gruppenmitglieder zu Beginn einander ihre Glaubensgeschichte erzählt. Daraus ist ein ganz neues Verständnis füreinander entstanden, weil die Mitglieder nun aufgrund der Lebensgeschichte verstanden haben, weshalb jemand so ist, wie er ist. Der Bischof hofft, dass uns das auch in unserer europäischen Gemeinschaft gelingt, und dass ein neues Verständnis aufgrund unserer unterschiedlichen Glaubensgeschichten entstehen kann.

Anschliessend spricht der Bischof ein Gebet und wir singen das Lied: «Hab Dank von Herzen, Herr»

Folgende Personen sind anwesend:

Stimmberechtigte Mitglieder:

**Bischof**

Vorsitzender Bischof	Bischof	Patrick Streiff	✓
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**Büro**

Stellvertretende Vorsitzende	Laie	Helene Bindl	✓
Sekretär	Pfarrer	Markus Bach	✓
Kassierin	Laie	Iris Bullinger	entschuldigt

**Exekutivkomitee**

Bulgarien-Rumänien	Sup.	Daniel Topalski	entschuldigt
	Laie	Desislava Todorova	entschuldigt
Serbien-Makedonien	Sup.	Daniel Sjanta	✓ (bis Do. 17.00)
	Laie	Daniela Stoilkova	✓ (bis Do. 17.00)
Österreich	Sup.	Stefan Schröckenfuchs	✓
	Laie	Helene Bindl (Büromitglied)	(✓)
Polen	Sup.	Andrzej Malicki	entschuldigt
	Laie	Olgierd Benedyktowicz	entschuldigt
Schweiz-Frankreich-Nordafrika	Sup.	Claudia Haslebacher	✓
	Laie	Lea Hafner	✓
Tschechien-Slowakei	Sup.	Stefan Rendoš	entschuldigt
	Laie	David Chlupáček	entschuldigt
Ungarn	Sup.	László Khaled	entschuldigt
	Laie	Henrik Schauerermann	entschuldigt
<b>Vorsitz AG Bischofsamt</b>	Pfarrer	Jörg Niederer	✓ <u>9 (7)</u>

Beratende Mitglieder:

<b>Bischof im Ruhestand</b>	Bischof i.R.	Heinrich Bolleter	entschuldigt
<b>Zusätzliche Superintendenten</b>			
Frankreich und Belgien	Sup.	Etienne Rudolph	entschuldigt
Algerien und Tunesien	Pfarrer	Freddy Nzambe	entschuldigt
Albanien:	Sup.	Wilfried Nausner	entschuldigt
Tschechien	Sup.	Petr Procházka	entschuldigt
Rumänien	Sup.	Rares Calugar	entschuldigt
Nord-Mazedonien:	Sup.	Marjan Dimov	✓ (bis Do. 17.00)

**Vorsitzende der Arbeitsgruppen**

AG Theologie u. Ord. Dienste	Sup.	Stefan Zürcher	✓
AG Liturgie	Pfarrer	Stefan Weller	entschuldigt
AG Kirchenordn. u. Rechtsfragen	Sup.	Daniel Topalski (Exekutivmitg.)	entschuldigt
AG Kinder und Jugend	Pfarrer	Boris Fazekas	entschuldigt
	bzw.	Irena Stefanova	entschuldigt
AG Frauendienst	Pfarrer/in	Monika Zuber	entschuldigt
Koordinatorin	Laie	Barbara Büniger	✓ <u>3 (2)</u>

**Als Gäste anwesend sind:**

aus der Schweiz	Sup.	Serge Frutiger	entschuldigt
aus Tschechien	Pfarrer/in	Ivana Procházková	entschuldigt
Assistent des Bischofs		Urs Schweizer	✓
Bischofsbüro		André Töngi	✓ <u>2</u>

**Total Anwesende: 14 (11)**

Bischof Bolleter lässt alle herzlich grüssen. Er war zu einer Kontrolle für sein Herz, wo sie feststellen mussten, dass er einen neuen Eingriff am Herz brauchen wird. Bischof Streiff bittet Helene Bintl, eine Karte zu besorgen, um ihm einen Gruss zukommen zu lassen.

Für die Generalkonferenz-Thematik haben die europäischen Bischöfe ihre örtliche Teilnahme aufgrund der Schutzmassnahmen wegen des Corona-Virus abgesagt. Sie werden aber über eine Internet-Verbindung zugeschaltet sein, damit sie uns über ihre Situation informieren können.

Der *Bischof* weist auf den Zeitplan (Bericht 1.1.1) hin. Das Exekutivkomitee ist bereit, entsprechend zu arbeiten.

### **Bericht des Büros (Berichte 1.1; 1.1.1; 1.1.2; 1.2; 1.3; 1.4)**

vertreten durch Markus Bach, Sekretär

Der Sekretär *Markus Bach* liest den Bürobericht abschnittsweise vor.

zu 1.3 Nachwahlen:

**Das Exekutivkomitee wählt Irena Stefanova einstimmig als Co-Leiterin der Arbeitsgruppe Kinder und Jugend.**

**Das Exekutivkomitee nimmt zustimmend davon Kenntnis, dass Jana Křížova in der Arbeitsgruppe «Kirchengemeinschaft» der GEKE teilnimmt.**

*Bischof Streiff:* Ich bitte den Sekretär, diese Personen entsprechend zu informieren.

*Bischof Streiff:* Im Zusammenhang mit der Liste der Verstorbenen bitte ich alle Konferenzen nochmals genau darauf zu achten, ob Laienpersonen der Zentralkonferenz in den vergangenen Jahren verstorben sind, damit wir sie an der Zentralkonferenz im nächsten Jahr erwähnen können. Bitte meldet diese Personen an das Bischofsbüro.

zu 3.8. Ausserordentliche Tagung des Exekutivkomitees vom 21./22. November 2020

Die Anträge werden am Freitagnachmittag behandelt.

zu 3.9 Tagung der Zentralkonferenz 2021:

*Jörg Niederer:* Das vorgeschlagene Thema ist biblisch und scheint mir passend zu sein.

*Lea Hafner:* Die Weihe von Patrick Streiff fand im Berner Münster statt. Das war würdevoll und hat mir gefallen. Daher fände ich die Weihe im Basler Münster sehr passend.

**Das Exekutivkomitee beschliesst einstimmig, dass über der Zentralkonferenz 2021 in Basel das Thema «Die Frucht des Geistes ist...» stehen soll.**

zu 4. Finanzielles:

Da die Kassierin, Iris Bullinger nicht anwesend sein kann, erläutert der Sekretär die Rechnung 2019 der Zentralkonferenz MSE.

**Das Exekutivkomitee nimmt einstimmig die Rechnung 2019 aufgrund des Revisorenberichts an, erteilt der Kassierin Entlastung und spricht ihr einen herzlichen Dank für die geleisteten Dienste aus.**

**Bischof Patrick Streiff wird ermächtigt, auch im kommenden Amtsjahr die Mehrkosten für bis zu zwei jährliche Upgrades in die Businessclass bei Transatlantik-Nachtflügen in die Schweiz der Zentralkonferenz zu verrechnen.**

zu 8. Weltrat Methodistische Kirchen

*Barbara Büniger:* Ich wäre froh, wenn wir möglichst junge Frauen aus den osteuropäischen Ländern senden könnten.

*Bischof Streiff:* Wir können fünf Personen an den World Methodist Council senden, aber haben das in der Vergangenheit nicht immer getan, weil uns der Aufwand an Zeit und für Finanzen immer hoch erschien. Jetzt in Schweden möchten wir aber tatsächlich schauen, dass wir fünf Personen senden können. Daher werden wir nach der Exekutive nochmals ein Mail aussenden, weil wir jetzt an der Tagung so wenige Personen für eine Nomination sind.

**Das Exekutivkomitee nominiert einstimmig die neue Bischöfin bzw. den neuen Bischof, Murielle Rietschi (als ihr Ersatz: Barbara Büniger), David Field und zwei weitere (vorzugsweise jüngere) Personen als Mitglieder des Weltrates Methodistischer Kirchen (2021-2026). Das Büro erhält die Kompetenz allenfalls noch offene Nominationen vorzunehmen.**

*Urs Schweizer:* Das OK des World Methodist Council fragt uns an, ob wir Personen melden könnten, welche als potentielle Redner/-innen für die drei Schwerpunktthemen «Migration», «Pilgrimage» und «Illumination/Guiding Lights» benannt werden könnten. Wir werden dieses Anliegen im Mail für die Nominationen ebenfalls aufnehmen.

zu 9. Namensänderung GEKE in englischer Sprache:

**Das Exekutivkomitee stimmt einstimmig der Namensänderung von Community of Protestant Churches in Europe zu Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe zu.**

*Bischof Streiff:* Ich bitte den Assistenten des Bischofs einen entsprechenden Brief zu verfassen.

zu 10. ZK-MSE-Mailadressen:

*Jörg Niederer* weist darauf hin, dass die Änderungen, für die nicht deutsch- oder französischsprachigen Mailadressen noch in diesem Jahr erfolgen werden.

*Markus Bach:* Ich bin froh, wenn die Adressen für die mögliche ausserordentliche Tagung im November 2020 funktionieren werden. Damit die Kommunikation funktioniert, sind wir auf die Mithilfe aller angewiesen.

zu 11. Bischofsbüro:

*Helene Bindl* überreicht Urs Schweizer und André Töngi ein kleines Geschenk als Dankeschön für ihren grossen Einsatz für die Zentralkonferenz. Das Exekutivkomitee applaudiert dazu.

**Das Exekutivkomitee stimmt dem Bericht des Büros mit herzlichem Dank zu.**

*Bischof Streiff* stellt das Dokument «Konsensbasierte Entscheidungsfindung» (Beilage 1.1.2) vor und erläutert das Vorgehen für das Gespräch am Freitagnachmittag.

Wir gehen anschliessend in eine Pause.



Donnerstag, 12. März 2020, 16.30 Uhr

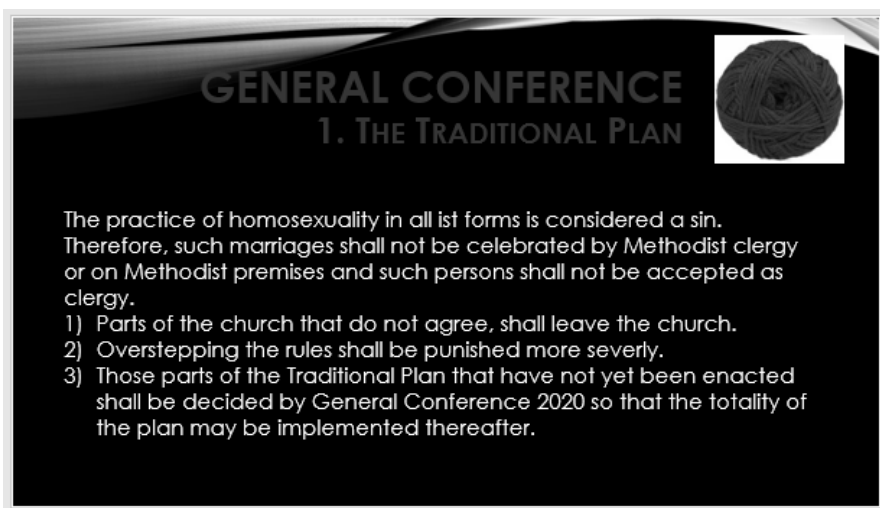
**Plenarsitzung in der EMK Wien Fünfhaus, Sechshausenstrasse 56**

Bischof Streiff weist darauf hin, dass in der Pause die Vertreter aus Nord-Mazedonien (Daniela Stoilkova und Marjan Dimov) und Serbien (Daniel Sjanta) in ihre Heimatländer zurückkehren mussten, da ab dem nächsten Tag die Rückkehr in ihre Länder mit einer zweiwöchigen Quarantänezeit verbunden wäre.

### **Bericht zur aktuellen Situation der Generalkonferenz und weltweiten Kirche**

Bischof Patrick Streiff

Bischof Streiff zeigt anhand eines verschiedenfarbigen Wollknäuels die Situation unserer weltweiten Kirche im Blick auf die Thematik der Homosexualität:



## GENERAL CONFERENCE 2. TOPICS OF WORLDWIDE RELEVANCE AT GC 2020



- 1) New Global Social Principles (biblical, methodist, worldwide, limited to principles)
- 2) US as a regional conference on its own (similar to central conferences outside the US)
- 3) A General Book of Discipline, reduced on essentials and non-adaptable – proposal for consultation only
- 4) Many, many new plans...

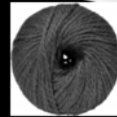
## GENERAL CONFERENCE 3. PROTOCOL ON RECONCILIATION AND GRACE THROUGH SEPARATION



GC 2019 has only led to an escalation of the conflict, not to its solution. US-based interest groups have worked on new plans. CC-bishops took the initiative to add the voice of the church outside the US with the attempt to find a peaceful solution.

- 1) On the basis of the protocol, a legal petition has been developed and will be submitted to GC 2020 for approval.
- 2) During a limited time, it will be possible to separate from the UMC and take all assets in leaving.
- 3) Outside the US, decisions have to follow a cascade: first central conference (March 21), then annual conferences (up to summer 2022), then local churches (up to 2024).
- 4) No one has to make a decision. One may remain in what the superior conference body does or deliberately decide differently.

## CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN EUROPE



The study group of the CC-CSE is now reporting to the March 2020 executive committee. The church councils of the countries responded whether they are willing to remain together even with the diversity of convictions. All has happened on the background of the Traditional Plan, voted at GC 2019. **If GC 2020 accepts the mediation protocol, the context for the CC-CSE will be completely different.**

A central conference needs to keep a minimum size (180 clergy) in order to be able to elect a bishop.

The central conference in March 2021 has the authority to fix the central conference discipline (keep it or change it within the principles of adaptation rights).



Die entsprechende Powerpoint ist in der Dropbox der Zentralkonferenz abgelegt und kann von dort heruntergeladen werden.

### **Weltrat Methodistischer Kirchen (kein schriftlicher Bericht)**

vertreten durch Bischof Patrick Streiff

*Bischof Streiff* weist nochmals auf den Bürobericht hin, in dem auf die Tagung des World Methodist Council im nächsten Jahr hingewiesen wird. Ein weiterer Bericht zum Weltrat Methodistischer Kirchen liegt nicht vor.

### **Europäischer Rat Methodistischer Kirchen (Bericht 3.3)**

von Emil Zaev

*Bischof Streiff* weist in diesem Zusammenhang auf die Situation der britischen Methodistenkirche hin, welche eine etwas offenere Haltung gegenüber homosexuell empfindenden Menschen hat.

*Bischof Streiff:* Im Abschnitt 6 des Berichts ist das Lernförderungsprogramm des EMC erwähnt. Vielleicht kann Stefan Schröckenfuchs uns mitteilen, ob aus diesem Förderprogramm Mittel für die Begegnungstage in Graz abgerufen werden können.

*Stefan Schröckenfuchs:* Ich bin zunächst noch unsicher, ob die Tagung überhaupt stattfinden kann aufgrund fehlender Anmeldungen. Diese sind bis jetzt noch nicht in der erwünschten Menge eingegangen, und ich glaube nicht, dass die Anmeldungen angesichts des Coronavirus jetzt noch gross steigen werden. Die Anmeldefrist dafür wurde nun bis am 22. April 2020 verlängert. Allfällige Anmeldungen sollten jedoch unbedingt erfolgen, da allfällige Anmeldegebühren vollumfänglich zurückbezahlt würden, wenn die Tagung nicht stattfinden kann. Zudem sollte die EMK-Gemeinde vor Ort möglichst früh wissen, wie viele Quartiere sie organisieren muss.

*Urs Schweizer:* Ich weiss, dass die Serben mit ca. 10 - 12 Personen kommen möchten und auch die Mazedonier in etwa in gleicher Anzahl. Es besteht keine Möglichkeit seitens der Organisatoren eine weitere Unterstützung zu gewähren. Ich werde nach wie vor schauen, ob es möglich ist, dass wir Gelder für diese Begegnungstage organisieren können. Ob die Unterstützung des EMC für eine ganze Gruppe möglich ist, erscheint mir fraglich, aber auch wenn für 3

Personen je EUR 200 bezahlt werden, so ist das besser als nichts. Der EMC hat beschlossen, dass die Veranstaltungen, welche auf ihrer Homepage erwähnt sind, unterstützt würden. Allerdings habe ich die Begegnungstage dort nicht gefunden. Wir werden mit der Sekretärin des EMC und mit den beiden möglichen Delegationen aus Serbien und Nord-Mazedonien im Kontakt bleiben und schauen, was möglich ist.

### **Das Exekutivkomitee nimmt den Bericht zum Europäischen Rat Methodistischer Kirchen mit Dank zur Kenntnis.**

#### **Connectional Table (Bericht 3.4)**

vertreten durch Dr. Stefan Zürcher

*Stefan Zürcher:* Auf der in meinem Bericht erwähnten Homepage sind bereits einige Blogs zu den aufgeführten Themen drauf. Es lohnt sich bereits, auf der Homepage zu surfen. Wir diskutieren im Connectional Table zurzeit, ob wir die Grösse des Connectional Table reduzieren können. Die meisten Mitglieder des Connectional Table stammen aus den USA, weshalb zugleich eine prozentuale Aufstockung von Nicht-Amerikanern erfolgen sollte. Allerdings werden wir angesichts der aktuellen Entscheidungen der weltweiten Kirche keinen Antrag an die Generalkonferenz stellen.

### **Das Exekutivkomitee nimmt den Bericht zum Connectional Table mit Dank zur Kenntnis.**

#### **In Mission Together (Bericht 3.5)**

vertreten durch Urs Schweizer

*Urs Schweizer:* Was uns in In Mission Together besonders betrifft, ist die Frage, wie es zukünftig auf der Weltebene weitergeht. Zudem ist nicht klar, ob Matt Elliott seine Aufgabe als IMT-Koordinator weiterführen wird und ob das GBGM diese Position künftig überhaupt noch unterstützen wird. Die Frage ist, ob sich dieses Programm weiter betreiben lässt, wenn in den USA kein Motor mehr dafür vorhanden sein sollte. Einige Verbindungen und Partnerschaften leben noch, aber die Weiterentwicklung dieses Programms ist von Europa aus – also ohne Unterstützung in den USA – kaum möglich.

*Markus Bach:* Gibt es Anzeichen dafür, dass aufgrund der Generalkonferenz-Entscheidungen gewisse Partnerschaften nicht mehr möglich sind, weil Gemeinden hier unterschiedliche Werte vertreten?

*Urs Schweizer:* Ich kann diese Frage nicht pauschal beantworten. Allerdings ist mir auch schon aufgefallen, dass eine Partnerschaft möglich war und gelebt wird, obwohl im Blick auf die Homosexualität durchaus unterschiedliche Werte vorhanden sein mögen.

### **Das Exekutivkomitee nimmt den Bericht zu In Mission Together mit Dank zur Kenntnis.**

#### **Ständiger Ausschuss für Zentralkonferenzangelegenheiten (Bericht 3.6)**

von Christine Schneider-Oesch

Zum Abschnitt «Weltweite Kirchenordnung» ergänzt *Bischof Streiff:* Es gibt jetzt eine Webseite zur neuen weltweiten Kirchenordnung: Unter [www.generalbod.org](http://www.generalbod.org) findet man einerseits generelle Überlegungen, was eine solche Kirchenordnung leisten soll. Es gibt aber auch eine

Übersicht entlang der Überschriften der Kirchenordnung. Zudem gibt es eine interlineare Darstellung, wie die Veränderungen genau aussehen werden.

*Bischof Streiff:* Die neue weltweite Kirchenordnung wird der Generalkonferenz 2020 noch nicht zur Abstimmung vorgelegt, soll aber dort diskutiert werden. Es soll eine Konsultation gemacht werden, was noch aufgenommen oder verändert werden soll. Die Entscheidung soll dann erst an der Generalkonferenz 2024 vorgenommen werden.

*Bischof Streiff:* Möglicherweise könnte im nächsten Quadrennium eine Beurteilung der Bischofsgebiete in Europa erfolgen (wie im letzten Quadrennium in den Philippinen).

### **Das Exekutivkomitee nimmt den Bericht des Ständigen Ausschusses für Zentralkonferenzangelegenheiten mit Dank zur Kenntnis.**

#### **General Board of Global Ministries (Bericht 3.7)**

von Andreas Stämpfli

*Bischof Streiff:* In Österreich könntet ihr vom Ausbildungsprogramm des GBGM für multikulturelle Pastorinnen und Pastoren sowie Laienführerinnen und -führer profitieren. Kannst Du, Stefan uns etwas dazu sagen?

*Stefan Schröckenfuchs:* In Österreich konnten bereits zwei Personen vor allem in der englischsprachigen Gemeinde in Wien profitieren. Eine dritte Person ist in Aussicht. Die vor Ort Anwesenden können sich auch direkt bei Matthew Laferty über seine Erfahrungen erkundigen.

### **Das Exekutivkomitee nimmt den Bericht des General Board of Global Ministries mit Dank zur Kenntnis.**

#### **Kommission für theologische Ausbildung in den Zentralkonferenzen (Bericht 3.9)**

vertreten durch Bischof Patrick Streiff

### **Das Exekutivkomitee nimmt den Bericht der Kommission für theologische Ausbildung in den Zentralkonferenzen mit Dank zur Kenntnis.**

#### **Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen (Bericht 3.10)**

von Daniel Topalski

*Bischof Streiff* weist darauf hin, wie wichtig die Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen im Bulgarien war, um ein für uns und andere christliche Kirchen verhängnisvolles Kirchengesetz in Bulgarien abzuwenden.

### **Das Exekutivkomitee nimmt den Bericht der Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen mit Dank zur Kenntnis.**

#### **Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa (Bericht 3.11)**

von David Turtle

*Bischof Streiff* weist darauf hin, dass Claudia Haslebacher und Ivana Procházková an der im Oktober 2020 stattfindenden Veranstaltung für Frauen in kirchlichen Führungspositionen teilnehmen werden. Es wäre sicher möglich, dass wir auch noch weitere Frauen senden können.

Ich bitte meine Assistenten zu klären, ob Anmeldungen noch möglich sind und eine Information zu dieser Tagung noch sinnvoll ist.

**Das Exekutivkomitee nimmt den Bericht der Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa mit Dank zur Kenntnis.**

**GEKE Regionalgruppe Südost-Europa (Bericht 3.11.1)**

von Novica Brankov und Martin Obermeir-Siegrist

*Stefan Schröckenfuchs:* Ich habe gelesen, dass die Tagungen der Regionalgruppe Südost-Europa vermehrt an verschiedenen Orten stattfinden werden. Sind damit auch höhere Reisespesen verbunden?

*Markus Bach:* Werden diese Reisekosten nicht auch von der Kasse der Zentralkonferenz übernommen?

*Bischof Streiff:* Nein, die Zentralkonferenz-Kasse übernimmt nur die Kosten für die GEKE. Die Reisekosten für die Südost-Europa-Gruppe können teilweise der GEKE in Rechnung gestellt werden. Wir haben auch schon aus dem Bischofsbüro die übriggebliebenen Spesen bezahlt.

**Das Exekutivkomitee nimmt den Bericht der GEKE-Regionalgruppe Südost-Europa mit Dank zur Kenntnis.**

*Donnerstag, 12. März 2020, 18.00 Uhr*

***Nachessen in der EMK Wien Fünfhaus, Sechshausstrasse 56***

*Donnerstag, 12. März 2020, 19.30 Uhr*

***Plenarsitzung in der EMK Wien Fünfhaus, Sechshausstrasse 56***

**Länderbericht Nordafrika**

Superintendent Etienne Rudolph

*Bischof Streiff* liest einen schriftlichen Bericht von Superintendent Etienne Rudolph zur Situation unserer Kirche in Algerien und ergänzt ihn mit einigen persönlichen Hinweisen.

Freddy Nzambe kann leider nicht an der Tagung des Exekutivkomitees anwesend sein. Aus computertechnischen Gründen war es ihm nicht möglich, zeitgerecht einen Bericht zu senden. Daher schildert Bischof Streiff die Situation der Kirche in Tunesien. Er weist darauf hin, wie glücklich er im Moment ist, dass wir mit Freddy Nzambe eine Person in Nordafrika haben, welche einen guten und wertvollen Dienst tut.

*Donnerstag, 12. März 2020, 19.30 Uhr*

***Abendgebet in der EMK Wien Fünfhaus, Sechshausstrasse 56***

Wir beschliessen den Abend mit einem Abendgebet aus «Methodist Prayer» ([www.methodist-prayer.org](http://www.methodist-prayer.org)).

## Minutes Executive Committee from Friday, March 13, 2020

Freitag, 13. März 2020, 9.00 Uhr

**Plenarsitzung in der EMK Wien Fünfhaus, Sechshausstrasse 56**

*Bischof Streiff* begrüsst zum heutigen Sitzungstag. Jörg Niederer wird über die Internetleitung teilnehmen.

Als Morgenbesinnung dient das Morgengebet von [www.methodistprayer.org](http://www.methodistprayer.org) vom Freitag, 13. März 2020.

### **Arbeitsgruppe Liturgie (Bericht 2.2)**

von Stefan Weller, Vorsitzender der Arbeitsgruppe

*Bischof Streiff:* Stefan Weller kann nicht da sein. Wir erkennen im Bericht der Arbeitsgruppe Liturgie ihre Enttäuschung, dass so wenig Rückmeldung zu ihrer Arbeit eingegangen ist.

*Stefan Zürcher:* Ich weiss, dass einige Gemeinden in der Schweiz sehr dankbar für ihr Material sind und die Gliederung der Gottesdienste entsprechend übernommen haben.

*Stefan Schröckenfuchs:* Überall in unseren Gemeinden wird diese Agenda verwendet. Ich weiss, dass die Gemeinde in Florisdorf ein spezielles Projekt zum Thema Gebet durchgeführt hat.

*Lea Hafner:* Ich finde den Stiffilm sehr hilfreich, um zu verstehen, worum es geht. Es ist allerdings so viel anderes in unserer Kirche gelaufen, weshalb diese Thematik unterging. Vielleicht wäre es hilfreich, wenn wir dieses Anliegen zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt nochmals in die Gemeinden bringen könnten, wenn die andere Thematik abgeflaut ist.

*Bischof Streiff:* Diese Arbeit wird stark von der JK-Arbeitsgruppe Musik und Liturgie in der Schweiz unterstützt. Wir sind sehr dankbar dafür, dass dies dort so gut aufgenommen wurde. Am Ende des Berichtes wird erwähnt, dass verschiedene Mitglieder ihre Mitarbeit auf die Zentralkonferenz 2021 beenden werden: Sylvia Minder, Peter Caley und Stefan Weller. Da wird es wichtig sein, dass wir im nächsten Jahr Vorschläge machen können, vor allem aus den Ländern, die nicht in dieser Arbeitsgruppe vertreten sind.

*Markus Bach:* Wie gross sollte diese Arbeitsgruppe Liturgie sein? War nicht ursprünglich gedacht, dass sie aus drei Personen aus drei verschiedene Jährlichen Konferenz bestehen sollte? Dann wäre sie eigentlich noch genügend gross.

*Bischof Streiff:* Wir haben die Arbeitsgruppe für diese spezielle Aufgabe der Liturgie-Reform aufgestockt. Wir werden an der ausserordentlichen Tagung im November 2020 mit der Arbeitsgruppe Liturgie klären müssen, welche Grösse sie benötigt, um arbeitsfähig zu sein.

*Bischof Streiff:* Ivana Procházková hat mir mitgeteilt, dass sie in Tschechien nun das Book of Worship übersetzt hätten und damit demnächst in Druck gehen. Das wird ihnen auch für ihre ökumenischen Kontakte helfen.

*Claudia Haslebacher:* Es ist mir wichtig, im Blick auf die Schweiz zu erwähnen, dass viele Gemeinden in der Schweiz ihre eigenen Liturgien haben, mit denen sie arbeiten. Wir sollten die

Erwartungen nicht allzu hoch ansetzen, dass sie diese eigenen Liturgien beiseitelegen und nur noch die ZK-Liturgie verwenden. Die Unterschiede zwischen den Liturgien sind aber nicht riesig. Ich möchte die Arbeitsgruppe ermutigen, weiterhin Impulse zu setzen und sich nicht entmutigen zu lassen.

*Stefan Schröckenfuchs:* Ich verstehe den Bericht der Arbeitsgruppe so, dass sie nicht nur die Schweiz oder Österreich im Blick haben, wenn sie von ihrer Enttäuschung schreiben.

*Lea Hafner:* Das tönt aber jetzt fast so, als wäre ihr Auftrag zu wenig klar gewesen. Ist das so?

*Bischof Streiff:* Eine ähnliche Erfahrung haben wir in Ungarn gemacht, als junge Pastoren voller Enthusiasmus das Book of Worship entdeckt und übersetzt hatten. Die Gemeinden haben diese Initiative junger Pastoren nicht nur mit Begeisterung aufgenommen. Ähnliches gab es in Tschechien. Die Polen haben bereits vor acht bis zehn Jahren ein Liturgiebuch für die Pfarrer herausgegeben. Andere Länder sind schon länger und intensiver mit liturgischen Texten unterwegs gewesen. In Serbien-Mazedonien hingegen werden mehrheitlich noch die älteren Liturgien aus den 1980er-Jahren benutzt.

### **Das Exekutivkomitee stimmt dem Bericht der Arbeitsgruppe Liturgie mit Dank zu.**

#### **Arbeitsgruppe Kirchenordnung und Rechtsfragen (Bericht 2.3)**

von Daniel Topalski, Vorsitzender der Arbeitsgruppe

### **Das Exekutivkomitee stimmt dem Bericht der Arbeitsgruppe Kirchenordnung und Rechtsfragen mit Dank zu.**

#### **Arbeitsgruppe Kirche und Gesellschaft**

(ohne Bericht)

*Helene Bindl:* Ich bin etwas erstaunt, dass wir keinen Bericht aus der Arbeitsgruppe haben. Hier gäbe es doch einiges zu erarbeiten. War das nicht schon letztes Jahr so?

*Stefan Zürcher:* Es wäre wichtig, dass wir Aufträge erteilen, damit die Arbeitsgruppe arbeiten kann. Es ist etwas schwierig, wenn man sich die Arbeitsaufträge immer selber geben muss. Ich kann das aus eigener Erfahrung durchaus nachvollziehen. Aufträge zu erteilen, wäre ein hilfreiches Mittel.

*Bischof Streiff:* In den letzten Jahren hat die Arbeitsgruppe an bestimmten Dokumenten aus europäischen Gremien gearbeitet. Es gab aber keine Initiative aus eigenem Antrieb, um bestimmte Anliegen zu Kirche und Gesellschaft aufzunehmen.

*Urs Schweizer:* David Chlupáček ist ebenfalls Mitglied im EMC. Könnten diese beide Gremien in diesem Zusammenhang nicht noch stärker verknüpft werden?

*Bischof Streiff:* Wir haben im EMC eine Art Selbstverpflichtung erarbeitet. Es geht dabei um Fragen, wie wir mit ökologischen Fragen umgehen im Zusammenhang mit Reisen usw. Wir setzen wir das um? Das wäre schon auch ein Thema für die Arbeitsgruppe.

Was wir für unsere Arbeitsgruppen aber ganz grundsätzlich brauchen, sind initiative Menschen, die das Anliegen der Arbeitsgruppe umsetzen wollen und können. Wir müssen fragen, wo wir solche Menschen finden.



*Markus Bach:* Ich stelle fest, dass die Vorsitzenden der Arbeitsgruppen meistens aus der Schweiz oder aus Österreich kommen, wenn die Arbeitsgruppen initiativ sind und aktiv Anliegen aus ihrem Bereich verfolgen. Woran liegt das? Hängt das mit der Sprache, der Materie oder den kirchlichen Ressourcen zusammen?

*Claudia Haslebacher:* Ist das nicht eine allgemeine Entwicklung, dass die Globalisierung zwar vorwärts geht, aber dass das Engagement viel stärker vor Ort erfolgt? Wir spüren auch, dass die europäische Zusammenarbeit heute weniger wichtig ist als vielleicht vor 40 Jahren.

*Stefan Schröckenfuchs:* Ich glaube auch, dass die Entwicklung in diese Richtung geht. Es ist ja nicht so, dass die Verantwortlichen in den anderen Ländern nicht initiativ wären – im Gegenteil. Wenn es in bestimmten Ländern keine Initiative vor Ort gegeben hätte, gäbe es dort auch keine Kirche.

*Barbara Büniger:* Wir erleben diese Entwicklung auch im Frauendienst. Viele Frauen engagieren sich vor Ort in ihrer Gemeinde. Einige wenige sind im europäischen Kontext engagiert, sind dann aber überall dabei, und können sich als Folge davon vor Ort kaum noch in gleichem Mass einbringen.

*Bischof Streiff:* Es ist wichtig, dass wir uns darüber Gedanken machen, wer die geeigneten Vorsitzenden für die Arbeitsgruppen sein könnten, die bewusst Zeit und Energie dafür einsetzen können. Diese werden dann sicher auch dankbar aufgenommen. Wir brauchen solche Personen als Motoren für unsere Arbeit als Zentralkonferenz.

*Barbara Büniger:* Es wäre dann aber wichtig, dass sie lokal entlastet werden können.

*Stefan Schröckenfuchs:* Wir müssten aber auch fragen, was diese Menschen motiviert, eine solche Arbeit zu machen. Wenn ich auf die Arbeit der Arbeitsgruppe Liturgie schaue, so entdecke ich, dass sie viel Arbeit und Herzblut investiert haben. In Monospitovo habe ich erlebt, wie enttäuscht Stefan Weller war, weil wir nicht an ihrem Anliegen arbeiten konnten, sondern uns um Fragen der Homosexualität kümmern mussten. Ich möchte viel lieber an diesen anderen Fragen des Kircheseins arbeiten als an der Frage der Homosexualität. Wir haben jetzt eine grosse Krise in Europa mit dem Coronavirus, und wir sollten uns eigentlich um Fragen in diesem Zusammenhang kümmern. Ich habe den Eindruck, dass wir uns mit den falschen Fragen abmühen. Wir müssen Klarheit darüber haben, wofür wir diese ganze Arbeit als Zentralkonferenz machen. Wir haben von Gott einen Schatz bekommen, aber spüren im Moment auch, wie zerbrechlich dieses Gefäss ist, in dem wir diesen Schatz haben. Wir sind eine Gesellschaft, die glaubt, dass wir alles in der Hand haben – und die jetzt erlebt, dass sie eben nicht alles in der Hand hat. Immerhin ist es gut zu wissen ist, dass wir in Gottes Hand sind.

*Stefan Zürcher:* Ich erlebe auch, dass wir uns immer wieder auf das Nächstliegende und Überschaubare beschränken und oft nur noch lokal denken. Es müsste doch gerade unsere Aufgabe als Zentralkonferenz sein, dass wir hier einen Gegenpol zum Gesellschaftstrend leben können.

*Helene Bindl:* Wir müssen schon auch lernen und uns bewusst werden, dass wir voneinander profitieren können. Die Internationalität wurde immer als hoher Wert angesehen. Vielleicht ist bei vielen der Wunsch nach lokalem Engagement stärker oder dringender. Wir müssen dagegen betonen, wie wichtig dieses Gemeinsame unserer Kirche ist.

*Claudia Haslebacher:* Ich frage mich, ob unsere Arbeitsweise mit thematischen Arbeitsgruppen für unser Arbeiten und Wirken hilfreich ist. Vielleicht müsste die Exekutive zwei oder drei Themen festlegen und dann daran in speziell dafür zusammengesetzten Arbeitsgruppen arbeiten.

Es ist für mich fraglich, ob unsere ständigen Arbeitsgruppen noch zeitgemäss sind. Das Exekutivkomitee sollte viel eher Themen festlegen, an denen dann gearbeitet wird.

*Jörg Niederer:* Als ich noch in der Arbeitsgruppe Kirche und Gesellschaft war, hatten wir immer den Eindruck, dass wir sparen müssen. So haben wir unsere Treffen immer im Zusammenhang mit dem Exekutivkomitee gemacht. Wir waren dankbar für klare Aufträge. Ansonsten war oft ein Unbehagen da, ob wir an den richtigen Themen arbeiten oder ob ich Themen hätte einbringen sollen. Es ist für eine Arbeitsgruppe immer hilfreich, wenn sie klare Aufträge und klare Rahmenbedingungen bekommt.

*Bischof Streiff:* Ob eine Arbeitsgruppe funktioniert, liegt zu einem grossen Teil an der leitenden Person. Sie muss bereit sein, als Motor zu dienen. Es ist auch eine wichtige Aufgabe für das Exekutivkomitee selber, dass sie klärt, welche Aufträge sie erteilen will. Diese Aufgabe müssen wir ernster nehmen. Wir müssen auch mit dem Erteilen von Aufträgen klären, welche finanziellen Mittel wir einer Arbeitsgruppe zur Verfügung stellen. Zudem müssen wir auch bedenken, dass selbst eine gute und wertvolle Arbeit einer Arbeitsgruppe den Weg von der Zentralkonferenz in die Jährlichen Konferenzen oft nicht gefunden hat. Deshalb haben wir vor einigen Jahren die Thementage eingeführt, an denen auch Vertreter der Jährlichen Konferenzen teilnehmen können. Wir müssen noch klarer definieren, welche Thementage wir tatsächlich durchführen wollen.

*Lea Hafner:* Die EMK ist stark reguliert. Das ist oft hilfreich. Aber vielleicht müssten wir flexibler werden und auch zwischenzeitlich bestimmte Arbeitsgruppen ruhen lassen, weil sie gerade nicht gebraucht werden.

*Stefan Schröckenfuchs:* Wir müssen tatsächlich überlegen, ob wir solche ständigen Arbeitsgruppen brauchen. Wäre es stattdessen nicht wichtiger, verstärkt den Fragen des Konferierens nachzugehen: Worum geht es uns als Kirche? Wozu sind wir da? Was ist das Herz des Glaubens der Menschen? Wie können wir uns von Gott lieben lassen und diese Liebe weitergehen? Wie sollen wir dies tun? Welche Schritte sind gefragt? Momentan glaube ich, dass wir die Arbeitsgruppen so belassen können, und nur arbeiten lassen, wenn es etwas für sie zu tun gibt.

*Barbara Bünger:* Es ist sicher hilfreich, wenn wir die Gruppen haben, die thematisch an einer Frage arbeiten können, und wenn wir sie nicht zuerst noch suchen und zusammenstellen müssen, wenn wir sie brauchen.

*Bischof Streiff:* Als wir vor ein paar Jahren die Arbeitsweise der Zentralkonferenz umstrukturierten, hatten wir uns überlegt, welche Arbeitsgruppen bestimmte Themen bearbeiten können. Wir hatten damals genau diese Frage gestellt und auch bestimmte Gruppen aufgelöst, weil wir sie nicht brauchten. Wir schufen damals auch die Möglichkeit, dass temporäre Arbeitsgruppen eingesetzt werden können. Damals waren wir der Meinung, dass die jetzt vorhandenen Arbeitsgruppen wesentlich für die Arbeit der Zentralkonferenz sind. Wir müssen aber diese Frage, welche Arbeitsgruppen wesentlich sind, immer wieder stellen.

*Stefan Schröckenfuchs:* Diese Notwendigkeit ergibt sich schon allein auch aus der Tatsache, dass wir in unseren Konferenzen eine neue Generation von leitenden Personen haben.

*Bischof Streiff:* Immer, wenn neue Generationen in der Kirche eingesetzt werden, ist es sowohl Chance als auch Herausforderung, diese Frage nach der bestmöglichen Wirksamkeit zu stellen. Herzlichen Dank für das Gespräch.

Wir gehen anschliessend in eine Pause.

Freitag, 13. März 2020, 10.45 Uhr

**Plenarsitzung in der EMK Wien Fünfhaus, Sechshausenstrasse 56**

### **Arbeitsgruppe Kinder und Jugend (Bericht 2.5)**

von Boris Fazekas, Co-Vorsitzender der Arbeitsgruppe

*Bischof Streiff:* Leider kann niemand von der Arbeitsgruppe Kinder und Jugend anwesend sein und den Bericht vertreten. Bei Punkt 3 steht, dass «alle» Vorschläge für den DMYP einbringen sollten. Ich meine jedoch, dass dies inzwischen geschehen ist.

*Urs Schweizer:* Ja, das ist inzwischen geschehen. Mit «alle» ist nicht das Exekutivkomitee gemeint, sondern die AG Kinder und Jugend. Sie haben Tsvetan Iliev aus Bulgarien nominiert, der dann auch gewählt wurde. Das geschah am ausserordentlichen Treffen vom 6. Oktober 2019. Davon ist die Rede im nächsten Abschnitt des Berichts.

*Barbara Büniger:* Mich würde interessieren, warum niemand aus der Schweiz dabei war.

*Urs Schweizer:* Barbara Morf Meneghin ist Delegierte aus der Schweiz. Sie konnte aber im letzten Jahr aufgrund einer Weiterbildung nicht dabei sein, sie wird aber weiterhin dabei sein.

*Stefan Zürcher:* Ich möchte erwähnen, dass wir in der Schweiz Unterlagen zum Schutz von Kindern und Jugendlichen erarbeiten. Diese können der Arbeitsgruppe Kinder und Jugend zur Verfügung gestellt werden. In dieser Schweizer Gruppe ist aber Barbara Morf Meneghin nicht dabei. Wir werden ihr diese Unterlagen zukommen lassen.

*Bischof Streiff:* Es ist mir ein Anliegen, dass wir in diesen Fragen von Kinder- und Jugendrechten sowie Kinder- und Jugendschutz proaktiv arbeiten und diese Fragen nicht erst aufnehmen, wenn Fehlverhalten da sind. Ich bin sehr dankbar für all die Arbeiten, die hier vor Ort und auf ZK-Ebene getan wird.

### **Das Exekutivkomitee stimmt dem Bericht der Arbeitsgruppe Kinder und Jugend mit Dank zu.**

### **Arbeitsgruppe Frauendienst (Bericht 2.6)**

vertreten durch Barbara Büniger, Koordinatorin des Frauendienstes

*Barbara Büniger:* Es war für uns ein spezielles Jahr, weil wir eine Konsultation hatten. Wenn wir Frauen zusammen sind, entsteht so viel Gemeinsames und Wertvolles, dass wir davon ganz erfüllt sind. Und wenn wir dann nach Hause kommen, rückt diese Erfahrung in den Hintergrund. Schön wäre es aber, wenn die Gemeinschaft bleiben könnte. Ich kann das an einem kleinen Beispiel zeigen: Als wir an unserer Tagung unser Statement verabschiedet hatten, waren wir ganz erfüllt von diesem Gedanken der Zusammengehörigkeit, die wir nicht aufgeben wollen. Wir haben es damals aber verpasst, die Unterschriften unter das Dokument zu sammeln. Als ich später, als alle wieder zu Hause waren, um ihre Unterschriften für das Statement gebeten hatte, kam nicht einmal von allen eine Reaktion, selbst auf eine Rückfrage meinerseits nicht. Was an der gemeinsamen Tagung sehr wichtig war, ist im Alltag plötzlich weit nach hinten gerutscht.

Zudem stellen wir fest, dass sich auch die Sprachkurse verändert haben. Wir haben zum ersten Mal einen Beitrag für eine Berufsausbildung gesprochen. Die Weiterbildung von Sprachen ist in vielen Ländern viel weiter fortgeschritten, als dies noch von einigen Jahren war.

*Lea Hafner:* Ich finde das Statement aus eurer Tagung sehr wichtig und möchte, dass wir uns daran ein Beispiel nehmen: «Wir wollen zusammenbleiben». Wenn die Frauen das können, warum sollen das die Männer nicht auch können?

*Bischof Streiff:* Auch von meiner Seite her ein herzliches Dankeschön. Es war ermutigend und sehr hilfreich in dem Prozess, in dem wir stehen, wo sonst vieles auseinanderdrängt.

*Barbara Büniger:* Für uns war es wichtig, dass wir uns zu dieser Konsultation treffen konnten. Und wir möchten uns auch weiterhin treffen können.

*Bischof Streiff:* Wohin gehen eure Gedanken bei der Nutzung von Synergien für Aufwand und Zeit im 2. Abschnitt des Berichts zur Konsultation?

*Barbara Büniger:* Wir führen zurzeit zweijährliche Treffen mit ca. 50 Frauen durch. Dazwischen findet eine Art Delegiertenversammlung für Vorstandsarbeit statt, bei der deutlich weniger Frauen anwesend sind. Wir möchten aber lieber häufigere Treffen mit vielen Delegierten haben, an denen auch Vorstandsarbeit gemacht werden kann. Wir stellen zudem fest, dass immer mehr örtliche Teams an unseren Tagungen teilnehmen und nur noch wenige Einzelpersonen dabei sind. Das erachten wir als positiv. Allerdings müssen wir in diesen Überlegungen auch bedenken, dass die Zeitressourcen auch bei Frauen immer knapper werden.

*Bischof Streiff:* Das zeigt auch, dass ihr aufeinander hören wollt, um angemessene Formen für eure Arbeit finden zu können. Die Seminare wurden ja immer über den Weltgebetstag aus der Schweiz finanziell unterstützt. Für sie ist wichtig, dass diese Tagungen auch eine Schulungskomponente haben, damit die Unterstützung weiter fließen kann. Für sie ist wichtig zu fragen, was Frauen lernen können. Sie möchten mit ihrem Beitrag nicht ein blosses Treffen zum Kaffeetrinken unterstützen. Es lohnt sich zu fragen, wie das Treffen gestaltet sein muss, damit die Kosten bezahlt werden.

*Barbara Büniger:* Die Beiträge, die wir vom Weltgebetstag in der Schweiz bekommen haben, waren nicht Riesenbeiträge. Dadurch dass wir uns in anderen Ländern treffen, konnten wir die Kosten massiv senken, im Vergleich zu Treffen in der Schweiz. Wir können inzwischen auch Kosten dadurch sparen, dass wir keine Übersetzungsanlage brauchen.

*Bischof Streiff:* Herzlichen Dank für eure wertvolle Arbeit.

**Das Exekutivkomitee stimmt dem Bericht der Arbeitsgruppe Frauendienst mit Dank zu.**

#### **Rechtsrat der Zentralkonferenz MSE (Bericht 2.8)**

von Dr. Christa Tobler, Vorsitzende des Rechtsrats

**Das Exekutivkomitee stimmt dem Bericht des Rechtsrates der Zentralkonferenz MSE mit Dank zu.**

## **Arbeitsgruppe Bischofsamt (Berichte 2.7; 2.7.1; 2.7.2; 2.7.3)**

vertreten durch Jörg Niederer, Vorsitzender der Arbeitsgruppe

*Jörg Niederer:* Die Arbeitsgruppe Bischofsamt hat am 12. März 2020 vorgängig zur Tagung des Exekutivkomitees getagt. Ihr habt inzwischen die Dokumente aus der Sitzung erhalten: das Protokoll der Sitzung (Bericht 2.7.1), die Liste der wählbaren Ältesten (Bericht 2.7.2) und das dazugehörige Informationsschreiben an die Jährlichen Konferenzen (Bericht 2.7.3).

In einem ersten Teil unserer Sitzung haben wir uns mit den Fragen zum ganzen Nominationsprozess befasst und im zweiten Teil ein Gespräch mit dem Bischof zu seinem Befinden geführt. Wichtig war uns, dass wir die Liste der wählbaren Ältesten bereinigen konnten, um sie den Jährlichen Konferenzen als Hilfe für ihre Nominationen zur Verfügung stellen zu können. Die Kriterien dazu findet ihr im Informationsschreiben an die Jährlichen Konferenzen.

Wir haben uns bei der Liste der wählbaren Ältesten gefragt, ob Personen, welche an der Jährlichen Konferenz selber noch ordiniert werden, auch noch auf diese Liste gehören – oder ob solche, welche an der Konferenz ausscheiden oder pensioniert werden, noch zu streichen wären. Unklar ist uns die Situation von Mihail Stefanov, weshalb wir einen Vermerk auf der Liste erstellt haben.

*Bischof Streiff:* Mihail Stefanov hat ein Gesuch auf Lokalisierung gestellt. Dies müsste in der Bemerkung entsprechend angepasst werden. Grundsätzlich bestimmt nicht der Zeitpunkt der Nominierung über die Möglichkeit einer Wahl zum Bischof oder einer Bischöfin, sondern der Zeitpunkt der Wahl an der Zentralkonferenz.

*Jörg Niederer:* Die Liste der wählbaren Ältesten ist im Vergleich zur Version vom letzten Jahr um eine Spalte ergänzt worden, sodass daraus erkennbar ist, wer an die Zentralkonferenz delegiert wurde bzw. Ersatz-Delegierter ist.

*Markus Bach:* Als ich die Dokumente von der Arbeitsgruppe bekommen hatte, lautete der Dokumententitel «Nominationsliste». Diese Liste wurde mündlich auch schon so benannt. Ich bitte sehr darum, diesen Begriff für diese Liste nicht zu verwenden. Sie zeigt nicht die Nominierten, sondern die wählbaren Ältesten für die Zentralkonferenz. Auch für die folgende Liste, in der dann aufgezeigt wird, ob die wählbaren Ältesten nominiert sind oder nicht, kann dieser Begriff nicht verwendet werden, da die Liste alle wählbaren Ältesten aufzeigt, also auch die nicht nominierten.

*Jörg Niederer:* Danke für den Hinweis. Wir sind in der Arbeitsgruppe nochmals durch den ganzen Prozess der Nomination gegangen. Die Vorgehensweise dazu ist im Dokument beschrieben, das wir letztes Jahr verabschiedet hatten. An den Jährlichen Konferenzen wird ein einheitlicher Nominationszettel vorliegen, den ich noch erstellen werde. Darauf können 0-3 Personen eingetragen werden. Diese Zettel werden dann gefaltet eingezogen und in einem verschlossenen Umschlag der Arbeitsgruppe zugestellt. Anders als ursprünglich vorgesehen, werden wir diese Nominierungen beim ausserordentlichen Treffen im November 2020 auswerten. Die so Nominierten werden wir jedoch wie vorgesehen erst im Januar 2021 darüber informieren. Nominiert ist jemand mit mindestens 3 Stimmen aus anderen Konferenzen oder mit mind. 10% Stimmen aller stimmberechtigten Personen aus der eigenen Jährlichen Konferenz.

*Bischof Streiff:* Auf der Liste der wählbaren Ältesten an die Zentralkonferenz wird angegeben sein, ob jemand von der eigenen Konferenz und/oder von anderen Konferenzen nominiert ist. Diese Liste wird 14 Tage vor der Tagung den Delegierten an die Zentralkonferenz zugestellt werden.

*Jörg Niederer:* Der zweite Teil unserer Sitzung betraf das Gespräch mit dem Bischof. Die Inhalte dazu sind im Bericht erwähnt. Im Vorfeld unserer Sitzung haben wir festgestellt, dass wir letztes Jahr die Nachwahlen für die aus der Arbeitsgruppe Bischofsamt ausgeschiedenen Ana Palik-Kunčak und Pavel Procházka nicht gemacht haben. Darum stellen wir die Anträge auf Nachwahl von Daniel Sjanta und Stefan Rendoš in die Arbeitsgruppe Bischofsamt jetzt:

**Daniel Sjanta und Stefan Rendoš werden einstimmig in die Arbeitsgruppe Bischofsamt gewählt.**

**Das Exekutivkomitee stimmt dem Bericht der Arbeitsgruppe Bischofsamt mit Dank zu.**

*Helene Bindl:* Lieber Bischof. Es ist mir nun ein herzliches Anliegen, dir für deine Arbeit und Dienste in der Zentralkonferenz herzlich im Namen von uns allen zu danken.

Der Bischof ist noch nicht «retired». Aber manchmal vielleicht «tired». Der Unterschied zwischen diesen beiden Worten ist ein «re». Und das heisst auf Italienisch «König». Wenn du dich also mal ein wenig «tired» fühlst, so möchten wir dich mit dem «re» langsam an dein «retired» heranführen, so dass du dir eine kleine Auszeit mit Heidi in einem Restaurant Krone, Kronenhof, Kronenhalle (ganz nach deiner Wahl) gönnen und dich als ein König fühlen kannst. Bitte nimm auch unseren herzlichen Dank an Heidi mit.

*Helene Bindl* übergibt Bischof Patrick Streiff einen Gutschein für ein Nachtessen zu zweit. Das Exekutivkomitee spendet einen herzlichen Applaus.

*Bischof Streiff:* Herzlichen Dank. Ich werde die Grüsse und den Dank gerne an Heidi weiterleiten.

*Bischof Streiff:* Es gab ein Pausengespräch, wie wir am Nachmittag weiterarbeiten wollen. Wir werden heute Nachmittag die europäischen Bischöfe zuschalten. Das wird ab 15.00 Uhr möglich sein. Nun kam die Frage auf, wie sinnvoll es ist, wenn wir als Vertreterinnen und Vertreter nur aus der Schweiz und Österreich an den Fragen zur Zukunft der Zentralkonferenz diskutieren.

*Claudia Haslebacher:* Ich war mit dem Bischof im Gespräch über die weitere Arbeitsweise. Wir erleben gerade, dass unsere Aufmerksamkeit momentan viel weniger bei den Fragen nach der Zukunft der Zentralkonferenz ist, sondern vielmehr bei lokalen Fragen rund um das Coronavirus. Die Konzentration auf dieses Thema ist daher eher tief. Ich schlage vor, dass wir noch die Information der europäischen Bischöfe mitnehmen und die notwendige Entscheidung für die ausserordentliche Tagung im November treffen. Alle weiteren Schritte und Planung übergeben wir dem Zentralkonferenz-Büro und beenden anschliessend die Tagung des Exekutivkomitees.

Ich stelle daher folgenden Antrag:

**Antrag Haslebacher:**

**1. Das Exekutivkomitee beschliesst gemäss dem Antrag des ZK-Büros vom 21. bis 22. November 2020 eine ausserordentliche Sitzung in Budapest abzuhalten.**

**2. Die Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees endet nach dem Bericht der europäischen Bischöfe und einer Zeit der Fragen und Antworten mit ihnen am Freitagnachmittag, dem 13. März 2020.**

**3. Das Exekutivkomitee beschliesst, dass die verbleibenden Berichte (Studiengruppe der ZK MSE und Arbeitsgruppe für Theologie und Ordinierte Dienste) und die Planung der nächsten Schritte dem Büro der Zentralkonferenz übergeben werden. Angesichts der bevorstehenden Entwicklung ist das Büro ermächtigt, die nächsten Schritte zu planen.**

*Stefan Schröckenfuchs:* Ich unterstütze diesen Antrag. Aber auch wenn wir heute Nachmittag nach dem Hearing der europäischen Bischöfe die Sitzung beenden, soll niemand den Eindruck bekommen, hinausgeworfen zu werden. Wir werden sämtliche Mahlzeiten anbieten. Alle dürfen aber frei entscheiden, wann sie nach Hause reisen wollen, bzw. nach Hause reisen können.

*Urs Schweizer:* Wird es möglich sein, dass wir mit den per Liveschaltung zugeschalteten Personen im Gespräch sein können?

*Claudia Haslebacher:* Selbstverständlich wird das möglich sein, dass wir und die zugeschalteten Personen miteinander im Gespräch sein können über das, was wir hören werden. Aber im Anschluss daran werden wir uns nicht weiter mit den vorgesehenen Traktanden befassen.

*Bischof Streiff:* Wir werden aber in der anschließenden Gesprächs-Möglichkeit keine Beschlüsse fassen. Alles Weitere wird dann im Zentralkonferenz-Büro besprochen. Seid ihr bereit, über den Antrag von Claudia Haslebacher abzustimmen?

**Der Antrag von Claudia Haslebacher wird einstimmig angenommen.**

Bischof Streiff: Wir werden diesen Beschluss allen Mitgliedern des Exekutivkomitees zukommen lassen.

Als Mittagsbesinnung dient das Mittagsgebet von [www.methodistprayer.org](http://www.methodistprayer.org) vom Freitag, 13. März 2020.

*Freitag, 13. März 2020, 12.30 Uhr*

***Mittagessen in der EMK Wien Fünfhaus, Sechshausstrasse 56***

*Freitag, 13. März 2020, 15.00 Uhr*

***Plenarsitzung in der EMK Wien Fünfhaus, Sechshausstrasse 56***

**Sondertreffen Zukunft**

Information der europäischen Bischöfe zur Situation in ihren Bischofsgebieten

Für die Information mit den europäischen Bischöfen werden folgende Personen zu unserer Sitzung über einen Livestream zugeschaltet: Bischof Harald Rückert, Bischof Eduard Kheday, Bischof Christian Alsted, Marjan Dimov, Daniela Stoilkova, Desislava Todorova, Daniel Topalski, Etienne Rudolph, Jörg Niederer, Henrik Schaueremann, Laszlo Khaled, David Chlupáček, Daniel Sjanta, Stefan Rendoš, Serge Frutiger, Rares Calugar.

*Bischof Streiff:* Ich begrüße nun alle Zugeschalteten zu unserer Tagung des Exekutivkomitee in Wien. Es ist schön, dass wir gemeinsam diese Zeit des Austausches haben können.

Wir singen das Lied «Love divine». Anschliessend spricht Bischof Streiff ein Gebet.

*Bischof Streiff* dankt den europäischen Bischöfen, dass sie sich die Zeit nehmen und uns über die Entwicklung in ihren Bischofsgebieten zu den Fragen im Zusammenhang mit den Entscheidungen der Generalkonferenz zur Homosexualität Auskunft geben. In einer ersten Runde wer-

den sie darüber informieren, was bisher in ihrem Gebiet seit der ausserordentlichen Generalkonferenz 2019 geschehen ist. In einer zweiten Runde werden sie uns Anteil daran geben, welche Fragen und Entwicklungen für die Zukunft in ihrem Bischofsgebiet daraus entstehen.

Zuerst erzählt *Bischof Hard Rückert* über das Geschehene in der Zentralkonferenz Deutschland seit der Generalkonferenz 2019. Anschliessend berichtet *Bischof Eduard Khegay* aus dem Bischofsgebiet von Eurasien und schliesslich *Bischof Christan Alsted* aus dem Bischofsgebiet Nordeuropa/Baltikum .

Die Statements der Bischöfe werden im Anhang zum Protokoll veröffentlicht. Im Anschluss an die beiden Berichtsrunden werden keine weiteren Fragen gestellt.

*Bischof Streiff:* Wir vier Bischöfe in Europa sind in einem ständigen Kontakt miteinander und können die Entwicklungen in unseren Bischofsgebieten miteinander teilen. Wir werden auch nach der Generalkonferenz im Kontakt bleiben und haben entschieden, dass wir wenn möglich einen gemeinsamen Vorschlag ausarbeiten werden, wie wir uns die Zukunft in Europa vorstellen können.

Wie ihr wisst, werden wir versuchen, an jeder der nächsten Zentralkonferenz in Europa anwesend zu sein. Das ist in dieser Zeit für uns ein wichtiges Zeichen, dass wir zusammen sind und uns gegenseitig unterstützen können.

*Bischof Streiff:* Herzlichen Dank an die Bischöfe, die uns mit hineingenommen haben in ihre aktuelle Situation in ihren Bischofsgebieten. Herzlichen Dank auch an alle anderen Teilnehmenden in der Liveübertragung. Es scheint mir sehr wertvoll und hilfreich gewesen zu sein, dass wir diesen Austausch miteinander haben konnten, auch wenn die Internet-Verbindung nicht immer ideal war.

Wir schliessen diese Zeit mit dem Unser-Vater-Gebet, das uns über jede Differenz hinweg miteinander verbindet. Alle beten in ihrer Muttersprache.

Anschliessend wird die Live-Übertragung beendet.

*Bischof Streiff:* Damit sind wir nun am Ende unserer Tagung des Exekutivkomitees in Wien angelangt. Ich möchte den lokalen Mitarbeitern ganz herzlich für die Gastfreundschaft danken. Diese Tagung wird uns als spezielle Coronavirus-Tagung in Erinnerung bleiben. Ich wünsche nun allen, dass sie gut nach Hause reisen können.

*Der Sekretär:*  
*Markus Bach*

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Das vorliegende Protokoll der 71. Tagung des Exekutivkomitees der Zentralkonferenz von Mittel- und Südeuropa vom 12. - 13. März 2020 in Wien (Österreich) wurde geprüft und als korrekt erklärt.

*Die Prüferin und Prüfer des Protokolls:*  
*Helene Bintl und Jörg Niederer*



## **Attachment of the minutes**

### **Statement from Bishop Harald Rückert, Central Conference Germany**

I cannot write a separate report, but I refer to three documents, which contain the essential information:

#### **a) Report of the «Kirchenvorstand», immediately after the special session GC 2019**

**Just as I watched over them to dig up and pull down,  
so I will watch over them to build and plant, declares the Lord.**

Jeremiah 31.28 (CEB), Watchword for Saturday, 9 March 2019

The Special Session of the General Conference adopted at its meeting in St. Louis the Traditional Plan. This upholds the current stance of the Book of Discipline on homosexuality; moreover, it demands consistent application with stricter controls and penalties. This resolution by the General Conference explicitly demands a statement from the conferences. The "Kirchenvorstand" (executive committee of the UMC in Germany) has taken an intensive look at the resolution by the General Conference and its required implementation.

We respect democratic decisions, so that the Cabinets of the Central Conference and the "Kirchenvorstand" have spent several days struggling intensively, emotionally and honestly with this resolution and all its consequences. Regardless of our own content-related convictions, we have reached the unanimous opinion that the stipulations of the Traditional Plan are not acceptable for our church in Germany. The UMC in Germany will therefore not follow the chosen way of controlling people in their disposition and imposing stricter penalties.

Our content-related discussions revealed the painful fact that neither the "Kirchenvorstand" nor the UMC as a whole can reach agreement on how homosexuality should be assessed. In our church there are large groups of opposing opinions on this question. We must expect the situation to remain like this for the foreseeable future. Even so, we want to stay together as a church where people of differing opinions can live with each other. We don't want to let go of each other and we don't want to separate from each other, but we want to hold on to each other and to be there for each other. For we are convinced that Jesus wants to use us and our gifts jointly and together.

But we can only stay together as a church if we manage to live in proximity and acknowledgement even without agreeing on important questions. We therefore want to be a church where people with homosexual sensibilities can be ordained and blessed in a marriage ceremony, and also where traditionally minded people can uphold their ideas and lifestyles. The "Kirchenvorstand" has reached agreement on this objective.

We see that many people in our church are disappointed, hurting and injured. We are aware that the endeavour to uphold community will make great demands of us all in future too. This way also includes transforming our church so that it can offer a secure home to people of differing convictions. (For example, could there be congregations and supra-regional structures for people with certain theological convictions?) We must all take on our own share of responsibility for each other and make every effort to find "vessels" where the others can be at home. We therefore ask you to stay in our church and join us in our search for this way.

It is important for us to engage in discussions on various different levels to ascertain how we can stay together despite differing convictions. These discussions do not entail trying to convince the others of our own opinion. Rather it is far more a case of finding ways for our church to be a home for as many people as possible. We are therefore launching a "round table" discussion process throughout Germany that should begin before the 2019 Annual Conferences. People from different groups and directions in our church will be invited to shape the above mentioned way into a shared future. It is important that these discussions are also held in congregations and regions.

The "Kirchenvorstand" has asked the Bishop to be the spiritual leader and organiser of this process. The Bishop has therefore already convened a group to describe and initiate the process straightaway. The Central Conference in November 2020 will adopt trendsetting resolutions.

We don't know exactly what this way will look like in detail. Our experience in the "Kirchenvorstand" gives us hope that the process can succeed. This would also be an important sign in an increasingly torn and divided society. We need God's help, your prayers and your assistance to go this way.

Fulda, 9 March 2019  
For the "Kirchenvorstand":  
Bischof Harald Rückert

Translation by Jaqueline Rohmann

## **b) Report from the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Round table from January 10-11, 2020 in Fulda**

The fourth meeting of the round table: 19 Christians - 15 hours of struggle together for the future way of the Church.

On January 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, the members of the Round Table, who came together from all three annual conferences of the UMC in Germany and brought very different theological convictions with them, met together in Fulda under the leadership of Bishop Harald Rückert. Up for debate was the way forward for the UMC in Germany in the face of different basic convictions on questions of homosexuality. The crucial question was: Is it possible to work out a common proposal for the way forward for the church?

The meeting began with a time of devotions and prayer, in which prayer partners of different theological positions came together with each other. Overall, prayer and an orientation toward God formed a special point of emphasis for the encounter. The first order of business was the analysis of the approximately 200 multifaceted responses to the proposals of the Round Table that were sent in by individuals, groups and congregations of the UMC.

Afterwards, it was time to do continued work on the Book of Discipline of the UMC. Because of the clear disagreement in the basic convictions about questions of homosexuality, the members of the Round Table propose to delete all passages that speak about the ordination of people with homosexual orientation and the blessing of same-sex partnerships. Every phrase in each sentence here was considered with much diligence. No other wording has been added instead. With regard to ordination, the Board of Ordained Ministry would still have the task of examining all candidates concerning their basic suitability. The deletions in the Book of Discipline would neither prescribe nor prohibit blessings of same-sex couples. Church councils should be able to discuss blessings of same-sex couples in their own churches and can make decisions.

The third task was continued work on the description of associations that could be formed to give people a connecting point, if they cannot, out of conviction, support the named deletions. It was finally unanimously decided that the Round Table of the central conference for the moment only suggests the formation of an association: an association that expressly maintains the previous position of the Book of Discipline on homosexuality and thus offers a home for those with traditional, conservative positions. With its own theological statement, this association should give its members security in their beliefs and actions. The association is open to districts, congregations, and also individuals. It will choose a leadership team, and the leader will be in close contact with the church leadership. Congregations should be able to vote if they would like to join such an association.

After a long and challenging struggle, the members of the Round Table finally voted unanimously for the overall package of the proposal worked out. There are still a few details to be clarified: The concrete form of the aforementioned association will now be designed by a working group of those siblings from the Round Table who will fill it with life. In addition, a name for this association is yet to be found – suggestions for it can gladly be sent to one of the two authors of the report (see below).

The suggestion of the Round Table will now be presented to the district assemblies and annual conferences of the UMC in Germany and be discussed, before it will finally be laid before the central conference in Zwickau in November 2020 for negotiation. Of course, this happens within consideration of international developments in the UMC. Bishop Harald Rückert also mentioned the proposal recently made by an international group regarding a respectful separation of the Church. The General Conference will discuss this in May 2020.

The fifteen hours of the meeting of the Round Table were characterized by an intensive struggle: How and in what way do we stay true to the word of God? How do we protect and accompany people in their identity without hurting them? How can we at the same time and as far as possible in our different convictions preserve the unity of the church and of congregations? The future will show if the hard work of the Round Table opens up horizons for this and is sustainable. We may, however, pray for it.

## **c) Final report "Round table" on the questions of homosexuality for decision at the Central Conference Germany from January 11, 2020 in Fulda**

### *1. Book of Discipline and regulations*

The decisions of the General Conference 2019 challenge the UMC in Germany concerning its own position on ordination and blessing of same-sex partnerships.

In the church council of the central conference (executive committee) and in the annual conferences as well as in the "Round Table" and other regional gatherings it became evident that there are opposing opinions and insights underlying the evaluation of homosexuality. These oppositions cannot be overcome in a short time.

In the intensive discussions on the issue over the last years and in many feed-backs from regions and local churches, at least some important foundational elements became visible that many hold in common:

#### **1. A common confession of faith and mission of the UMC in Germany**

The question of handling the issue of homosexuality shall not separate us in our common confession of faith and our common mission, even if this question leads into the core of their faith for some among us.

We want to live according to the mandate specific to the UMC: to join personal piety and openness to the world, evangelical liberty and accountable obedience, because the world needs this connection. We are well aware that differences in decisions of conscience also lead to differences in results.

#### **2. Unity as a spiritual mandate**

Keeping the unity is for us a spiritual mandate from Jesus in order not to divide his body but to try to listen to each other and to what is needed for staying together.

*John 17:20-21: I'm not praying only for them but also for those who believe in me because of their word. I pray they will be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. I pray that they also will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me. (CEB)*

We are grateful for all those in the UMC in Germany who have engaged in strengthening mutual understanding and a common way forward over the past months.

#### **3. Rescinding because of disunity**

There is no compromise between Yes and No to sexuality among persons of the same sex. The few Bible texts that speak explicitly about homosexuality are seen even by a number of conservative persons as not unambiguous enough, and too marginal, for grounding a viable theological rationale and decision on this issue.

It is controversial among us whether homosexuality is an undesirable deviation from a order of creation or a desired variation in the diversity of creation.

We have to confess in humility that our knowledge and our capacity of understanding is too limited for finding a common position in these questions. We therefore want the Discipline of the central conference not to make an explicit comment on the question of homosexuality, neither condemning nor approving.

This means that the UMC in Germany does not become one-sidedly liberal, but remains neutral on the topic of homosexuality for allowing to live with diverse opinions.

With a reluctant form of change, the UMC in Germany tries to keep the discussion open with other annual conferences of the UMC that keep such sentences in their disciplines.

**3.1. For decision:** The CC Germany rescinds four sentences on homosexuality in the Discipline of the CC Germany:

BOD2016, ¶341.6 (cf. CC-Germany VLO Art. 341.6; CC-CSE Art. 341.6)

~~6. Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.~~

In the Social Principles:

BOD2016, ¶161G) *Human Sexuality* (cf. CC Germany VLO 161G; CC-CSE 2010, art. 161F)

*We affirm that sexuality is God's good gift to all persons. We call everyone to responsible stewardship of this sacred gift.*

~~*Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.*~~

*We deplore all forms of the commercialization, abuse, and exploitation of sex. We call for strict global enforcement of laws prohibiting the sexual exploitation of children and for adequate protection, guidance, and counseling for abused children. All persons, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation, are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured and to be protected against violence. The Church should support the family in providing age-appropriate education regarding sexuality to children, youth, and adults.*

*We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. ~~The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.~~ We affirm that God's grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. ~~We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends.~~ We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.*

**3.2. For decision:** We encourage the local churches and agencies to further sharing and deeper reflection on biblical insights and God's activity in creation in order to enable a better mutual and common understanding.

#### 4. Restricting rules

The central conference (Germany) does not decide any particular bylaws or regulations on same-sex relationships.

Also on these issues, the board of ordained ministry has the obligation to examine the sufficient conformity with the Word of God and the Discipline of the Church.

The bishop, together with the cabinet, will continue to be responsible in all appointments for furthering peace in the local churches and building bridges between all groups and opinions.

In all ecclesial acts in the local church, a pastor has to examine the situation with regard to pastoral care.

**4.1. For decision:** A pastor may not be forced to bless a couple at a marriage, against his/her conscience. In such a situation, he/she may refer the couple to a colleague. In a similar way, a pastor may not be forced to refuse to bless a couple at a marriage, against his/her conscience.

The blessing of a marriage may be done in a neighboring local church if it were strongly shocking in the own local church.

**4.2. For decision:** The local church council may decide on the possibility to celebrate the blessing of a marriage of same-sex partners on its premises.

## 2. A „conservative“ network (German: Verbund)

*The term „conservative“ is only partially applicable. The final name of such a network still needs to be found!*

### A What is needed for persons in the UMC who are conservative minded concerning homosexuality.

#### a) A form of belonging

In our perception, it is important for persons who cannot perceive a structural opening of the church for homosexual persons (blessings and ordination) to remain in a form of belonging in their church that corresponds to their understanding of the Gospel. Belonging to a Church that allows the blessing of same-sex partnerships is actually not acceptable for them. If at all, only on the condition that they can belong to a part of the Church that does not implement such an opening.

**A „network“ needs to offer such a belonging structurally in order to meet this need. It is inevitable that such a belonging is also expressing a demarcation.**

#### b) Security

Persons who are „conservative“-minded often repeat that they fear to „be forced to accept“ a future opening towards homosexuality in the end. Therefore, reliable commitments are needed which create trust in their unbreakable integrity. Perhaps it will also need „protective hurdles“ (reliable regulations) on a structural level.

**A „network“ needs to offer such security to meet this need. It has to form a structure that is independent in its own forming of content in order to enable mutual reliability.**

#### c) A theological statement

A network, on the foundation of an orientation guide, needs to have the freedom of interpretation how marriage and sexuality may be defined. The Discipline of the CC Germany has in many instances the wording: 'other details are regulated by the annual conferences'. A similar wording needs to give some freedom of interpretation to the "conservative network".

A theological statement of a "conservative network" needs to be as concise as possible in order to find enough circuits that want to align with such a statement. If the statement becomes too detailed, many circuits will in the end agree with some of the content, but not all of it.

**A "conservative network" has to create a theological statement and thus be able to complement and interpret the Discipline of the CC Germany in order to express a conservative identity according to its own need.**

#### d) Forums of meeting for persons who have similar opinions

A „network“ would need to organize conferences and meetings. Persons who have conservative opinions need places to meet in a similar way as all other Methodists.

**A „network“ needs to offer such places of meetings for offering possibilities to meet with persons with similar opinions.**

**Such places of meetings could be:**

- Offers as e.g. camps;
- Meetings for educational and spiritual purposes, etc.

**This could be effective for aims of:**

- offering encouragement and spiritual up-building;
- communicating of information linked to the network;
- strengthening the relationship among members of the conservative network, etc.

**This could mean on a regional level:**

- There are house groups of the network on levels of circuits, districts or regions
- There are offers of support, meetings, and educational programs under the responsibility of the network

**This could be effective for aims of:**

- offering a safe space for sharing and discussion in addition to other offers of the Church
- giving an openness to local churches for living an evangelical/charismatic faith

## B Possible structuring of a „network“ \*)

A „network“ needs to offer such a belonging structurally in order to meet this need. It is inevitable that such a belonging is also expressing a demarcation.

A „network“ needs to have a presence within each level of the ministry of the church:

- Central conference
- Annual conference
- Regions
- Circuits
- Local churches

### 1. Structuring of a network:

- The network will not be a substitution for the church.
- The network contributes to strengthening the unity of the church.
- The network creates a leadership group out of delegates from the circuits belonging to it.
- The leadership group elects a leader.
- At least during the time of creating the network, there shall be a representation in the church council of the central conference (executive) and in the administrative councils of the conferences (executive).
- The network has an administrative structure
- The network has a communication structure for its own meetings and programs and content. It includes the possibility to use the media of the Church.
- The network receives financial support from the central conference, but the ministry will also be supported by circuits which belong to the network (joint financing)
- The network may offer programs for children and youth that are related with the agencies for children and youth ministries and may also participate in their programs.
- There is a possibility that individual persons, groups, local churches or circuits may declare their affiliation to the network. We recommend for local churches and circuits a clear majority, e.g. a 2/3 majority.

### 2. Central conference level:

- The network will have members with voting rights in the central conference for allowing collaboration and representation of the network.
- The network has to submit reports to the church council of the central conference and the administrative councils of the annual conferences.

### 3. Annual Conference level:

- The network may be active in all annual conferences.
- The agencies and the network are equivalent.
- The network is open to all persons, but remains faithful to its theological statement.
- One delegate of the network is a member with voting rights in the respective annual conference.
- Appointments continue to be done by the Bishop and his/her cabinet. The theological statement has to be considered in the process. In case of questions or conflicts there shall be consultation with the leader of the network.
- Ordination is done on the basis of the Discipline of the central conference.
- The network has to submit a report to the annual conferences.

### 4. Regional level

- The network may create structures of leadership on the level of regions.
- Such regional leadership may plan and organize meetings and programs.

### 5. Circuit level

- Circuits and local churches may become members of the network.
- Circuits will send persons into the leadership groups of the network.

## C Implementation of a „network“ \*)

The following process is planned:

1. A concept for a „conservative network“ will be created
2. The “Round Table” will recommend such a concept
3. The district meetings discuss the concept
4. The annual conferences discuss the concept
5. The “Round Table” will discuss the feed-back after the annual conferences.
6. The central conference decides that circuits which so choose, may create a “conservative network”.
7. The superintendents inform local churches and circuits about the creation of the network and the possibilities of local churches and/or circuits to join the network. The “Round Table” recommends to local churches and circuits to discuss the possibility of joining the network.
8. Circuits and local churches vote whether they want to join the “conservative network”. Such decisions need to be prepared carefully. There shall not be any obligation for a local church or circuit to have to make a decision.

<p><b>For decision:</b> The central conference decides that local churches may choose to join such a network as described here.</p>
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Fulda, 11.01.2020  
The members of the “Round Table”

Translated from German – official text is in German

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\*) *The final name of such a network still needs to be found!*

The key aspects of our consultations were:

- \* What do we need *in Germany* to be able to fulfill our mission together (aspects of the global UMC are somewhat subordinate)?
- \* How do we get out of the winner-loser scheme? Majorities in which some overrule others do not help us.
- \* «Less is more» - only if we define or regulate as little as possible, we can take many with us. That is why the proposal to the Central Conference is intended to make ‘our’ church discipline ‘neutral’ in matters relating to human sexuality.
- \* As Methodists, it is part of our DNA to be part of a larger community (connexio); we never want to become a German national church!

## **Statement from Bishop Eduard Khegay, Central Conference Eurasia**

In Eurasia Episcopal Area we hold very traditional view on human sexuality. We consider practice of homosexuality as sin and cannot accept the change of definition of marriage. We understand marriage as covenant between man and woman.

Our delegates to General Conference 2019 were satisfied with the result of General Conference regarding human sexuality. Before that they were very upset with election of practicing lesbian bishop in the USA. That incident raised many questions about accountability, leadership of bishops, and value of the Book of Discipline. Our people are very upset that the Book of Discipline is not followed in the USA. Bishops do not enforce the discipline and allow things to be violated.

We do not have much discussion about human sexuality at annual conference meetings. When General Conference delegates share about GC 2019 meeting, there were not many questions or discussion. Our people do not want to spend much time on the topic of human sexuality.

As some of you may be aware, I joined the group of conservative leaders in Atlanta in the beginning of March 2020 to develop a vision for the new traditional denomination if the Protocol passes at GC 2020. I and our leaders in Eurasia are not happy with the Protocol, but looking at it pragmatically we consider it as the least bad choice in present situation of the global UMC. Therefore, I made a decision to be proactive and pragmatic in preparing for the future traditional denomination. At the same time I understand that Protocol may not pass for various reasons at the GC. So, I pray and prepare and try to be open for any outcome.

As for Europe, my heart is grateful for everything I experienced within UMC in Europe. We have been blessed by many of you, by fellowship and friendship, partnership support, learning opportunities and kindness. At this point I do not know how our relationship will continue if UMC decide to separate. Some of our people in Eurasia do not want to have any relationships with post separation UMC. Others are open to have some relationships with the conservative churches and pastors in the post separation UMC. We plan to have all our annual conferences (we have 5 in Eurasia) meet in August so that we can discuss the GC results and plan for the future.

I pray that God gives you strength and wisdom in your complex and diverse Episcopal Area as you move forward.



## **Bishop Christian Alsted's Reflections from the Nordic and Baltic perspective**

Shared with CSE CC Executive committee 14. March 2020

- The Nordic and Baltic episcopal area is in many ways a microcosms of the United Methodist Church – there is much diversity, and we struggle to find broad based common ground.
- The roundtable process in the Nordic and Baltic episcopal area has been focused on theological and ethical themes, and our conversations have revealed deep divisions in the understanding of hermeneutics, soteriology and ecclesiology, and of course in the understanding of human sexuality. Whether the gap between differing understandings to some extent may be bridged is too early to say.
- It appears evident that we will be unable to remain together as a Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference.
- I believe the majority of the annual conferences in the Nordic and Baltic episcopal area will be able to stay together and remain in the United Methodist Church. However, most likely there will be one or several annual conference deciding to leave.
- The less specific the general church will be on defining marriage and setting standards for ordination, the more likely it is that our annual conferences will be able to remain together in the UMC. A redefinition of marriage will no doubt be a deal breaker.
- I am committed to work for as much unity and as much missional strength as possible, and my first priority is to enable the annual conferences to remain together. Should one or more annual conferences decide, they wish to leave, I am committed to help them transition into their future relationship with another Methodist Church, where they believe they can engage in mission with integrity faithful to their beliefs and convictions.

### Reflections on the future

- We are working on proposals for different models of unity and relationship. After a possible separation, we will need to await dialogue and agreements between the post-separation UMC and other Methodist churches emerging out of the UMC, before we can begin conversations between separate annual conferences in the region.
- The upcoming Central Conference must at least address the following matters:
  - Decisions regarding the freedom of annual conferences to set standards for ordination and policies for marriage.
  - Set boundaries and decide on adapted procedures for the transfer of clergy.
  - Consider how a bishop may operate in annual conference with different standards and policies.
  - An agreement of cooperation between annual conferences.
- Considering the possible separations, the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference will most likely not fulfill the requirements for being a Central Conference and thus unable to elect bishop.
- I foresee the need to redraw the map of the United Methodist Church. Perhaps the most obvious option would be to have one European Central Conference with two or more episcopal areas. Budgetary cuts would possibly require the episcopal areas to be self-funded, which would could reduce the number of episcopal areas to two.
- I perceive the European Methodist Council as an important forum and fellowship of collaboration for Methodist churches and our mission and ministry in Europe. I believe

we would benefit from strengthening and developing this important relationship, and I sincerely hope the European Methodist Council will be the umbrella that gathers all of us after a possible separation.

- I firmly believe the conversations about future perspectives need take place proactively rather than reactively to other decisions.

*Prayerfully submitted March 14, 2020*

*Christian Alsted, Bishop of the Nordic & Baltic area.*

## **II. Directory of Decisions**

### **of the 71<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe**

#### **Elections**

1. The Executive Committee unanimously elects Irena Stefanova as Co-Chair of the Working Group Children and Youth.
2. The Executive Committee takes note with approval that Jana Křížová joins the CPCE working group «Church Communion».
3. Daniel Sjanta and Stefan Rendoš are elected unanimously as members of the Working Group Episcopacy.
4. The Executive Committee unanimously elects the new Bishop, Murielle Rietschi (alternate: Barbara Büniger), David Field and two other (preferably younger) persons as members of the World Methodist Council (2021-2026). The CC Office is authorized to make any outstanding nominations.

#### **Decisions of the Executive Committee / Central Conference**

5. The Executive Committee unanimously decides that the theme of the Central Conference 2021 in Basel shall be «The fruit of the Spirit is...»..
6. The Executive Committee decides that its meeting will be finished after the report of the European Bishops and a time of questions and answers on Friday afternoon, March 13, 2020.
7. Following the motion of the CC Office, the Executive Committee decides to hold an extraordinary meeting in Budapest on November 21-22, 2020.
8. The Executive Committee unanimously agrees to the name change of «Community of Protestant Churches in Europe» to «Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe».

#### **Financial Decisions**

9. Based on the positive audit report, the Executive Committee unanimously approves the annual financial statement 2019 and discharges the treasurer. The Executive Committee expresses its thankfulness to the treasurer for her committed service.

10. The Executive Committee authorizes Bishop Patrick Streiff to charge the additional expenses for up to two Business Class upgrades for overnight transatlantic flights to Switzerland to the Central Conference. This authorization is valid throughout the upcoming year of service.

## **Decisions of the Working Group / Central Conference Office**

### **Central Conference Office**

11. The Executive Committee decides that the remaining reports (CC CSE Study Group and Working Group Theology + Ordained Ministry) and the planning of the next steps will be placed in the hands of the members of the CC Office. In light of the upcoming development, the CC Office is authorized to plan the next steps.

The Secretary: Markus Bach

# III. Report of the Office

## 1. Presence and Minutes

### 1.1 Meetings of the CC Office

Since the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central Conference in 2019 in Monospitovo (North Macedonia), the CC Office met twice: on September 11, 2019, and on February 26, 2020.

### 1.2 Minutes of the 70<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee 2019 in North Macedonia

The minutes of the 70<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee, written by Markus Bach, Secretary of the Central Conference, were made available on the website of the Central Conference (<https://www.umc-cse.org/en/downloads--links/documents-studies-and-lectures/minutes-cse.html>). There are two versions available: an original version in German and a version in English.

The CC Office wholeheartedly thanks the Secretary Markus Bach for his diligent and extensive work.

There are only a few copies of the minutes, which are printed for the archives in the various countries.

### 1.3 By-Elections

At the 2019 meeting of EMYC, Pastor Martin Obermeir-Siegrist (Austria) passed on the co-leadership of the WG Children and Youth to Irena Stefanova (Bulgaria), who will in the future serve together with Boris Fazekas.

#### **Motion to the Executive Committee**

***Election of Irena Stefanova as Co-Chair of the WG Children and Youth.***

The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) personally invited Pastor Jana Křížova (Prag/ Czechia) to be a member of an international working group dealing with the theme of «Church Communion». The bishop has encouraged her to accept this invitation. The Executive Committee is asked to take note of this commitment with approval.

#### **Motion to the Executive Committee**

***The Executive Committee takes note with approval that Jana Křížova joins the CPCE working group «Church Communion».***

### 1.4 List of the deceased (March 2019 to March 2020)

**Peter Baur** (CH), † 14.1.2019 (addendum from 2019), Delegate to CC 1985, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2005; Executive Committee 1985-1997

**Ruth Bickel** (CH), † 19.5.2019, Delegate to CC 1964, 1966, 1969, 1973, 1977, 1981; Member of WG Women's Work 1964-1981 (chairperson 1964-1969)

**Hans Hauzenberger** (CH), † 27.9.2019, member of WG Liturgy 1977-1981, 1985-1997 (chairperson 1985-1993)

## **2. Central Conference Pension Plan**

In addition to regular support from the global fund for pensions in central conferences, we receive further contributions from our own Central Conference. This makes it possible to pay out good additional benefits to the state pension benefits, despite modest contributions from the employer and employee sides. We are very grateful for this.

## **3. Planning of the Meeting of the Executive Committee and the Central Conference**

### **3.1 Adjustment of the program**

The program for the 71<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee has been made available to all members and guests via Dropbox. The CC Office has approved the current version of this program. A final directory of reports has also been prepared (report 1.0).

Because of many absences and protective measures due to the coronavirus, the bishop, together with the local hosts, has decided to close the meeting of the Executive Committee on Sunday at noon already and to make it possible for the participants to travel back home on Saturday afternoon. The Austrian evening has been canceled, and the participation in the worship services is adjusted to the situation.

The agenda and a detailed schedule of the meeting of the Executive Committee are also available (see attachment 1.1.1). They have been approved by the Office and will be made available in a printed version at the meeting.

### **3.2 No Theme Day 2020**

At the 2019 Executive Committee meeting in Monospitovo (North-Macedonia), the decision was taken to have a Theme Day on «Christian Conferencing» (What to teach? How to teach? What to do?) during this year's gathering in Vienna. In order to have enough time for the conversation on the work of the CC CSE Study Group and the journey into the future, the CC Office, however, decided at its meeting of September 2019 to do without such a Theme Day.

### **3.3 Special Session Unit with General Conference Delegates and other Guests**

A special session on the work of the CC CSE Study Group will be held from Friday, March 13, 2020, 14.00, to Saturday noon, March 14, 2020. There is a special report available (Report 3.1 with 4 attachments). For this part of the meeting, delegates to General Conference 2020 who are not members of the Executive Committee will also join the group, as far as their schedule permits. In addition, Bishops Christian Alsted (Nordic and Baltic Area) and Harald Rückert (Germany) will be present on Friday in order to report on the discussions in their respective episcopal areas. Bishop Eduard Kheday (Eurasia) will participate electronically.

During this session, the Bishop would like to work with the model «Consensus-Based Discernment» (see attachment 1.1.2) and gain relevant experience. This model of conversation should then also be applied to the theme of the General Conference decisions at the 2021 Central Conference. We hope that all participants will have the feeling that they are heard and taken seriously. The challenge is that the consensus model only works if those present are interested in consensus. It will also be challenging to switch from the consensus mode to the decision-making mode at some point. The CC Office asks all attendants to participate in the discussion in a helpful and supportive manner.

Because of many absences at the meeting of the Executive Committee, this part will include the possibility for those not present in Vienna to participate electronically. This shall offer them the

best possible option to make their own contribution, as well. However, only the voting members of the Executive Committee who are present in Vienna will have voting rights.

### **3.4 Country Reports at the Meeting of the Executive Committee**

The CC Office asks the following people to offer a country report during the Executive Committee meeting:

- Freddy Nzambe from Tunisia
- Etienne Rudolph from Algeria

The country report about Algeria is available in writing since Etienne Rudolph is not able to be present. It will be read by the bishop who will also be able to answer questions orally. We still hope that Freddy Nzambe will be able to join us. If this was not possible, he would also send us a written report.

The country reports (10 minutes each for the report and 10 minutes each for questions and prayers) are scheduled for Thursday evening.

### **3.5 Austrian evening on Saturday, March 14, 2020**

Because of protective measures due to the coronavirus, the Austrian evening had to be canceled. However, we would like to express our thankfulness for the preparations that had been made for this evening.

### **3.6 Worship Services on Sunday, March 15, 2020**

The participation of the meeting participants in the worship services in the region will be adapted to the situation due to the protective measures against the corona virus.

### **3.7 Responsibilities during the Meeting**

The CC Office commissions the following people:

- As helper to the Secretary: Urs Schweizer
- As auditor of the minutes: Helene Bindl + Jörg Niederer
- As treasurer during the meeting: Urs Schweizer / André Töngi
- As reporter for the church media: Claudia Haslebacher

### **3.8 Extraordinary Session of the Executive Committee on November 21-22, 2020**

In its report, the CC CSE Study Group proposes that an extraordinary session of the Executive Committee be held in November/December 2020 to determine which motions for resolutions should be submitted to the Central Conference in 2021 (see report 3.1). In the event that the members of the Executive Committee follow this proposal, the Office suggests the date of November 21-22, 2020. Budapest is envisaged as the venue for this gathering. All members with voting rights are invited (according to Art. 7.1 of the CC Rules of Order) – and the Bishop will also invite the advisory members (chairpersons of the working groups and additional superintendents of the CC countries not represented in the Executive Committee). The CC Office asks all participants to plan their journey in a way that the first part of the meeting can already take place on Saturday at 10.00. The return journey should be planned for Sunday evening. The CC Office will notify all participants in advance how much meeting time really will be needed. Many thanks to those responsible for preparing this extraordinary meeting.

#### **Motion to the Executive Committee**

**The Executive Committee decides to hold an extraordinary meeting in Budapest on November 21-22, 2020.**

The CC Office suggests that in the follow-up work after the meeting of General Conference only the smaller writing team should work on the proposed document (see Report 3.1, page 5). This writing team will report directly to the extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee, without the need for a larger group of the Central Conference to deal with it in advance. We ask the Executive Committee to nominate four persons for this writing team.

#### **Motion to the Executive Committee**

**The Executive Committee decides to set up a small writing team of four people to prepare a document. The aim is to describe how the CC Boo of Discipline and the Social Principles could be formulated in a way that would be helpful for our context if all prohibitive/negative/restrictive phrases concerning homosexuality were deleted. The same team should also prepare a "Covenant of Mutual Respect" as a protective measure, if deemed appropriate.**

Following this meeting, a Superintendents' meeting will be held at the same location. It will be discussed how this approach should be implemented and how respectively other viewpoint can be taken up. It is planned to have one day for this meeting.

### **3.9 Meeting of the Central Conference 2021**

From Wednesday afternoon, March 10, 2021, to Sunday, March 14, 2021, the 19th meeting of the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe will take place at the Zwinglihaus in Basel. Since Bishop Patrick Streiff will retire at this meeting, it is planned to elect a successor. The consecration of the new Bishop is expected to take place on Sunday afternoon, March 14, 2021, in the Basel Cathedral. The CC Office asks all Central Conference delegates to plan to depart after this service only, so that participation in the consecration service is possible. A committed host team has been established, which, in addition to its leader, local pastor Christine Preis, also consists of Pastor Sven Büchmeier, retired local pastor Annemarie Roser, Andreas Stämpfli and Hansruedi Wilhelm.

As a theme, the CC Office suggests, in reference to Galatians 5:22: «The fruit of the Spirit is...» This theme would refer to the overall situation of the UMC on the one hand, but also to the Wesleyan theme of sanctification: What is our identity? How are we on the road? Can we sense whose spirit carries and shapes us? The Bishop plans to base his Episcopal Address on this theme, as well.

The WG Music and Liturgy of the UMC in Switzerland, under the leadership of Pastor Stefan Zolliker, is ready to prepare and shape the liturgical parts of the Central Conference in cooperation with the WG Liturgy of the Central Conference. This also includes the service with the consecration of the new Bishop.

#### **Motion to the Executive Committee**

**The theme of the Central Conference 2021 in Basel shall be «The fruit of the Spirit is ...».**

## **4. Financial Issues**

### **4.1 Statement 2019 of the Central Conference and Auditor's report**

Iris Bullinger presents the financial statement 2019 of the Central Conference (see report 1.2). This statement shows an expenditure surplus of CHF 5'144.38.

Adrian Wenziker's auditor's report on the financial statement 2019 is available in writing (see report 1.3).



### **Motion to the Executive Committee**

***Based on the positive audit report, the Executive Committee approves the annual financial statement 2019 and discharges the treasurer. The Executive Committee expresses its thankfulness to the treasurer for her committed service.***

#### **4.2 Travel Expenses of the Bishop**

Last year, Bishop Patrick Streiff once again made use of the opportunity granted to him by the Executive Committee and he purchased one Business Class upgrade for an overnight transatlantic flight to Switzerland – once again in a situation in which he had to lead meetings and gatherings immediately after his arrival in Switzerland. For the same reason, he already planned another Business Class upgrade for the return flight from General Conference.

### **Motion to the Executive Committee**

***Throughout the upcoming conference year, Bishop Patrick Streiff is authorized to charge the additional expenses for up to two Business Class upgrades for overnight transatlantic flights to Switzerland to the Central Conference.***

#### **4.3 Reductions in Support from the Episcopal Fund for the General Church and Effects on the Contributions from the Annual Conferences of the CC CSE**

The General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) surprisingly decided in autumn 2019 that in the first quarter of 2020 only half of the costs of the bishops' offices will be financed (no reduction of the bishops' salaries) because of a decrease in the payment rate in the USA. In a letter to GCFA, the European bishops expressed their incomprehension that Episcopal Areas that pay 100% (or more) of their apportionments are also affected by the cut. If all areas paid 100%, the worldwide Episcopal Fund would not have any financial problems. But now all are «punished» to the same extent because some have paid less.

The CC CSE Council on Finance and Administration decided not to change the contributions from the Annual Conferences, but to reduce the contributions to the worldwide Episcopal Fund. The payment rate for this fund will thus decrease from 530% to approximately 470%. The deposit rate for «General Administration» will remain unchanged at 100%.

## **5. Statistical Information within the Central Conference**

### **5.1 Summary**

The Bishop's Office submits a compilation of statistical data to the Executive Committee (see report 1.4). This compilation is based on the reports to the 2019 meetings of the Annual Conferences, i.e. on the statistical data as per December 31, 2018. In almost all countries, this information is collected on a comparable base. This means that the summary provides a helpful overview even though it is not yet complete.

### **5.2 Forwarding of Statistical Information and Annual Conference Journals to GCFA**

A reminder (see Report from March 2019): The CC Office requests all Annual Conference Secretaries to continue sending the Annual Conference journals including the statistical information **directly** to the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA). These journals do not need to be printed brochures but can also be electronic files. GCFA then makes available the journals to all General Boards and Agencies needing a copy.

The Bishop's Office should be provided with **two** printed copies of the journals.

## 6. Dates

### 6.1 Meetings and Delegations

Various important gatherings and events, to which we will be invited to send delegates/participants, will take place in 2020 and 2021. Below are only some important pan-European or world-wide events:

- Apr 30-May 3, 20: EMK-Kongress in Gerlingen near Stuttgart (DE)  
May 5-15, 20: General Conference in Minneapolis (USA)  
Jul 3-5, 20: Christliche Begegnungstage in Graz (AT)  
→ Gathering of Protestant Churches from Central and Eastern Europe  
Sep 5-8, 20: European Methodist Council in Stuttgart (DE)  
Nov 17-21, 20: Central Conference in Germany in Zwickau (DE)  
Nov 21-22, 20: Extraordinary Executive Committee meeting in Budapest (HU); possibly connected with a Superintendents' Meeting  
Mar, 3-7, 21: Central Conference of Northern Europe and Eurasia in Tallinn (EE)  
→ the limited term (12 years) of the Bishop for the Nordic and Baltic Area will come to an end at this gathering  
May 12-16, 21: STAUNEN! at Dünenhof near Cuxhaven (DE)  
Aug 10-15, 21: Conference of World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Women in Gothenburg (SE)  
Aug, 17-18, 21: World Methodist Council in Gothenburg (SE)  
Aug, 19-21, 21: World Methodist Conference in Gothenburg (SE)  
Aug, 22-23, 21: World Methodist Council in Gothenburg (SE)

The 2020 Annual Conference meeting dates can be found at <https://www.umc-cse.org/en/agenda.html>.

### 6.2 Anniversaries

In the upcoming years, there will be several anniversaries in our Central Conference:

- October 3, 2020: Czech and Slovak Republics AC (100 years since the beginning of the mission work of the Methodist Episcopal Church South in 1920)  
June 4-6, 2021: Poland AC (100 years since the first Annual Conference meeting)  
October 8, 2021: Austria Provisional AC (150 years since the beginning of the mission work in 1870)

## 7. Nominations

In the process of nominations by the Council of Bishops for the general church for General Conference 2020 (and the quadrennium 2020-2024), the bishop has nominated the following persons from the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe to the respective agencies or committees:

- Connectional Table: Rev. Dr. Stefan Zürcher, CH
  - GBCS (Church and Society): Philipp Hadorn, CH
  - GBGM: Ulrich Bachmann, CH
  - GCSRW (Status and Role of Women): Rev. Monika Zuber, PL
  - StC-CCM (Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters): active Bishop; Rev. Petr Prochazka, CZ; Thomas Fux, AT
- Standing Administrative Committees of GC2020:
- Committee on Agenda and Calendar: Rev. Etienne Rudolph, FR

- Committee on Courtesies and Privileges: Istvan Ambrusz, HU
- Committee on Credentials: Rev. Dr. Daniel Topalski, BG
- Committee on Presiding Officers: Rev. Stefan Schröckenfuchs, AT
- Committee on References: Rev. Daniel Sjanta, RS, and Lenka Procházková, SK
- Commission on General Conference: Lea Hafner, CH

## **8. World Methodist Council**

In August 2021 (for exact dates see 6.1), the meeting of the current World Methodist Council, the World Methodist Conference, and the meeting of the World Methodist Council in its new composition will take place in Gothenburg (SE). As UMC in the CC CSE we are entitled to nominate five persons for the «new» World Methodist Council (2021-2026). These persons must be nominated by June 1, 2020.

The number of persons from our Central Conference who may attend the World Methodist Conference is not limited. Whether and to what extent financial support can be provided for travel and conference expenses, however, is not yet clear.

The office proposes the following persons for the «new» World Methodist Council:

- The newly elected bishop;
- from the CC Women's Work: Murielle Rietschi (alternate: Barbara Büniger);
- David Field;

The office asks the Executive Committee to nominate two more (preferably younger) persons who would be members of the World Methodist Council for the first time and who would come from different countries of East Central Europe and the Balkans.

### **Motion to the Executive Committee**

**The new bishop, Murielle Rietschi (alternate: Barbara Büniger), David Field and two other (preferably younger) persons are nominated as members of the World Methodist Council (2021-2026). The CC Office is authorized to make any outstanding nominations.**

## **9. Name Change of CPCE in English**

The Community of Protestant Churches (CPCE) would like to change its English name from **Community** of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) to **Communion** of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE). This should also better express in English that the member churches recognize each other in word, sacrament and ministry. The member churches are asked to respond by April 1, 2020, whether they agree to this plan. Failure to respond will be considered as agreement.

### **Motion to the Executive Committee**

**The Executive Committee agrees to the name change Community of Protestant Churches in Europe to Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe.**

## **10. Fund for Mission in Europe**

Since the foundation of the Fund for Mission in Europe in the nineties and until the end of 2019, the person responsible for finances and administration in the bishop's office also served as FMIE treasurer. From 2005, Urs Schweizer took over the role of the Office Manager. Due to the continuing heavy workload, Bishop Patrick Streiff had pressed for a replacement. On January 1, 2020, Andreas Stämpfli took over the management of FMIE, and EmK-Weltmission of the UMC

in Germany took over the bookkeeping. The bishop is grateful for this partial relief of his staff in the bishop's office.

## 11. CC CSE E-mail Addresses

At the meeting of the Executive Committee in Budapest in 2018 it was decided that in future all people in an official function of the Central Conference should receive an e-mail address following the pattern firstname.name@umc-cse.org. E-mails sent to this address would then automatically be forwarded to the real e-mail address. In practice, it became clear that automatic forwarding, which is set up by us on the server, represents a security risk for the entire server. The Communications Department of the UMC in Switzerland therefore decided that a separate mail account must be set up for each person. This mail account must be managed by the persons concerned on their own responsibility. The emails can be accessed directly from there or downloaded using POP or IMAP. It is also possible to set up a forwarding to the real e-mail address. **It is important to note that the owners of these «umc-cse.org» addresses will have to set this up themselves in future.** Jörg Niederer is also willing to help with the changeover. The German- and French-speaking members of the Central Conference have already converted to this system. For the other members and delegates of the Central Conference, it will take place this year. A clear description will be enclosed showing what needs to be done. As the CC Office, we are dependent on the changeover being made so that the flow of information can function.

## 12. Bishop's Office



In the sometimes more and sometimes less strong storms of everyday life and time, the two employees in the Bishop's Office support the Bishop in his ministry. The uncertain development of the UMC on a worldwide level and in regard to the Central Conference means an additional burden which nobody would wish for, but which cannot be avoided. In all faithfulness, the two employees continue to build bridges between individuals and congregations in very different countries, thus contributing to ensuring that the Methodist Connexion does not remain a theory but can be experienced as an enriching and encouraging reality. We thank them wholeheartedly for their service.

*Markus Bach, Secretary*

## **“Consensus-Based Discernment”**

On some topics during the executive meeting in Vienna, the Bishop would like to use “Consensus-Based Discernment”. The deliberation model is inspired by experiences of the World Council of Churches and the World Methodist Council. The Bishop has not yet used it but would like to test it with the option to use it again on certain topics in the central conference meeting in March 2021.

Consensus-based discernment – as understood here - does not mean that a final decision is taken unanimously. It is rather a process of exploring a topic that allows engaging with each other and assuring that each one is heard until it is time to take a decision. When the decision is not unanimous, those opposing or abstaining will testify that their arguments have been heard and seriously considered by everyone.

### **Goals**

- Allow enough questions so that a topic is well understood by every member
- Enhance participation and dialogue, including relevant facts and feelings
- Encourage prayerful listening to all voices, seeking to meet the legitimate concerns that others express
- No member need feel pressured into an unacceptable position
- Manage with courtesy, respect and grace discussions where participants bring deeply held, contending perspectives on matters at the heart of their Christian convictions
- Limit the possibility of domination by any participant or small group
- Explore creative alternatives
- All the considerations are weighed up, taken into account, and possibly incorporated into a proposal before a decision is made
- Encourage decisions to go forward when most are agreed, limiting the power of a few to obstruct decisions

### **Practices**

- Use cards to monitor the mind of the group
- Use of small groups and mixing up people in table groups
- Hearing many times from a minority
- Delegate a group to go and draft new words
- Time out for prayer or silence
- Deferring a decision if not yet ready

### **If a session uses the “consensus-based discernment”**

The bishop will announce whether a session is following regular proceedings of deliberation and decision or the “consensus-based discernment”.

In “consensus-based discernment”, members will use “Indicator cards”. We will use two colours:

- Yellow: indicating warmth towards an idea and acceptance that there is “light” in it
- Dark Blue: indicating coolness towards an idea and disapproval as being “dark” and not helpful

After a speaker has finished his or her remarks, the members will hold discreetly one of the two indicator cards at their table, indicating the support for the point of view expressed.

If members consider it is time to move on or that the sharing becomes repetitious, they hold the two indicator cards crossed at their table. If a majority does so, it shows a willingness to move forward.

## IV. Reports of the Working Groups

### 1

#### Working Group Theology and Ordained Ministry

1. The Working Group met September 27-30, 2019 in Uster, Switzerland. Attendants were Jana Daněčková, Zoltán Kovács, Michael Nausner, Edward Puślecki, Christof Voigt (Connection Person to the Central Conference of Germany) und Stefan Zürcher (Chair). Daniel Sjanta and Vladimir Zhelezov were excused.
2. The Working Group received no concrete tasks from the executive committee. Encouraged by bishop Patrick Streiff we discussed the following texts:
  - God in Love Unites Us. The Report of the Marriage and Relationships Task Group 2019 of the British Methodist Church<sup>1</sup>
  - Final Report of the 8th General Assembly of the CPCE, Sept. 13th to 18th 2018, in Basel
  - Role and Meaning of the Book of Discipline for the Church and the Life of the Community of Believers in the United Methodist Church from a Leadership Perspective by Stefan Zürcher
3. The article Role and Meaning of the Book of Discipline (BoD) by Stefan Zürcher was written for a conversation within the executive committee 2019. The question of the role of the BoD in our church had been raised and some requested that the question should be addressed more thoroughly. The Working Group took on this challenge as well and discussed the question on the basis of the article. A short comment is attached to this report.
4. Inspired by the Report of the Marriage and Relationships Task Group in the British Methodist Church the Working Group started drafting a document with the working title Elements of a Theology of Marriage. A first draft is attached to this report. The plan is to complete the work on this document at the next meeting in September 2020. Even if the present text is just a draft that needs to be discussed and deepened within the Working Group, we happily accept feedback: Which comments, suggestions, and/or questions does the executive committee want to send along for our continued work with the text?
5. Our discussion about these two texts as well as David N. Field's lecture The Divine Economy, the Church, and the struggle for Justice for the LGBTQ Community at the beginning of our meeting were shaped by the debate around the church's policies around homosexuality. We discussed in a respectful and trusting way. We had table fellowship and listened to each other. We recognized the various contexts we live in, and we learned from each other. We all left the meeting with the impression to understand each other and the others' opinions better than before the meeting. That experience touched us and made us grateful. It also gave us a hopeful perspective for the future. "Holy Conferencing" is possible!

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.methodist.org.uk/MandR19](http://www.methodist.org.uk/MandR19)

We want to highlight some aspects of the conversation:

- When dealing with sensitive issues such as homosexuality, about which we disagree, it is important that we carefully choose expressions and to reflect about what we communicate with them whether we want it or not. For example expressions like: open, progressive, modern, liberal/conservative, normal, homophobia/homophilia etc.
  - The various cultures in which we live and which shape our thinking need to be recognized and met with respect. It is not permissible that proponents for a certain culture express superiority over proponents for other cultures by telling them what is right or wrong, good or bad in their cultures.
  - As Working Group we are convinced that we should find a way within our Central Conference that makes it possible to remain united in spite of our differing views on homosexuality. Could it be a solution to leave it to the Boards of Ordained Ministries or to the closed meeting of the ordained at Annual Conferences to decide who will be ordained? The representatives of the Working Group agreed that that would be a way to continue to walk together and remain united.
6. In response to the final report from the Annual Meeting of the Conference of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) we discussed the question how the documents from CPCE can arrive at Annual Conference in order to be discussed and used in the congregations. Which channels exist between the Board of the CPCE and the member churches and the local congregations? Unfortunately, we observe that many documents with good impulses for congregational work do neither reach Annual Conferences nor local congregations, not even the ordained ministers. Here the Working Group could become more active. The CPCE document Church Communion and all the other endorsed documents in English and German can be found at the following webpage: <https://cpce-assembly.eu/dokumente>. We recommend them to the Annual Conferences for study purposes.
7. At the 2020 meeting we will deal with the following topic:
- Finishing the draft of "Elements of a Theology of Marriage"
- The executive committee has the possibility to recommend certain tasks or give specific impulses.
8. The next meeting of the Working Group will take place September 12-15, 2020, most likely in Prague/Czech Republic.

*Stefan Zürcher*



# Role and Meaning of the Book of Discipline<sup>1</sup> for the Church and Life of the Community of Believers in the United Methodist Church from a Leadership Perspective

By Stefan Zürcher

## 1. Background and the Questions Covered

The decisions taken by the special session of the General Conference of February 2019 on aspects of dealing with homosexual persons in the United Methodist Church (UMC) – the blessing of homosexual couples, the ordination of gay or lesbian ministers – have given rise to some questions.

The filed petitions are intended not only to have the contents of the UMC's official doctrinal position regarding homosexuality fixed at the level of the Book of Discipline (BO) as the sole and only right view which it intends to enforce, but also, in addition, to set up detailed regulations on, for example, how ministers are to be dealt with who diverge from and contravene the guidelines of the Book of Discipline. The intention is also to have a procedure put in place for reviewing applicants for ordained ministry that ensures that no gay or lesbian ministers can be received into the pastoral ministry without the responsible persons having to expect massive sanctions and disciplinary measures.

Up to now, there have not been any such legalistic passages in the Book of Discipline of our Central Conference<sup>2</sup>. Thus the question of the role and meaning of the Book of Discipline now arises: what is the function and meaning of the Book of Discipline for the church and life of the community of believers in the United Methodist Church? Is it a church law which has to be enforced by means of coercive measures when there is a contravention, or does it form a basic set of guidelines which have to be re-negotiated again and again in a consensual procedure and leave enough space to enable it to be adapted to the diverse situations in the approximately 50 countries in which the UMC works? What was the role of the Book of Discipline in the past, and what is its role today? What intentions did it and does it pursue, in particular with regard to doctrine and doctrinal questions?<sup>3</sup> How should this be judged from a modern point of view? With this background, where should corrections be made, in view of the present and future challenges?

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<sup>1</sup> The Central Conference of *Central and Southern Europe* (CCCSE) uses the expression *Kirchenordnung* for the Book of Discipline; it comprises the sections Constitution, Doctrinal Principles, Ministry of All Christians, Social Principles, Organization and Administration as well as Rules regarding Discipline and Arbitration. In the Germany Central Conference, the Book of Discipline is called *Verfassung, Lehre und Ordnung* (VLO).

<sup>2</sup> Exception: Art. 341.

<sup>3</sup> In English a distinction is made between *doctrine* and *teaching*. In German this distinction is not possible, because we do not have two corresponding terms, but only the word *Lehre*; this leads to a lack of precision. *Doctrine* means the doctrinal standards (*Lehrnormen, Lehrgrundlagen*) such as for example the Articles of Religion or the Confession of Faith. *Teaching* means in contrast the contents of teaching (*Lehrinhalte, Lehrmeinungen*) deduced from the doctrinal standards that can be modified according to time and context. An issue of teaching is a matter of theological interpretation and ethical concern. We hear the Wesleyan distinction between *essentials* and *opinions* here.

J. L. McCleskey points out that according to the Social Principles the question of homosexuality (Art. 161 II. G), but also questions of marriage and ordination, is a question of Christian *teaching* [*Lehre*], and not of *doctrine* [*Lehrnormen*]. The Social Principles of the UMC do not create identity and are not legally binding. The view on the incompatibility of practiced homosexuality cannot therefore be legally binding. See McCleskey, J. L., *Freedom and Connectionalism – The Wesleyan Way!*, <https://unitingmethodists.com/perspectives/freedom-and-connectionalism-the-wesleyan-way/>, 22.6.2019.

My proposition is as follows: *by reason of its origin and nature, a Methodist Book of Discipline is a rule of life which guides the members of the church and their community in the discipleship of Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of the church's task. Communal conversation and mutual responsibility are the basic and fundamental characteristics of this rule.*

My first section considers the emergence and development of the *General Book of Discipline* (BoD) within the history of Methodism and the Methodist Church since John Wesley. My second section describes the Book of Discipline's self-conception (its own understanding of itself) with regard to its purpose and character. My third section formulates the challenges from the point of view of modern cybernetics and discusses approaches to dealing with them.

What this brief examination does not provide is a comparison and discussion of the Methodist Book of Discipline with the church constitutions and/or the church laws of other churches, for example the Roman Catholic Church, the Reformed Church, the Anglican Church or the Eastern Church.<sup>4</sup> A description of the subject based on biblical theology and systematic theology has also not been given.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Development of the Book of Discipline since Wesley

By contrast with many reformed denominations, the English-language description of the UMC's church rules is not "Book of Order", but "Book of Discipline". Under the Protestant tradition, *discipline* has frequently taken on negative connotations in the course of time. The concept *discipline* gives a positive description of standards and expectations concerning church members or church communities with regard to certain practices and patterns of behavior, and a negative description with regard to "disciplinary rules" determined by prohibitions. If these rules are not complied with, this triggers a reprimand or church disciplinary procedure.

Under Methodism, on the other hand, there is an extended understanding of *discipline*, and the expression encompasses all aspects of church life. The understanding of what *discipline* means in the life of the Christian church community under Methodism has taken shape over the last 250 and more years. In the following section I describe some important phases and aspects of this development.

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<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Plathow, Michael, Art. Kirchenordnungen III. Praktisch-theologisch, in: TRE Vol. 18, 707-713; Honnecker, Martin, Kirchenrecht II. Evangelische Kirchen, in: TRE Vol. 18, 725-749, inter alia, differences are shown e.g. in the understanding of *ius divinum* and *ius humanum* as well as in the range of the objects normalized by the church law and their respective meaning.

<sup>5</sup> I refer to the brief, illuminating introduction by Schlink, Edmund, *Schriften zu Ökumene und Bekenntnis*, Vol. 2: *Ökumenische Dogmatik*, Göttingen <sup>3</sup>2005, 660-673. Here a brief summary: according to Schlink, Jesus's command to his disciples, for the fulfillment of which there are many possibilities, is the basis for all doings of the church. The workings of the spirit through the various spiritual gifts, and the ministries connected to this, are important here. Further: "Beyond and above such diverse workings of the spirit, which are not the same in each church community, recurrent orientations of the spiritual life of the church can be recognized in the books of the New Testament, resulting from the dynamics of the spiritual effects of the gospel and the sacrament [...] These basic structures [of the church], like the fundamental command of Christ, allow a number of church law concretizations. But church law is not lord over the spirit, but has to respect the basic structures of the spiritual life of the church, to secure free space for its effects and to protect it from one-sidedness and decay." (loc. cit., 666 et seq.) The church constitution [Kirchenordnung] Schlink goes on to say, is determined by the church's task and mission as a "revealed, absolutely mandatory and essential *divine right*" and has to serve the living work of the spirit and thus the life of the church in its spiritual structures. However, it demands of the church members not only commitment to its content, but also the "readiness to continue with arranging in the light of the changes in the historical situation. [...] The moment of freedom belonging to church law thus requires that the church law shall secure the possibility of adding to currently applicable provisions or replacing them by others which are more appropriate for God's command in the changed current situation" (loc. cit.) The "pneumatic historicity of church law" unlocks the possibility of recognizing church law differences as justified diversities in the unity of the church (loc. cit. 668)

## 2.1 The General Rules as the Rules of Wesley's Society Structure

The first basic phase was during the formative years of Methodism. A central feature of John Wesley's approach when founding the Methodist movement was to build up a communal or society structure (classes, bands, societies)<sup>6</sup>. This was an additional structure within the Anglican Church, in which the members of his societies continued to receive the sacraments or to take part in the services. As a consequence, Wesley only had to make rules for his societies, but not for an entire church, which is a significant difference to the function of our (church) rules/Book of Discipline. At the same time, when looking at our questions it is worth considering the function and form of his society rules, as important impulses for today can be gained from them.

What was the purpose of Wesley's society rules? Wesley described religion as "a constant ruling habit of soul; a renewal of our minds in the image of God; a recovery of the divine likeness; a still-increasing conformity of heart and life to the pattern of our most holy Redeemer"<sup>7</sup>. He formed his society structure in order to encourage this growth, the growth in the knowledge and love of God. And in order to guide the members of these societies in the sanctification of heart and life, he provided them with the *General Rules* of 1743 as a kind of rule of life. Those who wanted to be received into the societies were only expected to have the wish "to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins", and "that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, *First*: By doing no harm [...]. *Secondly*: By doing good [...]. *Thirdly*: By attending upon all the ordinances of God"<sup>8</sup>. Wesley understood that to follow these rules was a re-action and answer to God's grace. He was convinced that the relationship to God would be nourished by this. The General Rules were an aid – basically also themselves a means of grace – to experiencing the spiritual power of God's life-changing love. The latter was the end, the former was the means. – It is obvious that, in Wesley's thinking, discipline and discipleship were intrinsically linked, as R. Dunning comments.<sup>9</sup> To be a Methodist meant practicing a certain methodically ordered way of life.<sup>10</sup> There is a clear distinction between this spiritual happening and a practice based on a law.

The General Rules had a further function: societies that wanted to be counted as one of Wesley's United Societies had to comply with the General Rules, i.e. the General Rules were the unifying factor for the various societies of Wesley's connexion. They were the cement binding them together. A further characteristic of Methodism becomes apparent here: on the one hand, the different groups belonging to Wesley's connexion all invoked the General Rules; on the other hand, there were fundamental differences of opinion between them on certain questions.<sup>11</sup> This shows that it was not a uniform doctrine or theological position which gave Methodism its unique identity, but the pursuit of a joint object with the help of the General Rules, namely the promotion of sanctification and discipleship. The specifically Methodist elements were the society structure and the mutual responsibility put in place by it regarding the obedience to the rules, not specific doctrines: "Methodism began as a movement which emphasized practical piety and not particular

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<sup>6</sup> In the following passages, for the sake of brevity, I write only of societies. Classes and bands are also always included in this.

<sup>7</sup> Letter to Richard Morgan, Sen., 15.1.1734, in: WJW 25:369.

<sup>8</sup> The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2016, Part III Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task, Nashville TN 2016, 78 et seq.

<sup>9</sup> Dunning, H. Ray, Ethics in a Wesleyan Context, in: Wesleyan Theological Journal, Nashville TN, Vol. 5, Nr. 1, Spring 1970, [http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan\\_theology/wesleyjournal/1970-wtj-05.pdf](http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/wesleyjournal/1970-wtj-05.pdf), 22.6.2019. See also BoD 2016, III Doctrinal Standards, 58.

<sup>10</sup> Wesley was inspired here by William Law, Jeremy Taylor (Rules for Holy Living and Dying), Thomas a Kempis (Imitatio Christi) and possibly also by his mother Susanna Wesley. William Cave's book *Primitive Christianity* probably served Wesley as a template for the General Rules

<sup>11</sup> Some examples can be found in R. Heitzenrater: See Heitzenrater, Richard, John Wesley und der frühe Methodismus, Göttingen 2007, 146-149; 226-228.

doctrines.”<sup>12</sup> Questions of doctrine were subordinated to practical piety: Wesley “considered doctrinal matters primarily in terms of their significance for Christian discipleship”, as the Book of Discipline states.<sup>13</sup>

The General Rules may be regarded as *the* document which shaped the life of the Methodist movement like no other. It can therefore be said that it forms the basis of all Methodist Book of Discipline.<sup>14</sup> Should this foundation be forgotten, a significant part of the Methodist identity is broken away and leaves a vacuum which must inevitably be filled by something else. This is also the reason for its protection by the Restrictive Rules.<sup>15</sup>

Even where the character of these rules is overlooked, an important part of this basis is broken away. As a rule of life for Christian life, the General Rules may not be misunderstood as laws or prohibitions to be used as an aid to judging and rebuking the behavior of persons or even excluding people. The Book of Discipline refers to Wesley and states: “Wesley rejected undue reliance upon these rules. Discipline was not church law; it was a way of discipleship.”<sup>16</sup> On the contrary, Wesley saw it as an invitation to everyone to join one of his societies. Belonging to a society meant commitment to following the rules of the society – and not following them could indeed lead to exclusion<sup>17</sup> –, but it also assured the mutual association, accompaniment and support in working towards the member’s own salvation (Philippians 2,12). “The Methodist covenant was both an open invitation and a definite commitment. But it was far more a commitment to finding the way forward together than a sworn allegiance to a creed or defined set of righteous behaviours.”<sup>18</sup> Wesley never maintained that that General Rules were required or prescribed by scripture. He regarded them as “small reasonable aids”. A transgression was not an offence against God. No-one was forced to keep his rules and orders, everyone was able to leave the society at any time – and this was not synonymous with leaving the church. Wesley thus made a clear distinction between *ius divinum* and *ius humanum*.

There is something else which is characteristic of the General Rules: some of the subjects listed in the General Rules are very concrete and directly implementable, but other subjects are unspecific and have to be put into concrete terms.<sup>19</sup> This is a further characteristic feature of the General Rules: they have to be interpreted and contextualized. “This logic is grounded on an assumption of invitation into a way of life, structured by practices of studying and conversing in community to find the most useful way to do good, avoid evil, and grow in the knowledge and love of God, and given substance by the divine ordinances through which God’s grace is present.”<sup>20</sup> The community is necessary for this. In order to put the contents into concrete terms insofar as they can be applied practically in a specific context, the experience and judgement of the other persons is needed who are going on the same path. In order to find out what sanctification (which is always social sanctification) means in a concrete situation, we depend on each other. It is only together that we can grow as Christians and learn to judge in a complex world what it means to do good and to live according to God’s will (Romans 12,2). More about this can be found in the following section.

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<sup>12</sup> Shier-Jones, Angela, *Methodisch sein. Theologie in kirchlichen Strukturen*, in: Nausner, Michael (Edit.), *Kirchliches Leben in methodistischer Tradition. Perspektiven aus drei Kontinente*, RTS Vol. 6, Göttingen 2010, 175.

<sup>13</sup> BoD 2016, III Doctrinal Standards, 51.

<sup>14</sup> See Frank, Thomas E., *Discipline*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, Oxford 2009, 246.

<sup>15</sup> S. u. 2.3. Vgl. KO, I Verfassung, Art. 17 et seq., 7.

<sup>16</sup> BoD 2016, III Doctrinal Standards, 55.

<sup>17</sup> Irregularity and lack of seriousness in participating in the class meetings are frequently mentioned. Regularity and seriousness in participating is however much more an expression of the will to grow in sanctity than a meticulous keeping of the rules. The concrete reasons for exclusion would need to be examined in detail.

<sup>18</sup> Frank, *Discipline*, 247.

<sup>19</sup> For example, it is necessary to put into concrete terms which songs and books are such “that they do not tend to the knowledge or love of God”. *Book of Discipline*, II Basic Principles, 34.

<sup>20</sup> Frank, *Discipline*, 247 et seq.

## 2.2 Christian Conferencing as a Basic Principle of the Methodist Society Rules

As mentioned above, there were many statements in the General Rules which could not be directly applied; they had to be put into concrete terms. The society and communal conversation [in the society] were necessary for this. The communal conversation – also described as Christian conversation or “holy conferencing” – is a second characteristic of the Wesleyan society structure that has shaped our Book of Discipline up to today.

The societies with the General Rules aimed at promoting the growth of its members in the knowledge and love of God. “This growth, whether personal or connexional, occurs through conversation. So Methodist discipline has taught.”<sup>21</sup> Wesley saw Christian conversation as a means of grace through which people are led to be more closely in touch with God. The relationships with each other and the exchange of experiences, the Christian conversation, played an essential role. I have written that e.g. it was necessary to clarify together how the General Rules were to be applied to ethical issues which arose in the concrete life situations of the members. This process of reflection also trained the participants’ power of judgment – an ability which is needed not only by the individual believers, but also by the church as a community, if it wants to perform its task effectively.

In order to ensure that his preachers proclaimed his theology of grace and encouraged growth in the sanctification of Christian life, but also in order to discuss the challenges and possibilities of the Methodist mission, Wesley summoned them regularly to conferences.<sup>22</sup> Christian conversation was intended to be applied not only in his societies, but also in the conferences, in order to seek solutions on open questions of practical ministry or also to resolve conflicts where there were diverging theological views.

Holy conferencing, which strongly marked the societies and the conferences, demonstrates a further aspect: the mutual responsibility. Societies and conferences were structures of mutual responsibility, their rules and practices are built on this. The background to this was Wesley’s respect for the individual and communal responsibility before God and the community of believers, which cannot be overestimated.<sup>23</sup> The Book of Discipline of 1976 takes this up, and regarding the conferencing principle it writes: the fathers of Methodism preferred “a unique version of the ancient “conciliar principle,” in which the collective wisdom of living Christian pastors, teachers and people was relied upon to guard and guide their ongoing communal life”.<sup>24</sup>

When we look at the early development of the Methodist Book of Discipline, what is remarkable is its special form. The results of the conference did not subsequently flow into doctrine or church law texts, but rather, since the first conference of 1744, were published in the form of questions and answers reproducing the course of the conversation, first as *Minutes of several conversations*, later as *Large Minutes*. This instrument of the leaders was also continued in this form in the USA as from 1784<sup>25</sup>. In 1785 the *Minutes of several conversations between Coke, Asbury and others composing a form of Discipline for the ministers, preachers and other members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America* were published for the first time. Admittedly the title was soon changed to *Doctrine and Discipline*, but the question and answer form was partially retained until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was only at a relatively late stage that the change was made to a juridical form, usual for law texts. This change was accompanied by a loss of openness and flexibility – two characteristics which made the original Methodist Book of Discipline unique. By contrast with

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<sup>21</sup> Frank, *Discipline*, 250.

<sup>22</sup> The emphasis was on the questions: “1. What to teach; 2. How to teach; and 3. What to do; that is, how to regulate our doctrine, discipline, and practice.” Wesley, John, *Minutes of Some Late Conversations Between the Rev. Mr. Wesleys and Others*, in: *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, VIII, 275.

<sup>23</sup> See Shier-Jones, *Methodisch sein*, 182.

<sup>24</sup> *Book of Discipline*, II Doctrine, Nashville TN 1976, 41.

<sup>25</sup> The *Large Minutes* formed the basis for the first Book of Discipline. These were the fourth written document, apart from the Bible, the hymn book and the Service Book/text *Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*, that Wesley transmitted to the young American Methodist movement. See Richey, Russell E., *Die praktizierte Ekklesiologie des Methodismus*, in: Nausner, Michael (Edit.), *Kirchliches Leben in methodistischer Tradition. Perspektiven aus drei Kontinenten*, RTS Vol. 6, Göttingen 2010, 22.

laid down, formal legal texts, a conversation is dynamic, reacts quickly to altered circumstances and can be extended without problems to a larger circle of participants. Minutes of conversations show the course of the conversation and how particular decision came about, but also what other considerations and possibilities were discussed. In short, conversation is characterized by something that the Book of Discipline specifies as a feature of our theological task: it encourages critical and constructive thinking, individual and communal, contextual and incarnational, practical i.e. related to life.<sup>26</sup>

### 2.3 *The Constitution of the Methodist Movement as a Church*

After Wesley's death, the Methodist movement in England and/or as a result of the independence of the USA in America entered into a new phase, which also had an impact on the Book of Discipline. Whereas the Methodist movement had initially been an internal church society within the structures of the Anglican Church, based on that church's doctrinal standards and rules, it now broke away from the Anglican Church and constituted itself as an independent church.<sup>27</sup> One development connected with this was the formation of the General Conference in America, which meets every four years, and was originally composed of all members of the annual conferences, later (because the size had become unmanageable) only of delegates from the annual conferences. It was attempted to limit the growing power of the General Conference and to preserve the fundamental structure with the annual conferences as the basic units, by ensuring that at least basic decisions, such as changes of the constitution, had to be ratified by the annual conferences. In 1808 the General Conference passed a succession of rules which organized the work of the Conference. In this connection it also enacted the so-called "Restrictive Rules", which forbade it in the future, inter alia, to revoke or amend the Articles of Religion or to set up doctrinal rules which contradicted the current ones. It was also forbidden to revoke, amend or replace the Confession of Faith and the General Rules.<sup>28</sup> Frank observes that "these "Restrictive Rules" formed in effect the first constitution of the *Methodist Episcopal Church in America MEC*".<sup>29</sup> For the documents designated by the Restrictive Rules were also constituted by it as doctrinal standards. The motives for these Restrictive Rules need to be examined in more detail.

Occasional disputes caused Wesley to publish a Model Deed in 1763 as a binding standard for Methodist preaching ("*standard measure of Methodist preaching*"). This Deed contained the four volumes of his sermons, as well as his Notes on the New Testament. It became the basis of Methodist teaching and tradition in Great Britain, and also in the American colonies.<sup>30</sup>

Wesley equipped the American Methodists with various documents for their independence: the doctrinal standards were found initially only in the service book (*Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*), which also contained the Articles of Religion which were abbreviated by Wesley. In addition to these, as the rules of society structure, there were the General Rules, a hymn book as well as the adapted "Large Minutes". Admittedly Wesley's sermons and Notes continued to serve as a model and standard for Methodist interpretation and preaching. They were however not counted officially as part of the basic documents until after 1808.<sup>31</sup> Shier-Jones argues that

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<sup>26</sup> See KO, II Grundlagen, 37 et seq. Frank, Discipline, 249, observes a change of concept in recent years. Instead of talk or conversation, people speak of discussion, debate, dialog – concepts and/or forms which changed the conversation. For in a dialog, only two parties with two voices are talking to each other, instead of a plural number, and a debate promotes confrontation instead of understanding.

<sup>27</sup> Already in February 1784 John Wesley had drew up the so-called "*Deed of Declaration*" in order to give the Annual Conference in Great Britain a permanent order beyond his death. This unilateral declaration issued by Wesley had constitutional significance. In it he listed one hundred preachers who ought to form the Conference (the "*Legal Hundred*"), and 15 regulations for the conduct of the Conference. Teaching questions are not mentioned in it. See Heitzenrater, Richard P., Wesley and the People Called Methodists, Nashville 1995, 282ff.

<sup>28</sup> See BoD 2016, I Constitution, § 17 et seq., 7.

<sup>29</sup> Frank, Discipline, 251.

<sup>30</sup> See BoD, II Basic Principles, 12 et seq.

<sup>31</sup> Unlike the CCCSE in: Was bedeutet Bekenntnis für uns?, 1981, 3. This document assumes that the founding conference accepted the sermons and Notes.

this shift took place in particular because the society structure, which according to Shier-Jones had fundamentally borne the theological heritage of early Methodism, began to disintegrate.<sup>32</sup> This argument appears plausible to me, because it takes seriously the Methodist movement and its emphasis on practical piety on the basis of a fundamentally Christian-Methodist teaching as stated in the Articles of Religion, instead of specific teachings and teaching contents. The Methodist movement was concerned, as we have seen above, with a specific way of life and rules which encouraged that way of life. This was what made its special identity.

It must of course be said that the transition from a movement to a church also changed the function of the doctrinal standards. They now no longer served merely as doctrinal emphases for the sermon within a movement in the framework of a church, but as fundamental norms for Christian belief within a church.

## 2.4 Further Developments<sup>33</sup>

The changes in the Book of Discipline which were initiated in the course of constitution as a church, led to the Book taking on more and more characteristics of a church law. The characteristic question and answer form was given up, the Book of Discipline became more comprehensive and it began to regulate church practice right down to small details: "Church law clarified policy in areas once left to habitual practice or cultural assumptions."<sup>34</sup> What, for example, in the early days was described using the simple concept of a class meeting, is today given a chapter of its own about the local church community with detailed rules about church membership and the organization of the church community and its ministry. Whereas the vocation of a candidate for ministry in the church was originally examined by asking some questions, a comprehensive procedure is required today.

In the course of the decades the formerly catechism-like handbook for Methodist doctrine and work has grown to become a comprehensive set of rules which omits hardly any area. The church mergers of 1939 and 1968 also bear some responsibility for this. The intention was to ensure that the most important elements of each tradition were taken adequately into consideration in the new denomination. But the consciousness of the ecumenical dimension also left traces in the Book of Discipline.<sup>35</sup>

In 1934 the Methodist Episcopal Church South founded the first judicial council, the predecessor of the Judicial Council of the Methodist Church of 1939, which has consulted and decided about legal questions since then.<sup>36</sup> It is questionable how far this "supreme court" can be reconciled with the principle of Christian conferencing, as its function is to determine who is in the right and who is not.

## 2.5 Summary and Preliminary Conclusions

- The "setting in life" of the General Rules was originally the societies within the church. They organized life in the societies, but not the life of the church as a whole.
- The General Rules were not a law, but rather a rule of life, and as such represented instructions for a disciplined life in discipleship. Following them with commitment was not the result of obedience to law or of force, but a grateful re-action to God's gracious devotion.
- It was the reference to the General Rules and the joint following of the object behind them that held the various societies of Wesley's connexion together, and not their agreement regarding special teaching contents; in the early Methodist movement, practical piety based on the articles of religion was at the center, not particular teachings.

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<sup>32</sup> See Shier-Jones, *Methodisch sein*, 175.

<sup>33</sup> For more details, and up to the present, see Frank, *Discipline*, 252 et seq.

<sup>34</sup> Frank, *Discipline*, 253.

<sup>35</sup> See e.g. BoD 2016, I Constitution, § 7, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Vgl. AsKew Sally C., *A Brief History of the Judicial Council of the United Methodist Church*, in: *Methodist History*, 49:2, 2011 (<http://archives.gcah.org/handle/10516/1385>; 5.8.2019).

- The General Rules were so broadly and generally formulated in many areas of life that they had to be interpreted and contextualized in the societies in conversation together.
- The General Rules shaped the Methodist movement and identity as a fundamental document, and therefore implicitly form the basis of every Methodist "*Book of Discipline*". If this is forgotten, an important part of the foundation of the Methodist identity is broken off.
- As a means of grace, Christian conversation and holy conferencing connect the participants more closely to God.
- The communal conversation was not only the way in which solutions were found for open questions, but at a higher level it also trained the power of judgement of the participants, which is an important quality for growing in the knowledge of God.
- The results of the conferences did not flow into doctrine or church law texts, but were published in the form of questions and answers. The departure from this form was accompanied by a loss of openness and flexibility and no doubt also by a loss of the consciousness that convictions were clarified in conversation together, and the character of the Book of Discipline as a rigid church law increased.
- Mutual responsibility is a further feature of Christian conversation and of an "ordered" Christian life aimed at growth in sanctification.
- A good deal was also left to the standard practice and cultural circumstances in the early phase of independence as a Methodist church. The church's practice then began to be regulated more and more by provisions in the Book of Discipline.
- Doctrinal norms were fixed for the first time in 1808 with the "Restrictive Rules". Prior to this, the society structure with the General Rules and the Judicial Council had been sufficient as bodies responsible for Methodist theology and doctrine.
- In the course of the institutionalization of the church, which increased at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Book of Discipline took on the character of a church law more and more and it became more comprehensive and carried more weight in respect of church practice.

In view of the function and meaning of the Book of Discipline in Methodism from a historical perspective the preliminary conclusions are as follows:

A Methodist Book of Discipline

- is a rule of life which guides individual believers and a community of faith in an ordered life in the discipleship of Jesus Christ and in sanctification, and encourages them in their growth.
- enables and protects communal conversation and thus provides a framework in which the basic doctrines can be interpreted and put into concrete terms for the particular context, and questions of church practice and mission can be clarified.
- grants a free space for varying opinions and convictions on questions which do not relate to the core Christian beliefs.
- is founded on mutual responsibility and maturity of the believers and encourages these.
- is itself a means of grace.

### **3. The Book of Discipline's Self-Conception**

After I have outlined the origins, the most important roots and developments of the Book of Discipline in the preceding section, this section is devoted to the self-conception of the current Book of Discipline. What does it say itself about what it is and what it is not? What does it say itself about its purpose? What part of the preliminary conclusions stated above is reflected in it? Specifically, the following four subjects will be considered below in more detail:

- The Book of Discipline as a rule of life and guide to discipleship
- The Book of Discipline and Christian conversation
- The Book of Discipline and doctrine
- The Book of Discipline between openness/freedom and binding force



I base my remarks here on the BoD of 2016 and the adapted translation of the CC CSE of 2005, but also on older versions (1972/1976) and within these, in particular on Part II, *Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task*.

### *3.1 The Book of Discipline as a Rule of Life and Guide to Discipleship*

Bishop P. Streiff writes in the preface to the 2005 edition of the CC CSE BoD: "Anyone who takes the trouble to read the 2005 Book of Discipline will soon discover that it is essentially not a legal text, but a theologically based manual about how the United Methodist Church wishes to live its mission in responsibility before God and its members."<sup>37</sup> The Book of Discipline does indeed contain doctrinal standards and norms, but it observes in this connection that these are not the essence. Practical piety is paramount, life lived in love as Christians. This admittedly requires discipline.<sup>38</sup> The Book of Discipline invokes Wesley and his way of dealing with the General Rules: "Wesley rejected undue reliance upon these rules. Discipline was not church law; it was a way of discipleship"<sup>39</sup>. It should however be noted that our Book of Discipline cannot necessarily be compared with Wesley's rules for his societies. Their areas of application, and therefore also their purpose, are different.

Anyone who only reads the later pages of the Book of Discipline, such as those about organization and administration, could come to a different conclusion than Streiff. If these very legalistic paragraphs are looked at in isolation, the impression of a legislative text can certainly be given. But it is important to understand that the Book of Discipline does not contain only these parts, but also needs to be read and understood from the point of view of its theological and also historical foundations. This perspective changes the character of the other parts too. It makes it possible to recognize the Book of Discipline not so much as a written church law, but rather as a manual for the life of the church, as Streiff emphasizes. We need to bear this in mind, in order to avoid the danger of a one-sided legalistic application and thus the misinterpretation of the Book of Discipline. We would be succumbing to the latter if we were to misunderstand its discipline and doctrinal norms as "positive, juridical norms", "demanding unqualified assent on pain of excommunication. They are and ought to remain as important landmarks"<sup>40</sup>. They are landmarks that define a framework which allows space for conversation in the church community, during the course of which a consensus is reached or it is established that a diversity of opinions in certain questions does not have to endanger unity.

### *3.2 The Book of Discipline and Christian Conversation*

Where varying opinions are not only allowed, but welcome and encouraged – I return to this under section 3.3 – the conversation with one another is even more decisive for being able to hold on to unity and fulfilling the church's task jointly in spite of differing views on some questions. The Book of Discipline invites all church members to this conversation not only implicitly, through its conference structure, but also explicitly:

The United Methodist Church stands continually in need of doctrinal reinvigoration for the sake of authentic renewal, fruitful evangelism, and ecumenical dialogue. In this light, the recovery and updating of our distinctive doctrinal heritage—catholic, evangelical, and reformed—is essential. This task calls for the repossession of our traditions as well as the promotion of theological inquiry both within the denomination and in our ecumenical efforts. All are invited to share in this endeavor to stimulate an active interest in doctrinal understanding in order to claim our legacy and to shape that legacy for the Church we aspire to be.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> KO ZK MSE, Geleitwort des Bischofs.

<sup>38</sup> See BoD 2016, III Doctrinal Standards, 55.

<sup>39</sup> BoD 2016, III Doctrinal Standards, 55.

<sup>40</sup> BoD 1976, II Doctrine, 49 et seq.

<sup>41</sup> BoD 2016, III Doctrinal Standards, 65.

Schäfer refers to a passage in the Book of Discipline of 1976 which emphasizes the conciliar principle: the fathers of Methodism

declined to adopt any of the classical forms of the 'confessional principle' – the claim that the essence of Christian truth can, and ought to be, stated in precisely defined propositions, legally enforceable by ecclesiastical authority. Instead, they turned to a unique version of the ancient 'conciliar principle', in which the collective wisdom of living Christian pastors, teachers and people was relied upon to guard and guide their ongoing communal life.<sup>42</sup>

Since Wesley, the body responsible for this cooperative process has been called the *Conference* and used at all levels, from the level of the district up to the level of the global church. The conference "is both a consultative and legislative body, responsible for valid applications of church teaching and polity to theoretical and practical questions alike"<sup>43</sup>.

The mutual responsibility applied in the society structure from the early period, which was important for Wesley, became less important with the loss of the class meetings in the 19th century. However, it can still be found in the Book of Discipline. This is brought up in the section General Rules and Social Principles:

The Book of Discipline and the General Rules convey the expectation of discipline within the experience of individuals and the life of the Church. Such discipline assumes accountability to the community of faith by those who claim that community's support. Support without accountability promotes moral weakness; accountability without support is a form of cruelty.<sup>44</sup>

Part III *The Ministry of All Christians* invites all believers to take on the task and responsibility for carrying out the church's mission in love to God and their neighbors.

The conference system, with the annual conference as the basic body,<sup>45</sup> is not only laid down in the Book of Discipline, but also even *the* structural principle of our church, which has formed an important part of its identity since its origins in the founding period of the Methodist movement. Thus conversation in the society/church community is assigned a unique place with regard to questions of doctrine and church practice. Examples of failure at all levels show that it is necessary to struggle again and again to find ways in which holy conferencing can achieve the step from the revered theory to the reality of church practice, which is often shaped by overly earthly interests, and that Christian conversation must be learned and practiced.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.3 *The Book of Discipline and Doctrine*

The Book of Discipline contains, as historical, unchangeable doctrinal standards, the 25 Articles of Religion of the Methodist<sup>47</sup>, the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren Church with its 16 Articles<sup>48</sup> and the General Rules of the Methodist Church<sup>49</sup>. The further binding doctrinal standards include Wesley's Sermons as well as his Explanatory Notes on the New Testament.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> BoD 1976, II Doctrine, 41. See also Schäfer, Bekenntnis, 17.

<sup>43</sup> Loc. Cit., 41. The 1976 BoD instances the three original questions concerning doctrine, discipline and practice: What should we teach? How should we teach? What should we do?

<sup>44</sup> BoD 2016, III Doctrinal Standards, 55.

<sup>45</sup> It is important that the annual conference is the basic unit of the UMC. The UMC differs from churches structured in a congregationalist way by the fact that it is not the district conference which is the basic unit, and from churches structured hierarchically by the fact that it is not the General Conference that is the basic unit. In this connection, see CCCSE, Überlegungen zur Beziehung von Connexio und Autonomie in methodistischem Umfeld, 1995.2f.

<sup>46</sup> See on this the impulses by Field, David, Zu lieben sind wir da. Der methodistische Weg, Kirche zu sein, Leipzig 2018, 219 et seq., and also in more detail: Field, David, Bid Our Jarring Conflicts Cease. A Wesleyan Theology and Praxis of Church Unity, Nashville 2017, 151-165.

<sup>47</sup> See BoD 2016, III Doctrinal Standards, 65 et seq.

<sup>48</sup> See loc. cit., 72 et seq.

<sup>49</sup> See loc. cit., 77 et seq.

<sup>50</sup> See loc. cit., 64 et seq.; 77.

Because of the Restrictive Rules, the creation of new doctrinal standards and norms is limited. Notwithstanding this, it is recognized that "The United Methodist Church stands continually in need of doctrinal reinvigoration" and that means it also needs constant discussion about fundamental Christian truths.<sup>51</sup>

The Book of Discipline voices in various places the idea that the Methodists know that they are committed to the fundamental Christian truths. However it gives space for different opinions on questions of interpretation and form:

While it is true that United Methodists are fixed upon certain religious affirmations, grounded in the gospel and confirmed in their experience, they also recognize the right of Christians to disagree on matters such as forms of worship, structures of church government, modes of baptism, or theological explorations. They believe such differences do not break the bond of fellowship that ties Christians together in Jesus Christ. Wesley's familiar dictum was, "As to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think."<sup>52</sup>

The Book of Discipline of 1976, looking back to the founders of the Methodist movement, formulated it at this point as follows: "Their interest in dogma as such was minimal; thus they were able to insist on the integrity of Christian truth even while allowing for a decent latitude in its interpretation"<sup>53</sup>. After this there also followed the reference to the Wesley quotation given above. The version of 1976 regarded theological diversity and different views as allowable, not only in questions of form and structure, but also in questions of interpretation. It appears that at least on this point, a narrower understanding replaced the broader one. It would however be necessary to look at this in more detail. The expressions *religious tolerance* and *theological diversity* have at any rate remained up to today. Thus in the current Book of Discipline the subsequent paragraph reads:

But, even as they were fully committed to the principles of religious toleration and theological diversity, they were equally confident that there is a "marrow" of Christian truth that can be identified and that must be conserved. This living core, as they believed, stands revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal and corporate experience, and confirmed by reason. They were very much aware, of course, that God's eternal Word never has been, nor can be, exhaustively expressed in any single form of words.

They were also prepared, as a matter of course, to reaffirm the ancient creeds and confessions as valid summaries of Christian truth. But they were careful not to set them apart as absolute standards for doctrinal truth and error.

Beyond the essentials of vital religion, United Methodists respect the diversity of opinions held by conscientious persons of faith. Wesley followed a time-tested approach: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity."

The spirit of charity takes into consideration the limits of human understanding. "To be ignorant of many things and to be mistaken in some," Wesley observed, "is the necessary condition of humanity." The crucial matter in religion is steadfast love for God and neighbor, empowered by the redeeming and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>54</sup>

The diversity of theological views is necessary, states the Book of Discipline, because uniformity does not do justice either to the nature of the triune God or to the many voices of Biblical testimony. It is not only tolerated, but expressly welcomed and encouraged. The Book of Discipline differentiates here between Christian doctrinal standards, the so-called Essentials, and the unimportant matters, i.e. all other questions<sup>55</sup>. Even the binding and unchangeable doctrinal norms remain human formulations which can always only grasp and describe truth in a fragmentary

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<sup>51</sup> Loc. cit., 65.

<sup>52</sup> BoD 2016, III Doctrinal Standards, 56. The Wesley quote comes from Wesley, John, *The character of a Methodist*.

<sup>53</sup> BoD 1976, II Doctrine, 40. See also Schäfer, Franz W., *Bekenntnis und Freiheit in der Kirche. Ein Beitrag zum Selbstverständnis der Evangelisch-methodistischen Kirche im Gespräch mit den Konfessionskirchen*, Series: Methodismus in Dokumenten, 13, Zürich 1978, 16.

<sup>54</sup> BoD 2016, III Doctrinal Standards, 56 et seq.

<sup>55</sup> With regard to the difference between *doctrine* and *teaching*, see note 2.

way. It is therefore logical and, especially also with regard to the dispute about homosexuality, worth heeding what F. Schäfer writes: "In Methodism the individual articles were rarely used to define persons as heretics or to exclude them."<sup>56</sup> If the articles of religion were not misused for this, then how much less should this happen in respect of other, less fundamental truths.

Conclusion: although the Book of Discipline, by contrast with the position at the time of the foundation of the Methodist movement, lays down doctrinal standards for the church, it nevertheless does not see them as being set in stone. On the contrary, it states clearly that the theological standards make it absolutely necessary to re-interpret them for the particular place and time. Thus it keeps an important characteristic of Methodist rules alive.

### 3.4 *The Book of Discipline between Openness/Freedom and Binding Force*

The BoD describes its purposes in the following words: "The *General Book of Discipline* reflects our Wesleyan way of serving Christ through doctrine and disciplined Christian life. We are a worldwide denomination united by doctrine, discipline, and mission through our connectional covenant. The *General Book of Discipline* expresses that unity"<sup>57</sup>. The purpose of the Book of Discipline is the creation of a framework inside which church life is possible in association and unity as well as the effective fulfillment of the church's task. This can obviously not be done without rules – rules which help us to perform our joint function. But how open or how binding is the Book of Discipline? In the preface to the BoD of 2016, the bishops Ough, Carter and Harvey write: „We do not see the Discipline as sacrosanct or infallible, but we do consider it a document suitable to our heritage and an expression of a future with hope. It is the most current statement of how United Methodists agree to live their lives together"<sup>58</sup>. The UMC does not have a magisterium, but the conciliar process within the framework of the conferences for clarifying questions of discipline and doctrine. This process is never finished, but is started anew again and again by the transformation of time. In this sense the Book of Discipline is open, because it is part of an open development process. It is binding insofar as the participants in this process are jointly seeking a consensus and then submit to this on their own responsibility – if this is then the case.

With regard to the doctrinal standards, the Book of Discipline of 1976 speaks of a flexible framework: the object of giving doctrinal standards – it was specifically concerned with Wesley's Sermons and the Notes on the New Testament in 1763 –

was not to impose an inflexible system of doctrine or to inhibit responsible intellectual freedom, but rather to provide a broad and flexible framework of doctrine which would define the outside limits for public teaching in the societies in disputed cases. These standards were more flexible than any of the classical creeds or confessions or articles; they gave the Methodists a measure of protection from doctrinal eccentricity, and they gave Methodist laymen a new role in the assessment of doctrinal standards. This particular collegial formula for doctrinal guidance was unique in Christendom. It committed the Methodist people to the biblical revelation as primary without proposing a literal summary of that revelation in any single propositional form. It anchored Methodist theology to a stable core, but allowed it freedom of movement in the further unfoldings of history.<sup>59</sup>

The doctrinal standards are not positive, legalistic doctrinal norms which limit the freedom of belief and conscience, but represent important landmarks. They do not have the status of definitiveness of content and expression, but can, indeed must, be re-formulated and re-interpreted again and again, as we have seen. It is important to see this. Moreover, doctrinal statements or consent to the provisions of the Book of Discipline are to this day not criteria for membership of the UMC.

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<sup>56</sup> Schäfer, Bekenntnis, 13.

<sup>57</sup> BoD 2016, II General Book, § 101, 45.

<sup>58</sup> BoD 2016, Episcopal Greetings, V.

<sup>59</sup> BoD 1976, II Doctrine, 42 et seq.

### 3.5 Conclusions

Even if the Book of Discipline has gone through a large development in the course of the last 250 years and more, as is to be expected, it does also show in some characteristic features a surprising continuity, for example in the conversation in the society/church community, in the emphasis on mutual responsibility or in shaping an ordered Christian life with the object of growing in sanctification.

- The UMC's Book of Discipline of today, with its constitution, doctrinal standards and rules is to be understood not as a church law, but as a manual which by giving important landmarks and guidelines stakes out a framework which makes possible and orders the life and mission of the church and its members.
- Through the conferencing principle at all levels, the Book of Discipline protects and encourages the mutual responsibility of all church members and communal conversation with reference to questions of doctrine and church practice.
- The core Christian beliefs are admittedly set out in the doctrinal norms in the Book of Discipline. At the same time, however, the Book makes clear that it is essential to re-interpret these and re-formulate them in concrete terms again and again for the different and changing contexts. The conference structure provides the necessary tool for this.
- The Book of Discipline is subject to an open process of development. It allows free space for varying opinions on questions of teaching and church practice. It is based on the fact that church members use its guidelines to position themselves bindingly on their own responsibility or then initiate a renewed conversation process. As such, it is a document which encourages unity.

## 4. Challenges from a Cybernetic Perspective and Approaches to Dealing With Them

### 4.1 Using and Protecting the Free Space

There are two things here: one is the form of the Book of Discipline itself, the other is the question of how it is applied and lived in practice. Our influence on the former in our daily practice is much smaller, the latter is basically up to us. We have seen that the current Book of Discipline sets out guidelines which define a space. This space must be developed in the church's practice and filled with life. This free space must be used and formed in such a way that it serves the work of the life-creating spirit of God and thus serves the life of the church and the fulfillment of its task and does not impede this. Great care and vigilance is necessary here. In particular the General Conference and the central conferences bear a great responsibility for keeping the space open, but also for protecting it. It is threatened from the outside and from the inside!

In this connection a reference to the right to make adaptations: according to art. 31.5 of the Constitution and art. 543.7, Part VI Organization and Administration, the central conference has the right to adapt the Book of Discipline.<sup>60</sup> This right keeps the space open, and an important instrument for contextualization has been given to us here. In the new version of Part VI Organization and Administration, everything possible must be done so that a maximum of free space is retained for the adaptation of the Book of Discipline to the concrete situation in each case, in order to encourage a fruitful ministry in the future in the very different contexts.

### 4.2 Practicing Christian Conversation

The development during the last two and a half centuries is obvious: the style of the Book of Discipline is much more strongly orientated towards legal texts than in earlier versions.<sup>61</sup> Even if the

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<sup>60</sup> See BoD 2016, II General Book, § 101, 45. Excepted from this right are §§ 1-61; 101-105; 120-143; 160-166.

<sup>61</sup> Shier-Jones, *Methodisch sein*, 188, judges "that Methodist Discipline throughout Europe and America is no longer specifically aimed at individuals growing in grace and sanctification through the maintenance of spiritual

conversation-orientated approach has declined in significance, it is still not completely lost. The conference system still structures our church. Thus the conditions for both Christian conversation and for mutual responsibility are met. The Book of Discipline creates an enabling and protective framework and provides space (due to the fact that it has hitherto, or at any rate until the special session of the General Conference of February 2019, not definitively fixed *teachings*) to interpret and contextualize *doctrine*.

But how was this approach/how will this approach be lived in practice – at the level of the districts, the annual conferences, the central conferences and the General Conference? For the future, the question is: would Methodism be better served if the Book of Discipline had a more rigorous, more legalistic form, with a clear line on authority and doctrine? Or should forms be preferred and strengthened that encourage communal conversation, holy conferencing? My experience is that the trend is for the first alternative, at all levels. Clear answers are attractive for some people. A mature approach in questions of life as a believer and taking over responsibility, toleration of different opinions and the uncertainty involved in this, are challenging; mutual responsibility costs something.

Should the question be answered in favor of the conversation-orientated approach, then, on the other hand, it would be necessary to find ways at all levels as to how communal conversation can be practiced in mutual responsibility and made fruitful. It is not something that goes without saying, but is endangered, and it requires great attention and care. It will be best to start off at the level of the local church community, e.g. by forming or extending a small group structure. Also the district commissions and authorities and committees of the annual conference, even the sessions of the annual conference itself if there is careful planning, are practice fields. For experience shows: where people know each other, where sustainable relationships, and thus trust, have been built up over the years – for example in districts and annual conferences – then open conversation comes more easily. Where there are no such relations, Christian conferencing is almost impossible.<sup>62</sup> Whether conversation is possible and constructive, is not primarily a question of method, but of the relations of the participants – and of understanding as a means of grace which encourages the growth of sanctification of heart and life of the individuals and a community.<sup>63</sup>

### *4.3 Consciously Bearing in Mind the Original Meaning of the Book of Discipline*

The General Rules, as rules of the societies, are implicitly the basis of the Book of Discipline. As a rule of life, on the one hand they ordered the life of the societies, and on the other hand they also linked the societies which invoked them with Wesley's connexion. The societies were organized around these rules, in order to grow together in the Christian life.<sup>64</sup> We need consciously to bear in mind this origin and purpose of the Book of Discipline again and again. It is there to guide the members of the church and its church communities in their discipleship of Jesus Christ and fulfillment of the church's task. Anyone who reads the Book of Discipline and applies it in practice in this spirit is less likely to fall into the trap of legalism. And we must strive to see that our Book of Discipline remains in essence such a rule of life or, where it is no longer such a rule of life, that it becomes it again.

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responsibility. Instead, it became a legalistic means of protecting ecclesiastical orthodoxy and orthopractice<sup>65</sup>. I do not go so far in my evaluation, as I find that the responsibility aspect is still there. However, Shier-Jones demonstrates an area of tension in which we stand.

<sup>62</sup> On this point, see Weems, Lovett H. Jr., *General Conference is Broken; Annual Conferences Are Not*, <https://www.churchleadership.com/focus/general-conference-is-broken-annual-conferences-are-not>, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

<sup>63</sup> Christian conversation as a means of grace is, like prayer, a place in which God himself is brought into the experience, and in this way it has a dimension which forms the habitus of the believers and the community of believers. See Zürcher-Allenbach, Stefan, *Die formative Dimension des Gebets, Pastoraltheologische Grundlagen einer Gemeindepraxis aus methodistisch-wesleyanischer Perspektive*, Leipzig 2019, 259 et seq.

<sup>64</sup> See Frank, *Discipline*, 248.

#### *4.4 Dealing with Power – Transparent Processes for Opinion-Forming and Decisions*

Every church discipline has to do with power. It settles how power will be dealt with, by distributing and transferring power, by limiting the power of individuals and committees, and by providing for control procedures. Thus it sets out framework conditions within which power serves the fulfillment of the church's task, and provides protection against misuse of power, even though it can never completely prevent the latter. Important elements of this include the conference system with its mutual responsibility, the principle of parity between lay persons and ordained persons, the investiture of bishops, the ministry appointment system etc. Specific, but also always limited tasks, competencies and responsibilities are assigned to all participating persons and committees, and their full power only unfolds where there is interaction, i.e. they are in a position to influence people or a concrete situation in such a way that a fruitful ministry takes place through God's spirit. Attention must be paid at all levels to this interaction, which is regulated by the Book of Discipline. The agreement of e.g. common values, guiding principles, objects and measures is an effective way of doing this. Again, communal conversation plays the decisive role. However, the Book of Discipline itself, and the application and use of it, do not only determine the rules of the game for using power. They are themselves the means of exercising power which can also be misused for power games. However, if there is misuse of power, the Book of Discipline loses its serving character and thus its purpose. Misuse of power can occur in many different ways, as for example where groups attempt to use the conciliar process of determining or amending the Book of Discipline for asserting their own individual interests, or where the Book of Discipline, in a manner laid down in the provisions, prevents persons from listening to each other. Once again, Christian conversation must be contrasted with these forms of misuse of power. In particular, it is necessary to return to methods which encourage transparent processes for opinion-forming and decisions and, as far as possible, give consideration to the variety of views and convictions.

## **Comments of the Working Group on the Role and Meaning of the Book of Discipline for the Church and Life of the Community in The United Methodist Church from a Leadership Perspective**

At the September 2019 meeting of the Working Group for Theology and Ordained Ministry in Uster/Switzerland we discussed the nature of the Book of Discipline (BoD) based on an article Stefan Zürcher had written.

We honored the general direction of Stefan Zürcher's text in which he argues that the BoD has its roots in a rule of life rather than in a book of law. Its intention originally was to guide the members of the early Methodist movement how to live a holy life (or, as Wesley formulated it, "how to flee from the wrath to come"). Communal conversation and mutual responsibility were key aspects of such a rule of life. This means that the original text was more about rules people were invited to follow and less about laws they were obliged to follow. Historically this rule of life was given the name General Rules (do no harm, do good, use the means of grace) and was meant as a practical guideline for the early Methodist societies – both during their gatherings and in everyday life. They emphasized holy living rather than right doctrine. Holy conferencing became an expression for this way of structuring communal life. Through the centuries this early practical rule of life that was meant to aid people to grow in sanctification developed into a more a more detailed book of law. This development started in the late 18th century when the Methodist movement became a church and needed a church discipline. Already in 1763, the "Model Deed" defined the teachings that were to be the basis for Methodist preaching both in England and in America. But it was not before 1784 that the Deed of Declaration was adopted by the Methodists in England, and the Christmas Conference in the United States formed the Episcopal Methodist Church. In the early 19th century doctrinal standards were fixed, and in the 20th century a judicial council was installed. The original role of the General Rules as rules of living were overshadowed.

Is there a way to rediscover the roots of the BoD as a means of grace, i.e. a rule of life for spiritual growth that protects and promotes communal life, and leaves free space for various opinions and expressions? The BoD understands itself as an aid for discipleship that develops confessional principles in a conciliar way. It relies on the accountability and mutual support of church members. The theological standards in the BoD indicate that continuous doctrinal reinvigoration is needed, something that cannot happen without communal conversation and mutual listening. Bishops Ough, Carter, and Harvey highlight the BoD as result of continuous conversation when they define it as a "statement of how United Methodists agree to live their lives together." This is an open-ended process partly regulated by restrictive rules.

If we take the more than 250 years of development into consideration, we want to emphasize that the BoD is an expression of

- unity amidst varying views
- conversation in community
- mutual responsibility
- guidance to help the community to grow in sanctification.

As a governing tool with serving character, the BoD therefore needs to be utilized to

- protect the free space of communities to be filled with concrete life



- aid Christian conversation
- continue the original purpose of the General Rules which is to foster sanctification
- regulate the use of power so that it serves the whole church and not only special interest groups

With this in mind, today we continuously need to negotiate what the BoD as a book of law means. What is "law" in the strict sense for us Methodists? How do we understand the wording "General Conference is the Law Making Body..." both theologically and practically? What does it mean in Central Conference where large parts of this "law" does not apply and where the BoD not even is available in the native languages? It needs to be available in native languages whether we understand it as a book of law or a rule of life. A key challenge is how to translate "conversation/conferencing" into "discipline".

We are not sure that we have a common ground in the current situation for the exercise of democratic procedures. May holy conferencing be a way to find and recover common ground in a situation of democratic crisis? While we strongly support democratic procedures, we find ourselves today in a situation in which majority votes on certain issues alone do not seem to lead to peaceable solutions. At conferences we need more time and space for conversation, to listen to each other. Where is the space for people who are in a minority to speak? Where is such a space at conferences without being forced to vote? Where is the balance between holy conferencing and voting? How to make space for close relationships to develop in a large church? 1729 the Holy Club helped people practically and prayed with and for them. Where do progressives and traditionalists help each other and pray for and with each other?

## Elements of a theology of marriage - Draft

1. As the Working Group for Theology and Ordained ministries we see marriage as a particular form of relationship between two people. It is an expression of God's good creation and part of the history of God's loving and blessing interaction with people and the world. The divine intention for humanity and God's covenant action as aspects of God's creating of shalom form the foundation of the theological understanding of marriage outlined in this document.
2. God as Creator created the human beings in *his image*, as man and woman. God revealed this image in Jesus Christ. In him God showed his being, which is love. We correspond to our vocation as human beings if we let God renew us and transform us into the image of Jesus Christ. In this way we become more like God and, even if only fragmentarily, participate in God's being, live out of God's love, and love God and our neighbours like ourselves.
3. The fundamental characteristic of our bearing the image God is our *relatedness*: We are created for relationship with God, then for relationship with our fellow human beings, with ourselves and with the rest of creation, knowing that relationships in itself are not the goal.

The relationship with God is described in the Bible as a *covenant*: By grace, God binds God-self to us and at the same time calls us to live according to God's nature and will. To fulfil this vocation is our response and our responsibility.

As social and interdependent beings, we are created to live in partnership with others. The Bible says: It is not good for the human being to be alone. We are therefore called to be there for each other and to care for each other. Through this mutual interdependence we are also firmly integrated into the culture in which we live.

4. God created the human race as gendered, *sexual beings*, male and female, reports the author of the 1st creation narrative. Sexuality is part of God's good creation. It is an expression of God's intention that our humanity should unfold in relationships. Sexual intimacy can be an expression of a particularly close relationship between people. When it is, it creates a physical, psychological, spiritual and social bond between them that can strengthen and deepen their relationship. Sexuality can be related with reproduction. The power of sexuality has the potential for good and evil.
5. In sections 2 to 4 we have described the creatureliness of humanity and its destiny. Now we put them in the broader context of God's action as the creation of shalom. God's will and purpose for the world is *shalom* (Luke 2:14). The following aspects seem to be important:
  - Shalom as well-being, prosperity, happiness, then wholeness and integrity (including the physical dimensions = health, fertility) of the individual and the human world, the whole world and the whole creation.
  - Shalom is an unconditionally positive state in/of the world, because it is "ordered" in all areas and therefore "in order" and life-enabling, because structured conditions prevail.
  - Shalom in the here and now with its:
    - personal, individual dimension, which allows the individual person to be at peace with himself/herself

- the social dimension, which includes political freedom, economic well-being, and social justice, so that life can unfold and people can live in reconciled relationships with one another
  - the ecological dimension, including the preservation of creation and the stewardship of natural resources
  - spiritual dimension, which includes a salvific, liberating relationship with God, which already now, albeit fragmentarily, makes it possible for people and their community to participate in a full and holistic existence
- Shalom is created and guaranteed by God alone, but obscured in the here and now under its opposite again and again as a consequence of human guilt. In celebrating and praising God we become aware of who the source of shalom is and allow ourselves be taken into shalom and to be filled by it. Together we learn to live according to the God's wholesome and saving principles for the world; let ourselves be equipped as peacemakers; and be sent by God into everyday life.
  - Shalom is a fundamental characteristic of the new creation which is to come and which has dawned in Jesus Christ. For believers, shalom is already the basis and yardstick for their relationship to the world and for their actions in the world.

God grants shalom, i.e. an order that enables life, by making a covenant with us human beings. This covenant and thus the shalom granted by God who guards and sustains our relationship with God and in all our relationships with each other. We are called to live according to this order of peace and to be peacemakers. Our works of piety and mercy are an expression of this.

6. *Good relationships* promote the shalom of God, i.e. God's life-promoting order in the world:

- Through good relationships, people and communities flourish. People flourish because they are not alone, but are partners and companions in a variety of relationships; they are there for each other and for others. They also flourish because they are connected with each other as God's co-workers in God's ministry.
- Good relationships are permeated by God's creative love. People who are filled with God's love contribute as good stewards to the care of and preservation of creation. As co-designers, they shape the appearance of the earth and give new life to it through reproduction.
- Through good relationships between sisters and brothers a part of God's new creation is already flourishing here and now. In the community of the Body of Christ, people are strengthened and nourished.

All people, whether single or in partnerships, can be each other's companions, they can shape such relationships, and experience how they and others flourish and find fulfilment through these diverse relationships. Where such flourishing and fulfilment is visible in and through relationships, God is present and we have reason to praise God.

7. *Jesus' attitude* towards people, his behaviour, and his actions were deeply rooted in and grew out of his relationship with God. In his relationships we see how God envisages relationships. Characteristics of such relationships are: self-giving love, mercy and forgiveness, commitment and faithfulness, loyalty, sincerity, equality and reciprocity in terms of care,

protection and respect, and the desire that others may flourish and unfold in and through this relationship.

It should be noted that these characteristics vary in different relationships depending on the persons involved (e.g. parent-child relationship, superior - subordinate, marriage...). But in principle we are called to orient ourselves in our relationships to these characteristics, to learn from Jesus Christ and from one another, and to practice them. At the same time, we are aware that we live in a fallen world. The shalom granted by God is always hidden under its opposite - in our relationships as well. That is why there are disturbances and fractures in relationships. But we live from the mercy and forgiveness of Christ. From this we draw the strength and the ability to live mercifully and forgivingly ourselves, and to dare and make possible new beginnings again and again.

8. There are many forms of relationships between people. *Marriage* is only one of them, albeit a special one. The liturgy speaks of marriage as a gift of God and as a holy, lifelong covenant. Its peculiarity manifested by the fact that the Bible uses marriage of a man and woman as an image of God's covenant with his people or for the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church. It should be noted, however, that, according to Paul, not only marriage, but also being single is a charism and must therefore be valued just as much.

Like all relationships between people, marriage should show the characteristics listed above. Furthermore, it is intended to be permanent and exclusive (monogamy). In it two people unite of their own free will with body, heart, spirit and soul. Their relationship with the triune God enables them to be companions for one another in love, trust, care and tenderness, to inspire and encourage one another. Marriage is also the place for sexual intimacy and the space in which children can be raised. Such marriages strengthen families, build Christian community, and support human society.

Marriages also suffer from the fact that God's shalom is always hidden under discord. Marriages break up, partners separate and get divorced. Some divorcees remain single, others marry again. Some divorced mothers and fathers have to carry the parental duties alone. This makes it all the more important for them to have viable relationships in which they experience other people, who accompany them and help them to accomplish what needs to be done.

9. The form and understanding of marriage are always also an expression of particular times and cultures and are subject to constant development. Already in the Bible – and even more so outside it – we find manifold forms of marriage of man and woman, some of them side by side: monogamy, polygamy, marriages with concubines, levirate marriages, etc. There is no normative binding form of marriage in the Bible, and in the course of the centuries it has changed continuously - and very differently depending on the context. In contemporary context the legal position of women is clearly different from when they were seen as property. Marriage is no longer a contract arranged under private law between two families, but a state-recognised legal form which married couples can have confirmed in the church.
10. As a result of the social changes in recent decades, the question of *same-sex* marriage has become the focus of discussion in Western European and North American societies. There is a diversity of convictions diverge, in the church as well, especially in a worldwide one like ours. Some hold the view that a marriage can only be concluded between a woman and a

man. Others are of the opinion that marriages can also be concluded between two adult persons<sup>1</sup>, thus also persons of the same-sex.

Even the opinions in our working-group differ on this question. For some, a same-sex marriage combined with a church wedding is conceivable, indeed the possibility of this is desirable or should be worked for. For the others, marriage is marriage only as a union of man and woman.

11. We propose to examine whether it would be helpful for our continuing together in our Central Conference to treat both forms of partnership, those between man and woman and those between man and man or woman and woman, in the same way, but not with the same term, i.e. to apply the term "marriage" only to the partnership between man and woman and to look for another term for the same-sex partnership. This could perhaps further the discussion within the Church.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Excluded are marriages between siblings, parent - child, grandparent - grandchild.

<sup>2</sup> As an example, I refer to the proposal of Andreas Krebs. He proposes to speak of the „sacrament of the covenant of life“, distinguishing marriage between man and woman as one manifestation of the covenant of life, and same-sex partnership as another (cf. in the book mentioned below, 134). On the question of the blessing of same-sex partnerships, compare the theological debate in the Old Catholic Church in Germany, in: Krebs, Andreas/Ring, Matthias (Hg.): Mit dem Segen der Kirche. Die Segnung gleichgeschlechtlicher Partnerschaften in der theologischen Diskussion, Bonn 2018.

## 2

### Working Group Liturgy

#### 1. Preliminary remark

We received no response to the questions we asked in our previous report. Our Working Group was frustrated to receive so little reaction to our report and the results of our intensive work (the film, guidelines for pilot projects, etc.).

#### 2. Activities in the year under review

The working group met on September 11-12, 2019 in Freienstein, Switzerland. Stefan Weller took part in the worship group meeting of the Germany CC on October 24-25, 2019 in Kassel.

#### 3. Mandate Central Conference 2021

Stefan Zolliker (Chairman of the Committee for Church Music and Liturgy of the AC CH-F-NA), in collaboration with Esther Handschin, will be responsible for the worship celebrations at the Central Conference 2021 in Basel.

#### 4. Cooperation with the German section

##### 4.1 Website

The website [www.emk-gottesdienst.org](http://www.emk-gottesdienst.org) will continue to be developed jointly. We are no longer planning an English language version.

##### 4.2 European Worship Forum

A European Worship Forum in English and German is planned for autumn 2022. Erika Stalcup, Esther Handschin and Stefan Weller are taking part in the preparation.

#### 5. Promotion of holy communion

##### 5.1 Translations from the Book of Worship

The interchangeable parts from the BoW have been translated into Czech and German. For the use of the German translations the permission of the Publishing House (USA) and ZK MSE must be obtained.

##### 5.2 Liturgies in common language

German-language Communion liturgies in common language, i.e. according to the criteria of the translation of the Basisbibel, are in progress. They establish thematic and ecclesiastical seasonal priorities.

#### 6. Pilot projects

We have received reports of two pilot projects: Romanshorn (Switzerland) and Vienna-Floridsdorf (Austria)

#### 7. Personnel changes

Sylvia Minder, Peter Caley and Stefan Weller will end their participation in the Working Group for CC 2021. Esther Handschin, Erika Stalcup and Jana Křížova will continue to be available. The Executive Committee is requested to propose or nominate new members.

*Basel, January 13, 2020*

*Stefan Weller*

### **3**

## **Working Group Church Discipline and Legal Affairs**

The Working group did not receive any specific tasks to work on from the Executive Committee. That is why the Working Group did not hold any meetings so far.

The Working Group consists of following members:

Petr Procházka (CZ)

Serge Frutiger (CH)

Wilfried Nausner (AT – MK/AL)

Daniel Topalski (BG) – Chair

*Daniel Topalski*

*January 2019/20*

### **4**

## **Working Group Church and Society**

There is no report from the Working Group in this year.

## 5

# Working Group Children and Youth

## 1. General

The Working Group for Children and Youth met 3.10.2019 during the EMYC Council Meeting in Skopje(Macedonia).

Present were: Martin Obermeir-Siegrist (Austria), Orsi Sztupkai (Youth Worker, Hungary), Sára Csernák, (Youth Delegate, Hungary), Maria Sonnleithner (Translator, Austria), Caro Berger (Youth Worker, France), Simona Tancheva (Youth Delegate, Macedonia), Daniel Kułakowski (Youth Worker, Poland), Boris Fazekas (Youth Worker, Serbia), Pavol Absolon (Youth Worker, Slovakia), Vítězslav Rybár (Substituted Youth Worker, Czech Republic), Milan Stefanova (Guest, Bulgaria), Irena Stefanova (Children's Worker, Bulgaria)

Excused | Entschuldigt: Daniela Stoilkova (Youth Worker, Macedonia) is coming late, Anežka Chlupáčková (Youth worker, Czech Republic)

Not attending: Switzerland, Rumania?, Albania?

## 2. Meeting of the CC Working Group

### 2.1 Exchange

The Delegates exchanged ideas about Safeguarding Policies and encouraged each other in their work.

### 2.2 New Co-Chair

Martin Obermeir-Siegrist step down as a co-chair, Irena Stefanova *was elected as a co-chair of the Working Group who will support Boris. Boris will still be part of the EMYC Executive and CC meetings while Irena will help him with office work.*

## 3. DMYP

Division on Ministry with young people consist of youth, young adults and youth leaders from all around the world. It connects people, exchanges ideas and experiences from different countries and takes part in organizing the Global Convocation. The plan for the new quadrennium of the DMYP: delegates will be minimized. The whole of Europe can send 3 delegates. May 2020, after General Conference, the new plan will be voted on and we will know how many delegates we can actually send.

Delegates have to be professing UMC member interested in global church (maybe even have knowledge on the global church structure), fluent in English language, able to get off work/school at least 5 days (annual DMYP meetings normally end of July), and will be able to get a Visa to the US. Commitment is four years. The DMYP sends representatives to different church boards, which could mean additional days of traveling to other boards, if elected through the DMYP. The UMC pays for all expenses. It is a really big commitment but also very rewarding. Everybody is asked to make suggestions for delegates.

## Extra Meeting 6.10.19

The Central Conferences in Europe have set up a rotation system on who is sending, which delegate. Germany is sending this quadrennium (2020-2024) a Youth, Norther Europe and Eurasia is sending the Young Adult and Central and Southern Europe is sending the Adult Worker. Next quadrennium (2024-2028) Germany is going to send the Young Adult, NEE Adult Worker and CSE the Youth. And the quadrennium after that (2028-2032) Germany is going to send the Adult



Worker, NEE the Youth and CSE the Young Adult. Then it will repeat unless something changes in the Book of Discipline.

DMYP	2020-2024	2024-2028	2028-2032
Germany	Youth	Young adult	Youth worker
CSE	Youth worker	Youth	Young adult
NEE	Young adult	Youth worker	Youth

The CC CSE working group has nominated and voted for Tsvetan Iliev from Bulgaria to be the delegate to the DYMP for the coming quadrennium.

#### **4. EMYC Council Meeting**

The traditional process of the council continues: After we had a new Bishop Eduard Khegay from last year, we had this time to say goodbye to the secretary of the EMYC Emma Weaver. We are grateful for all the love she put into the work of EMYC. The new secretary is Roxanne Bainbridge.

#### **5. Various**

The next meeting of the Working Group is scheduled for the EMYC Council Meeting coming up September 2020.

*February 2020, Borislav Fazekas*

## 6

# Working Group Women's Work

## Review

### 1. Working Group (WG) Women's Work

Our main task in 2019 was to prepare and hold the Central Conference (CC) Seminar combined with the Consultation in Budapest on 3-7 October.

### 2. Leadership development

Events or activities financially supported by the WG Women's Work took place in North Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary and France.

In Poland there will be a change in the national leadership of the Women's Work in 2020. After many years of commitment, Bozena Daszuta will pass on her leadership role to younger women. We have already been able to meet four of them at the CC Seminar in Budapest.

### 3. Language Courses

In 2019, we financed a language course for only one woman from Serbia and one woman from North Macedonia. We notice that today many young women are already learning English in school. Alternatively, in the future the financial support could be extended to vocational training for young women.

### 4. Central Conference Seminar/Consultation in Budapest from 3 to 7 October 2019

The integration of the CC-Seminar and the Consultation has proved successful. 50 women from all the countries of our CC, except Algeria and Belgium, participated in this seminar. There was a great need to see each other and to share with each other.

As a speaker, Wendy Johnston from Ireland led us impressively and vividly through the topic of „storytelling“.

During the **business meeting**, the opportunity was taken to discuss with each other about matters that specifically concern our Women's Work and to consciously listen to each other. Fortunately, the time planned for this was far too short. Three topics should be mentioned:

1. The future of Women's Work in the CC CSE: Whatever decisions are made in the GC 2020 or CC 2021, the future composition of our CC CSE will be discussed anew.

Therefore, the following intention was clearly formulated and supported by all the women present:

#### **Whatever happens, we stay together.**

Motivation:

We want to support each other. This mutual support is unique to us. We need it.

We are not focused on what divides us, but on what unites us.

In doing so, we are dependent on direct encounters between each other.

These encounters and the resulting deep connections are good for us, encourage us and we enjoy it.

The relationship with women from other cultures and life circumstances has a positive effect on our faith. These relationships help us to develop personally, our opinions and the work with and for women in our church.

Future scenarios in case of a split of our CC were discussed. For example, we could imagine maintaining the current structure of Women's Work (WG Women's Work, Women Seminar, Consultation, Coordinator) as a part of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW).

2. Time and energy must be invested to build and deepen relationships. However, our resources are limited. Women are reaching their limits in their involvement in family, church and work. Therefore we want to use more synergies in terms of finances and effort. We are mainly thinking of continuing to integrate the consultations into the CC Seminars or into the Area Seminars of the WFMUCW.

3. Nevertheless, it is also important for us to support each other during the time between the seminars. However, this depends above all on the individual commitment of each woman.

## **Outlook**

**1. Europe/Eurasia Women's Leadership Gathering - 23-24 October 2020 in Munich/Germany.**

The Women's Leadership Gathering is the Europe/Eurasia Regional Consultation, bringing together women leaders of the United Methodist Church across the region to explore ways of impacting church and society.

It is sponsored by United Methodist Women, National Office based in New York and United Methodist Women-Frauenwerk/UMC Germany. Women from our CC will participate.

**2. CC women seminar and Consultation**

We, as WG Women's Work plan to hold the next CC Seminar in spring 2022. There we will discuss our future togetherness as women after the decisions of the GC in 2020 and the CC in 2021.

## **Thanks**

Women are strong and brave. But they need support, even if they don't fight for it. In the Church they are always open to serve. But ministry to serve others is not only "women's work" – it's human work. That's why we want to thank everyone who supports women in their everyday life, in the church, family life and in the social context. Serving God and other people is a great challenge and thanks to community and joint action, we can build each other. Even if we differ, despite different views, we can do good to others together. Thanks that ministry we all together are closer to God and His Love.

*February, 2020*

*Monika Zuber, Barbara Büniger*

## Statement Consultation of Women's Work of the Central Conference CSE in October 2019

Because of a possible split of the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe as a result of the decisions of the General Conference of our church 2020 the women from Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, Austria, Slovakia, Czech Republic, France and Switzerland formulated the following statement:

### **Whatever happens, we stay together.**

We want to support each other. This mutual support is unique to us. We need it.

We are not focused on what divides us, but on what unites us.

In doing so, we are dependent on direct encounters between each other.

These encounters and the resulting deep connections are good for us, encourage us and we enjoy it.

The relationship with women from other cultures and life circumstances has a positive effect on our faith. These relationships help us to develop personally, our opinions and the work with and for women in our church.

Manika Zuber

Lakatos Lilla

Julia Slavik  
Maria Vinag

Ligia Vadiazzi

Magd Weller

E. Steiger

R. Gail B. Feat

Brigitte Hetschi  
V. Brunner

## 7

### Working Group Episcopacy

The Working Group Episcopacy met on March 12, 2020 before the opening of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central Conference CSE in Vienna. Helene Bindl, Daniel Sjanta and Jörg Niederer were present on site, Desislava Todorova, Stefan Rendoš and Henrik Schauer mann took part in the conference from home. We had no information from Andrzej Malicki.

Two priorities were set:

1. The new created list of electable elders for nomination was discussed. The explanatory letter accompanying it was also approved. Both documents are now being presented to the Executive Committee of the Central Conference. The nomination process was also discussed again. A nomination paper is created for the actual nominations, which should then also be submitted for translation into the local languages.

For the evaluation of the nomination, we provide for the special meeting of the Executive Committee in November 2020. In this way, the Working Group of Episcopacy would not have to come together, which saves travel costs. As planned, however, the nominees will not be informed until January 2021.

2. The conversation took place with the bishop. Both Patrick and Heidi Streiff are healthy and well. We are all very grateful for that.

He needs a lot of strength for the developments in questions about dealing with homosexuality. The unity of the church is very important to him. He is experiencing a lot of trust, but lately there has been increased distrust. Some suspect that he has a specific agenda.

It is important to him to accompany people in the various conferences in such a way that they can listen to one another and thus also learn to understand the attitudes of others. Bishop Patrick Streiff: *"I really try to be the bishop of everyone."*

The bishop's workload does not change much. There are shifts in the individual areas.

The question was asked what influence the corona virus has on its work. The various restrictions in the individual countries not only lead to absences and postponements here at the Executive Committee. The bishop responds to this with greater flexibility. All Annual Conferences in May and June are uncertain. It is also not certain whether the General Conference will take place in May. In any case, the one-month entry ban for Europeans to the USA that was decided today would already have ended.

Another question for the bishop was, what would happen if no new bishop could be elected in 2021. Then the bishop's council would probably appoint a supervisory person until the election can take place at a later date.

There have been two changes within the Working Group in the past two years. At this meeting, the election of the following persons should be made up for.

- Daniel Sjanta (RS-MK) and Stefan Rendoš (CZ-SK)

#### **Motion to the Executive Committee:**

**Daniel Sjanta and Stefan Rendoš are elected to the Working Group Episcopacy.**

Finally, the members of the Working Group prayed in their languages for the bishop, the church, the sick, the governments and the Central Conference.

*Jörg Niederer, March 12, 2020*

Liste der ordinierten Ältesten in voller Verbindung 2020 in der Zentralkonferenz von Mittel- und Südeuropa  
List of ordained Elders in Full Connection 2020 in the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe

Delegiert an die ZK 2021 / Delegated to the CC 2021	Name	Vorname / First Name	Jährliche Konferenz Annual Conference	Geburtsjahr / Year of Birth	Aufnahme in volle Verbindung / Admission to Full Connection	aktuelle Dienstzuweisung / Current Appointment	Erfahrungen in der ... / Experience in the ...	
							Zentralkonferenz / Central Conference	weltweiten Kirche / Global Church
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bach	Markus	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1963	1993	Bäretswil-Uster-Dübendorf / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Baier	Esther	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1961	2007	Bern / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Balovski	Lila	Serbien-Mazedonien	1961	2002	Jabuka / RS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bartos	Jozef	Polen	1968	1996	Superintendent Distrikt Süd und Krakow / PL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bator	Jaroslav	Polen	1965	2019	Pulawy, Lublin / PL	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Baumann	Urs	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1960	2017	Affoltern a. A. / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Becher	Nicole	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1968	2011	Frauenfeld-Weinfelden / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bestrzynski	Sebastian	Polen	1970	2019	Koszalin und Slupsk / PL	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Brankov	Novica	Serbien-Mazedonien	1977	2009	Novi Sad / RS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes

\* = Ersatzdelegierte / Alternate delegate

Delegiert an die ZK 2021 / Delegated to the CC 2021	Name	Vorname / First Name	Jährliche Konferenz Annual Conference	Geburtsjahr / Year of Birth	Aufnahme in volle Verbindung / Admission to Full Connection	aktuelle Dienstzuweisung / Current Appointment	Erfahrungen in der ... / Experience in the ...	
							Zentralkonferenz / Central Conference	weltweiten Kirche / Global Church
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Brunner-Wyss	Andrea	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1966	2006	Kloten-Glattbrugg / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Büchmeier	Sven	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1962	1995/2002	Basel-Ost / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Büniger	Matthias	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1965	1998	Thun / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Caley	Peter G.A.	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1956	1991	Embrachertal / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Calugar	Rares	Bulgarien-Rumänien	1980	2018	Superintendent und Cluj- Napoca / RO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chahinian	Grégoire	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1954	2005	Colmar / FR	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Da Rugna	Markus	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1969	2005	Aarau / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dabrowski	Waldemar	Polen	1967	unk.	Katowice / PL	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Daneckova	Jana	Tschechien-Slowakei	1977	2011	Brno / CZ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Déjardin	Joël	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1965	2012	Metz / FR	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dimov	Marjan	Serbien-Mazedonien	1977	2011	Superintendent und Strumica / MK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Đurovka-Petraš	Maria	Serbien-Mazedonien	1983	2013	Pivnice / RS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Eggert	Waldemar	Polen	1964	unk.	Superintendent Distrikt Masuren sowie Ostroda,	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes

Delegiert an die ZK 2021 / Delegated to the CC 2021	Name	Vorname / First Name	Jährliche Konferenz Annual Conference	Geburtsjahr / Year of Birth	Aufnahme in volle Verbindung / Admission to Full Connection	aktuelle Dienstzuweisung / Current Appointment	Erfahrungen in der ... / Experience in the ...	
							Zentralkonferenz / Central Conference	weltweiten Kirche / Global Church
						Lukta, Slonecznik und Lipowo / PL		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Ehoussou	Catherine	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1957	2017	Paris-Résurrection und Paris-Jérusalem / FR	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Eschbach	Daniel	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1965	1994	Adliswil-Zürich 2 / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Eschler	Werner	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1957	1996	Schlatt / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Etter	Daniel	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1957	1987	Region Oberraargau / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fankhauser	Matthias	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1967	2008	Bereichsleitung Gemeindeentwicklung und «Kirche anders» / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fazekaš	Vladimir	Serbien-Mazedonien	1983	2017	Šid / RS	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Fietkau	Klaus	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1963	1965	Belp / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Forster	Christina	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1971	2016	Basel-Kleinbasel / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Friedrich	Sigmar	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1969	1999	Redaktor «Kirche und Welt» / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Frutiger	Serge	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1974	2008	Superintendent Distrikt Nordostschweiz / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gumbal	Peter	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1959	1998	Region Zimmerberg / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gyurkó	Donát	Ungarn	1988	2017	Szekszard / HU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes

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							Zentralkonferenz / Central Conference	weltweiten Kirche / Global Church
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hagen	Christian	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1977	2017	Herisau / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hajdune Csernak	Erzsebet	Ungarn	1959	1996	Nyiregyhaza / HU	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Handschin	Esther	Österreich	1968	2004	Wien-Florisdorf und Wien- Fünfhaus / AT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Haslebacher	Claudia	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1966	1996	Superintendent Berner Distrikt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Hecker	Marton	Ungarn	1965	1991	Dombovar / HU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hostettler	Andy	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1957	2011	Rothrist / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hradsky	Pavel	Tschechien-Slowakei	1957	2007	Pizen 3 Husova / CZ	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hruby	Ctirad	Tschechien-Slowakei	1968	2016	Mikulov / CZ	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Hug	Ernst	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1969	1997	Lyss-Aarberg / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Iliev	Cvetan	Bulgarien-Rumänien	1984	2019	Pleven / BG	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Istrate	Cristian	Bulgarien-Rumänien	1984	2019	Sibiu / RO	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jaeschke	Marco	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1965	2010	Beurlaubung (Art. 354 KO) / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jende	Annegret	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1986	2018	Eschlikon / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Johanus	Stephan	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1961	2013	Zürich-Ost / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes

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							Zentralkonferenz / Central Conference	weltweiten Kirche / Global Church
<input type="checkbox"/>	Khaled Abdo	Laszlo	Ungarn	1979	2013	Superintendent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kleiner	Markus	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1969	2006	Rüti-Wald-Hombrechtikon / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Klusek	Krzysztof	Polen	1972	2014	Chodziej und Czarnkow / PL	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kocev	Pavle	Tschechien-Slowakei	1968	2015	Sered / SK	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Koch	Stephan	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1962	2009	Evangelische Kirche Ermatingen / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kohli	Philipp	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1983	2017	Bäretswil-Uster-Dübendorf / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Kömives-Francisti	Svetlana	Tschechien-Slowakei	1975	2005	Michalovce / SK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kopacz	Krzysztof	Polen	1971	unk	Ilawa, Siemiany und Glaznoty / PL	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kopas	Gabriella	Tschechien-Slowakei	1976	2015	Bratislava Elim / SK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Kovacs	Zoltan	Ungarn	1977	2011	Miskolc / HU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kuchynka	Pavel	Tschechien-Slowakei	1970	2001	Pizen 1 Lochotin / CZ	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kurdi	Zoltan	Ungarn	1964	2005	Pecs / HU	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Lee	Beyong Koan	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1963	2010	Mulhouse / FR	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lewicki	Pawel	Polen	1973	unk.	Wisla und Bielsko Biala / PL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Malicki	Andrzej	Polen	1963	unk.	Leitender Superintendent und Warschau / PL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes

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							Zentralkonferenz / Central Conference	weltweiten Kirche / Global Church
<input type="checkbox"/>	Matter	Thomas	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1962	1991	Interlaken / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maurin	Pascal	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1961	2005	Mont-de-Marsan / FR	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Minder	Hans-Peter	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1965	1999	Bülach-Oberglatt / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Minder	Sylvia	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1965	2007	Bülach-Oberglatt / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Moll	Stefan	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1961	1992	Baden + Fresh Expression / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Morata	Daniel	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1974	2017	Agen und Fleurance / FR	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Morris-Ivanova	Jessica	Bulgarien-Rumänien	1974	2018	Schumen / BG	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Morunov	Ivan	Bulgarien-Rumänien	1956	2004	Veliko Tarnovo / BG	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Moser	Brigitte	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1977	2011	Klingenberg-Kreuzlingen / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Myslinski	Adrian	Polen	1988	2017	Tarnow / PL	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nausner	Michael	Österreich	1965	1994	Senior Researcher, Uppsala	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Niederer	Jörg	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1959	1989	St. Gallen-Teufen / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Niedziedzinski	Sebastian	Polen	1972	2012	Gdansk und Elblag / PL	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Novak	Richard	Tschechien-Slowakei	1959	2001	Protivin / CZ	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes



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							Zentralkonferenz / Central Conference	weltweiten Kirche / Global Church
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nussbaumer	Marc	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1957	1993	3x3 (Region Lenzburg) / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nzambe	Freddy	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1969	2015	Tunis / TN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Obermeir-Siegrist	Martin	Österreich	1981	2014	Linz / AT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Odendaal	Marietjie	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1963	2013	Gelterkinden / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Olszanski	Janusz	Polen	1958	unk.	Bydgoszcz und Inowroclaw / PL	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ottersberg	André	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1991	2000	Beurlaubung (Art. 354 KO) / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Paka	Théo	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1960	2011	Genève Communauté francophone und Lausanne / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Palik-Kunčák	Ana	Serbien-Mazedonien	1961	1988	Kisač / RS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pfister	Stefan	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1968	1997	Davos / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Poganiacz	Artur	Polen	1965	unk.	Gierzwald, Dabrownó, Olsztynek und Kraplewo / PL	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Polak	Jerzy	Polen	1963	2005	Scinawka Srednia / PL	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Prochazka	Petr	Tschechien-Slowakei	1966	1998	Superintendent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prochazkova	Ivana	Tschechien-Slowakei	1971	2001	Institute of Education / CZ	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes

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							Zentralkonferenz / Central Conference	weltweiten Kirche / Global Church
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ramseier	Urs	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1960	1991	Gstaad / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rendos	Stefan	Tschechien-Slowakei	1982	2015	Superintendent / SK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rickenbacher	Urs	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1968	1998	Solothurn / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rodaszynski	Slawomir	Polen	1964	unk.	Superintendent Distrikt West sowie Miedzyrzecz und Poznan, Szczecin / PL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rudolph	Etienne	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1966	1993	Superintendent District francophone / FR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Schiess	Markus	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1958	1991	Rhein-Bodensee / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Schluep	Christoph	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1970	2018	Zürich 4 / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Schnell	Bernfried	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1959	2014	Bregenz / AT	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Schöni	Markus	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1956	1985	Staffelbach / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Schröckenfuchs	Stefan	Österreich	1978	2009	Superintendent und Wien- Fünfhaus / AT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sjanta	Daniel	Serbien-Mazedonien	1984	2013	Superintendent und Kovačica / RS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Stefanov	Mihail	Bulgarien-Rumänien	1979	2009	Sofia / BG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stefanov	Milen	Bulgarien-Rumänien	1975	2017	Dobritsch / BG	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes

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							Zentralkonferenz / Central Conference	weltweiten Kirche / Global Church
<input type="checkbox"/>	Steiner	Andreas	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1968	2001	Spiez-Oey und Zentrum Artos Interlaken / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Streit	Martin	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1961	2001	Bern / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Szuhanszky	Gabor	Ungarn	1956	1981	Direktor Altersheime und Budakeszi / HU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Szuhanszky	Istvan	Ungarn	1957	1981	Szolnok / HU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Todorov	Vladimir	Bulgarien-Rumänien	1974	2006	beurlaubt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Todorova	Margarita	Bulgarien-Rumänien	1961	1999	Sevlievo / BG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Topalski	Daniel	Bulgarien-Rumänien	1974	2011	Superintendent und Varna / BG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trajčevski	Dragan	Serbien-Mazedonien	1978	2013	Vrbas / RS	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vadura	Petr	Tschechien-Slowakei	1962	2019	Tachov / CZ	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vigh	Bence	Ungarn	1985	2015	Kaposvar / HU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	von Känel	Peter	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1960	1991	Burgdorf-Breiteneegg / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Weller	Stefan	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1964	1991	Bethesda Spital Basel / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wichers	Gunnar	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1961	1988	Zofingen / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wolnica	Krzysztof	Polen	1967		Wroclaw / PL	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Wüthrich	Rolf	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1973	2017	Stäfa-Männedorf / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes

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							Zentralkonferenz / Central Conference	weltweiten Kirche / Global Church
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wyder	Rolf	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1967	2004	Uzwil-Flawil / CH	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Zhelezov	Vladimir	Bulgarien-Rumänien	1980	2017	Ruse / BG	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Zolliker	Stefan	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1967	2003	Winterthur / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Zuber	Dariusz	Polen	1978	2012	Elk, Pietki / PL	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	Zuber	Monika	Polen	1979	2019	Stare Juchy / PL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Zürcher	Simon	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1976	2006	Frutigland / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Zürcher	Stefan	Schweiz-Frankreich- Nordafrika	1967	2003	Superintendent Distrikt Nordwestschweiz / CH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ja/Yes



**United Methodist Church**  
Central Conference of  
Central and Southern Europe

## **Working Group on Episcopacy**

To the members of the Annual Conferences of the  
Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe

At the 2020 sessions of the Annual Conferences, the nominations for the election of the new bishop at the Central Conference 2021 will take place.

Please find enclosed a list of all eligible pastors; all of them being ordained elders in full connection.

The list was compiled according to the following criteria:

Since the mandatory retirement age of a United Methodist Bishop is 72, and taking into consideration that the term of office needs to be at least 4 years, this means that the future bishop may not be older than 68 at the time of election (Book of Discipline par. 408.1b). The enclosed list therefore only includes ordained elders who will not yet be 68 at the time of Central Conference 2021 (i.e. born in March 1953 or later). There is no minimum age and no minimum number of years of service as an ordained elder in full connection. The retired ordained elders who will not yet have completed their 68<sup>th</sup> year of age at the time of Central Conference 2021 are not eligible and therefore not included in the list. Ordained deacons, pastors on honorable location, guest members, and associated members are not eligible and not listed either.

- The information in the enclosed list is reflecting the situation as per January 1, 2020.
- Missing information is indicated by the abbreviation "unk."
- The first column shows whether the pastor is a delegate to Central Conference 2021. Alternate delegates are marked with an asterisk (\*).
- The second-to-last column provides the information whether someone has officially attended a meeting of the Central Conference or Executive Committee of the Central Conference in the past, whether he/she has been entrusted by the Central Conference with a particular task, or whether he/she is/has been a member of a working group of the Central Conference.
- "Experience in the Global Church" means official responsibilities beyond the Central Conference. This box is checked if the person has attended a General Conference, was entrusted by the Central Conference with an international task (General Board, global area of work), was a member of the European Methodist Council (EMC) (for persons under 35 also a member of EMYC
- European Methodist Youth & Children), or served as member of the World Methodist Council (WMC) or the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW).  
Missionary assignments (e.g. with Connexio) or involvement in the "In Mission Together" (IMT) partnership program are not included.

Further important information can be found in the "Procedure for the Nomination and Election of a Bishop of the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe 2021".

For the Working Group on Episcopacy: Jörg Niederer

## **8**

# **Judicial Court**

### **Composition**

According to Para. 12(1) of the "Rules of Order of the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe - CC CSE", the Judicial Court is composed of five members and four reserve persons. At present there is one vacancy for a reserve person.

### **Activities**

According to the "Rules of Order of the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe - CC CSE", the Judicial Court has the following tasks:

- a) According to Para. 12(4), the Judicial Court „shall make all judicial decisions in accordance with the constitution, excluding the jurisdiction of the Judicial Court of the General Conference." This concerns legal questions that arise in the application of the rules and by-laws as well as in the application changes made thereto by the Central Conference.

In the reporting period, the Judicial Court has not been applied to.

- b) According to Para. 12(5), the Central Conference shall be entitled to assign further tasks to the Judicial Court. It did not do so at its last meeting.

In the reporting period, no such tasks have been assigned to the Judicial Court.

*Zurich, January 28, 2020*

*Prof. Dr. Christa Tobler, LL.M.*

*(President of the Judicial Court of the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe)*

# V. Weitere Berichte

## Study Group of the Central Conference CSE

### 1. Decisions of the Executive Committee Meeting in March 2019 in Mono-spitovo

The executive committee agreed on the following mandate for the Study Group which shall:

- **study and evaluate scenario(s) for staying as closely united and/or connected as possible**, in light of a strictly enforced "Traditional Plan" that may be enacted at the 2020 General Conference; and
- report to the executive committee of the central conference CSE in March 2020.

The Study Group shall have the Bishop as convener/moderator and the following members were named:

Bishop Patrick Streiff

AC Switzerland-France-North Africa: Rev. Claudia Haslebacher, Roland Affolter (Co-chair of AC Church Council), Marc Berger (Chair of District Council, France)

AC Austria: Rev. Stefan Schröckenfuchs, Thomas Fux (Church Council)

AC Bulgaria-Romania: Rev. Daniel Topalski

AC Czech and Slovak Republics: Rev. Petr Prochazka

AC Hungary: Rev. Zoltan Kovacs (Church Council, and chairperson of Board of Ordained Ministry)

AC Poland: Rev. Andrzej Malicki

AC Serbia-Macedonia, and Albania: Rev. Wilfried Nausner, Rev. Daniel Sjanta

Urs Schweizer, assistant to the Bishop, for logistics and minutes.

### 2. Four meetings of the study group

The Study Group met twice online and twice in person. Here is an outline of the process and some important steps of our journey together:

**At the first online-meeting in end June 2019**, we shared what we see as common spiritual grounding for our work, what are the situations after the respective annual conferences; what are basic facts for the CC-CSE (e.g. if we split according to the initial positions after General Conference 2019, each part would be too small to continue as a full central conference), and what we see as key issues which we need to address in the next meeting. Key issues were:

- **Do we want to stay in one Central Conference or not?**
- **Why do we want to stay together?**
- **Why is it important to stay together?**
- **What is the core of our belief that binds us together - and what does not belong to it?**
- **How much differences of opinions do we allow for when we are staying together?**
- **What kind of real alternatives do we have if we do not want to stay together?**
- **If we do not want to stay together, what will we do?**

**At the second, in-person meeting in end August 2019,** we realized the advantage of being present in person and have time for intensive and more personal sharing and working together. We did several steps. We later evaluated some of the results during the fourth meeting. Here is a short outline of these steps:

- **Where are our interests in favour or against continuing together in the CC-CSE?** (see also report after the fourth meeting) Some arguments were more rational, others more emotional; the feeling of being under pressure came from the traditional side.
- **Understanding and representing the “other side” in a fair way (on Bible; relationship between faith and life; unity and diversity; homosexuality and marriage);** each “side” felt not really understood by the image which the other had of them and we had some interesting learning.
- **Brainstorming on options/scenarios for the future of the UMC in the CC-CSE;** mostly in three larger categories: (1) Methodism in Europe in a somehow new configuration; (2) Staying together in our CC, with differences, and taking time for dialogue and searching consensus; (3) Autonomy in different configurations.

In the planning of next steps in the process, the following key aspects were named:

- **Staying together must not happen as a result of pressure but as an expression of a free decision.** (All who want to stay together should do it out of their free will: We want to engage in that.)
- **Staying together must not be a bad compromise but the result of work on a core consensus.** (And this work on a core consensus requires a process; it cannot be done in one or two days at Central Conference.)
- **What do we say on marriage?** (Knowing that also the legal situation in our countries is very diverse and it is often a highly politicized topic in the society)
- **What do we say on sexuality – what are the values that we have in common?** (We only talk about the aspect of homosexuality – but not, for instance, about pornography, trafficking, responsibly lived sexuality, etc.)

In order to get a feed-back from each country, it was agreed on writing a paper enabling a conversation in all ACs/countries. This paper should clearly state that we want to remain together, also in our diversity – and then people in the ACs/countries can express whether they are willing to lean into such a process. The paper shall be sent to the church councils in each country, as we realized that it is not realistic to involve all AC-members in this conversation. Responses from the church councils were expected by end January 2020.

→ **See attachment 1: The Study Group paper “CC-CSE – Where to go?”**

→ **See attachment 2: A summary of the responses from the countries**

Please note that Switzerland is in itself a very diverse country, more than any other in the CC-CSE, and that the AC Switzerland-France-North Africa has in itself all the diversity that you can find in the CC-CSE.

**At the third (online)-meeting in November 2019,** we kept each other informed about the discussion process in the countries and the bishop shared about developments in the world-wide church in preparation to General Conference 2020.

**At the fourth (in-person) meeting in early February 2020,** we looked at the responses from the countries which were given based on the "Traditional Plan", adopted by General Conference 2019. But we also looked at those proposals to General Conference 2020 that have a high probability to find a majority, as e.g. the Mediation Protocol. During the meeting, the proposed legislation for the Mediation Protocol was published. The proposed legislation clearly states that no conference entity is obliged to make any decision and then will remain in what the "higher" conference body has decided. If 20% of the membership of a conference asks for a vote, a vote needs to be taken. On the level of the central conference, a majority of 2/3 is required to join a new Methodist denomination instead of staying in the "Post-UMC". On the level of the annual conference, a majority of 57% is required to join a different denomination than the central conference has chosen. On the level of the local church, the church council of the local church decides whether a majority of 50% or of 2/3 will be required to join a different denomination than its own annual conference.

After the first two steps on new developments in the context and on the responses from the countries, we collected the most important elements as arguments in favour or against staying together or separating.

→ **See attachment 3: The collection of arguments for staying together or separating.**

The three attachments mentioned are important elements for the proposals of the Study Group that came out of its process in February. As the process between August 2019 and end January 2020 was focused on the proposals of "CC-CSE - Where to go?" and the question of the willingness to stay together despite the diversity within the central conference, the study group will not come up with different scenarios. The work of the study group – and also the responses from the countries – was based on the decisions of General Conference 2019 to enact a Traditional Plan.

We do not know in which direction General Conference 2020 will lean with its decisions. The members of the study group also had different positions on how far a central conference can or should go in adapting its central conference Book of Discipline. At its February meeting, the Study Group did not further address the question of scenarios on structural changes. However, all active bishops from Europe will be present at the executive committee meeting in March. It will offer an opportunity to hear what European perspectives may be considered in other episcopal areas and how this might effect borderlines among the areas and central conferences in the future.

As a starting point for a process up to the Central Conference 2021, the following summary was given by the bishop:

- After GC 2019, some among us, having a traditional view and conviction, could well live with the Traditional Plan. Others could not see at all to live with the implementation of this plan.
- The CC Study Group asked the Church Councils to express their willingness (or unwillingness) to stay within the CC-CSE according to the outline in the paper. As a result, some said: We are aware of our diversity, and we can live with it as long as we are not put under pressure. Others said: We cannot imagine remaining together in diversity.

- If the legislation related to the Mediation Protocol passes at GC2020, things would be somehow reversed, compared to 2019. Those who could not live with a strictly implemented Traditional Plan might find their place in the Post-UMC; others who were in favor of the Traditional Plan will probably say: We cannot be part of the Post-UMC but will have to join a new traditional Methodist denomination. The Mediation Protocol would not force someone to leave the (Post-)UMC but would offer a respective option.
- General Conference 2020 will also have to decide whether it adopts the new "Global Social Principles".
- The question will remain: Who is willing to stay together? AND: How will staying together look like – in terms of relationships and in terms of the CC-CSE Discipline? We are at a point where we realize that some say that they can live together while others say they can no longer under certain circumstances.
- It is now our task to prepare a proposal to CC 2021 for those who want to remain together and to commit themselves to this joint journey. The responses of the various Church Councils will influence this proposal, although the context might have changed after GC 2020. But the Study Group now needs to identify the content questions (theological or ethical questions) that need to be discussed so that a proposal can be made to CC 2021 enabling the annual conferences to decide on staying in the CC or leaving it.

### **3. Unfinished task and proposal for a process up to the CC in March 2021**

The study group took intensive discussion time to look at content questions that should be dealt with for further clarification. We then recognised that some very same and some very similar topics came up again, but not really new ones. Here are first the more general ones:

- Methodist identity (our understanding of the core of Christianity)
- Understanding of unity / Purpose of unity ("body of Christ")
- Diversity / borders of diversity
- Mindful look at the history of our CC-CSE (past / present / future)
- Interpretation of the Bible
- What ethical questions belong to the core? Relationship faith and life/ethics;

And on the specific ethical questions:

- What may we say together on human sexuality despite the differences when it comes to the practice of homosexuality?
- Understanding of marriage (often seen as the priority question)
- Understanding of practice of homosexuality (secondary to marriage question)

The study group has not the intention to propose that all these topics need to find an answer till March 2021, but it recognises how strongly they are inter-related. Before trying to find common agreement, we will need first to find a better understanding of the position of the "other side". The labels (traditional, liberal, etc.) which we use are not helpful. We realized in our own journey in the study group that we often have misleading ideas and perspectives on those "on the other side". Furthermore, the study group noted that the Working Group on Theology and Ordained Ministry took up some of the above mentioned topics in the past or at present.



The study group further raised some additional thoughts for handling the topic:

- What process is helpful?
- How can we change the way of handling the problem?
- How much do we have to define, and what do we need to leave blank?
- In light of living with different perspectives in the same CC and of the fear that one's own conviction comes under pressure by others: What should be said in a "covenant of mutual respect"?
- What are the things we want to continue to do together in mission?

The present discipline of the CC-CSE will remain unchanged till March 2021. As proposed in the paper "CC-CSE – Where to go?", all who are willing to search for a way how as many ACs/countries as possible will decide to stay together, shall actively participate in the process. However, the process can only start after the decisions of General Conference 2020 are known. For remaining together in diversity, a proposal for amendments to the present discipline of the CC-CSE has to be prepared and presented in a timeline which allows for consultations in the countries and among the delegates to the central conference. Well prepared proposals need to come on what we write in the Book of Discipline on marriage and human sexuality, as well for the Social Principles as for legislatively binding text in other chapters of the Discipline.

The Study Group proposes the following **mandate and timeline for a further process** to the Executive (being aware that unexpected and surprising decisions of GC 2020 might have implications on it). Its basic aim is to prepare a proposal for CC 2021 that offers a realistic possibility for as many countries and ACs as possible to remain together.

**March 2020 Meeting of the Executive Committee**

→ *discussion on the work of the Study Group and decision on the further process*

**Spring 2020 AC Meetings (for dates after General Conference 2020)**

→ *awareness-raising conversations but **no** decisions*

→ *wherever possible with participation of guests from other contexts, so that it is not only the Bishop (being Bishop of the whole CC!) who may offer alternate views from other ACs*

**July to-October/November 2020 Preparation of Draft Proposal for CC 2021**

→ *small writing team (about 4 people, balanced between different viewpoints) for preparing a document how the Book of Discipline of the central conference and the Social Principles would look like if all prohibitive/negative/restrictive sentences regarding homosexuality would be deleted; the same team could also prepare a «covenant of mutual respect» (safeguard) if deemed appropriate*

→ *bigger group with equal representatives of as much countries as possible and Working Group Women for refining these proposals and submission to the Executive Committee; (one meeting)*

→ *other mandates may be given to existing working groups of the CC, e.g. the WG Theology and Ordained Ministry for specific content topics;*

*Important for the process:*

→ *involving leadership of every country being interested in a consensus/common journey*

→ *not forcing any country to be involved against his/her will*

**November/December 2020 Extraordinary Meeting of the Executive Committee**

→ *discussion and finalization of proposal to CC 2021 which will be sent out to all delegates of the CC;*

**December 2020-March 2021 Timeframe for optional consultations on AC or District Level****March 2021 Meeting of the Central Conference**

Additional elements:

Decisions on the level of annual conferences will not have to be taken before the annual conferences in 2021 or even only at annual conferences in 2022.

For the small writing team, four persons should be chosen (balancing the different view-points). If they have been part of the present study group, it would facilitate the work; probably only on-line meetings.

For the larger group which should meet once, each country should either be present with one person or express its assurance to be represented by another person in the group; the Bishop as convener.

The executive committee will need to have a meeting towards the end of the year in order to decide what proposal shall go to the central conference in March 2021. The proposal shall then be published and sent out to all delegates to the Central Conference. Each country may decide in what form it wants to hold consultations prior to the central conference in March 2021.

However, it has to be noted that in the United Methodist Church, we highly value conferencing as a means of grace. Therefore, no delegate can be bound how to vote by a constituency from which he/she comes.

*Bishop Patrick Streiff,  
convener and moderator of the Study Group  
20.2.2020*

# **The Study Group paper “CC CSE - Where to go?”**

## **Consultation Paper for the church boards in each country**

### **PREFACE**

#### **Mandate of the study group of CC CSE**

The executive committee of the CC CSE, at its meeting in March 2019 in Monospitovo, has given the following mandate to the study group:

- to study and evaluate scenario(s) for staying as closely united and/or connected as possible, in light of a strictly enforced “Traditional Plan” that may be enacted at the 2020 General Conference; and
- to report to the executive committee of the Central Conference CSE in March 2020.

#### **Meeting of the study group of CC CSE in Vienna, August 30-31, 2019**

An intensive process of listening to each other and sharing led us, the members of the study group, to gain experience and insight, among which the following are particularly important:

- the present debate was nobody’s choice within the CC CSE;
- everyone feels put under pressure from somewhere outside;
- we are sad that we are hurting each other, ask each other for forgiveness. We want to honestly share where we feel misunderstood;
- we do not agree on different topics, but we value each other as brothers and sisters in Christ with whom we want to continue our journey;
- we acknowledge that we live in completely different contexts that shape our understanding and living out of the mission of the UMC in our different countries;
- our relationships and connection within the CC CSE are important to each of us and more important than other relationships beyond the border of our own country or annual conference.

**Therefore we, the members of the study group, suggest to proceed as follows for CC CSE beyond 2020/2021. We send this paper for consultation to the church boards of each country of CC CSE and want to hear back from you whether you are willing to join in this process.**

#### **1. Defining the legitimate position of CC CSE after General Conference 2019**

The adapted CC CSE BOD 2005 is presently the approved church discipline of CC CSE. It has been voted on and was approved by Central Conference. This is where we need to start from to make any legitimate changes. It is the common ground that we presently stand on for each country and annual conference belonging to CC CSE. Any further steps will have to be made on the basis of past agreements and will need to be approved by each annual conference.

General Conference decisions made in 2020 may be considered, imported and ratified by the CC CSE, or adapted or put aside because of the special needs of the Central Conference. Knowing that adaptation rights have different interpretations in the worldwide UMC, we believe that they always need to respect different legal situations and need to have sufficient time of consensus building within the CC CSE.

We want to continue on our present legal basis which is the current 2005 CC CSE BOD. Any changes to it need to come out of a common decision among us in the CC CSE.

## **Future changes in CC CSE BOD**

At the Central Conference meeting in March 2021, we want to implement such changes in the CC CSE BOD that enable us to continue together within the CC CSE in full respect of different positions and without putting pressure on anyone.

The following clarifications and/or changes may be envisioned:

- We keep the unity in all essential matters (e.g. doctrinal standards, articles of religion, constitution) and keep our relationships. This allows different Annual Conferences to keep the discussion on human sexuality on annual and local church level, where it belongs traditionally.
- We decide that the decisions about the qualification on ministry are made on Annual Conference level as was the tradition of the UMC until 1972 and 1984 (1972 and 1984 mark the dates when the first paragraphs about homosexuality were put into the BOD). We adapt the texts of the BOD to guarantee this and we will not make changes until we have found an acceptable solution for all sides. This means we use the adaptation rights we have as a Central Conference.
- We agree to continue together as Central Conference of the UMC and do not allow that an imposed timeline forces us to make decisions which have not matured through our own conferencing encounters and procedures.

## **2. Renewed willingness to stay together on a common journey**

If we are serious in a renewed willingness to stay together, the Central Conference needs to be strengthened and take the initiative to be more connected. This will need some structural improvements and sharing of responsibilities. We want to continue together as one Central Conference with respect and dignity, without exercising pressure on each other. We do not want to break the unity because of different opinions. We will deliberately use consensus building rules in our decision making on the level of the CC CSE.

### **Intensify conferencing and shared responsibility**

We will intensify our conferencing on understanding each other in our witness in various contexts and in mutual support of the mission of our church.

We will intensify shared responsibility for our common journey. Among suggestions to achieve this, are:

- Strengthening the role of the Central Conference Secretary and/or vice-chair of the executive committee as mediator and facilitating between Annual Conferences.
- New cabinet meetings beyond a single annual conference, exchanges between superintendents and others.
- Creating options for sharing faith and life beyond borders of a single country through meetings and conversations and pastoral and diaconal exchange programmes.

## **3. If a country (as a district or an Annual Conference) wants to leave**

Countries which form a district or an Annual Conferences and which want to leave the CC CSE shall openly declare so. The process of leaving shall be done in the steps according to the current CC CSE discipline for leaving.

## **4. AIM OF THE CONSULTATION (within the church boards):**

**The aim of the consultation shall be to find out if national church boards within Annual Conferences want to continue their presence and work within CC CSE. Therefore, the following questions shall be forwarded to the national church boards: Are you willing to stay within the CC CSE according to the outline presented here? And are you willing to engage yourself for staying together as CC CSE within your annual conference?**

**Process of consultation:**

This paper shall be shared with the church board in each country by a member of the study group. A reply is expected to the study group within a set period.

If, in the course of this consultation, you see additional needs for our common future journey in the CC CSE, please mention them in your reply.

The reply from each country on this consultation shall be sent to the episcopal office by January 31st, 2020. The episcopal office will share the replies with the members of the study group of the CC CSE for its meeting in February 2020. At that meeting, the study group will prepare its report to the executive committee of the CC CSE which will meet in March 2020.

**Note:**

The church board may decide to invite other leaders to take part in the consultation but should look at a good representation of laity and gender.

A church board of a country may invite one or two member(s) of the study group to attend its own consultation about this paper if there is need for clarification and to encourage mutual listening and understanding. The coordination of such invitations will be handled through the episcopal office.

**Members of the study group under the leadership of Bishop Patrick Streiff:**

Roland Affolter (CH-FR-NA), Marc Berger (CH-FR-NA), Thomas Fux (AT), Claudia Haslebacher (CH-FR-NA), Zoltan Kovacs (HU), Andrzej Malicki (PL), Wilfried Nausner (RS-MK-AL), Petr Prochazka (CZ-SK), Stefan Schröckenfuchs (AT), Daniel Sjanta (RS-MK), Daniel Topalski (BG-RO); as secretary: Urs Schweizer, assistant.

Approved by the members of the study group on September 24, 2019.

*This text is meant for the use of the church boards of the different legal bodies representing the United Methodist Annual Conferences of the countries within the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe. As it is a working paper only it shall not be published nor distributed to any other entity.*

*We ask the recipients to treat it confidentially so that we may find consensus and ways how to deal with differences in the spirit of love, respect and mutual commitment. We ask you therefore not to spread this document to such groups in the UMC that try to influence our internal decision making from outside.*

**A summary of the responses from the countries**

**1) Present legal basis in CC-CSE Book of Discipline 2005 and future changes**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Supportive feed-back</b>	<b>Hesitative or opposing feed-back</b>
ALBANIA	Uniformity in opinion and practice is not a goal to strive for and a danger to growth in love and grace.	
AUSTRIA	Support according to way outlined in paper	
BULGARIA & ROMANIA		NO, entirely unacceptable - Unacceptable procedure to demand Church Councils; unsubstantiated understanding of adaption rights of CC; Judicial Council decision 313 from 31.01.1969 → no adaptation rights for qualifications for ordination; legal basis not only CC-CSE BOD of 2005 but also BOD of General Conference.
CZECH REPUBLIC		Not supportive - Matters of sexuality can not be transferred to the competence of individual ACs
FRANCE	Wide diversity within AC CH-FR-NA	Very traditional; substantial part cannot imagine remaining in a church that opens up, even if they may remain conservative.
HUNGARY		If change of current BOD, would need to reevaluate regarding relationship in CC.
NORTH MACEDONIA	Welcome if AC may decide on who may take part in its ministry	
POLAND		Fully accept Traditional Plan according to GC 2019
SERBIA	Do not wish to give up on what we have had for so many years; willing to at least try, stay in conversation, give our contribution in order to keep what we have been building together for years.	Worried to be called out to some sort of "rebellion" against General conference; causes pressure from various sides; whatever we decide, we lose something
SLOVAK REPUBLIC		NO – is in conflict with the special GC 2019 and sounds similar to the "One Church Plan" rejected by GC 2019
SWITZERLAND	Willing to go on working towards a shared future within CC; wide diversity within AC CH-FR-NA; decisions need to be made on level of AC or District (country).	
CC-WOMEN consultation	Focused on what unites us, not on what divides us.	

**2) Renewed willingness to stay together on a common journey for CC-CSE 2021 and beyond**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Supportive feed-back</b>	<b>Hesitative or opposing feed-back</b>
ALBANIA	Wants to remain in CC-CSE and support its work and mission.	
AUSTRIA	Willingness to continue presence and work within CC-CSE and engage within own AC for staying together as CC-CSE	
BULGARIA & ROMANIA		NO - Cannot fathom to be part of a CC where open to ordination and blessing of same-sex marriages; would mean to agree with it. Stay together needs to be on bases of Bible, Tradition and existing church law.
CZECH REPUBLIC		Present CC meetings beneficial and sufficient; no need for strengthening structures of CC; no commitment now; wait for GC 2020
FRANCE	Supportive of intention of study group despite strong resistance to split away in France	Many want to split away from being together with UMC in CH
HUNGARY	Confirm commitment to ministry / mission statement, but conservative understanding; only remain in CC with present stance in BOD	In 2017: importance of observing (traditional) BOD of CC and GC; no ordination or marrying of homosexual people; reaffirm traditional view of CC-BOD 2005; do not know what future holds;
NORTH MACEDONIA	Do not want to leave behind years of successful and hopeful cooperation for separation; CC-CSE should stay together; committed to this task	
POLAND	Renewed willingness to stay together in structure of present CC; pray for unity among Methodists in Europe	Final decision with AC
SERBIA	At least through conversation try and find a common ground and a common decision that would be acceptable to everybody (I Cor 16:14)	No forcing or coercion into anything
SLOVAK REPUBLIC		NO – seem to bring centralization and fundamental intervention into church organization
SWITZERLAND	supportive of staying together as far as possible within existing form of CC;	
CC-WOMEN consultation	Want to support each other; is unique to us and we need it; we are dependent on face-to-face encounters.	

## Other elements of feed-back related to human sexuality

Country	Supportive feed-back	Hesitative or opposing feed-back
ALBANIA	Cultural background: no support of practice of homosexuality; needs to be respected by others; homosexual persons need to be welcome to the family of God and we are challenged to express this in love.	
AUSTRIA		
BULGARIA & ROMANIA		Entire biblical and church tradition without reason to approve same-sex marriages or ordain practicing homosexual persons; danger for unity of the Church does not come from the tradition, but from overthrowing it.
CZECH REPUBLIC		Church is falling apart on matters of sexuality
FRANCE		Very traditional; evangelical; low Methodist identity
HUNGARY		Trying to "correct" biblical interpretation by changing moral values regarding sexuality; Christian marriage is one of the main issues of faith (Eph. 5);
NORTH MACEDONIA	Unity of church is more important than differences of opinion of some of its members.	
POLAND		Traditional in UMC and Constitution of PL; might be difficult to accept LGBT people in our church ministry.
SERBIA	Were against 'One-Church-Plan' and GC2019 received with gratitude	Traditional Plan: worrying trend to become a Pharisee-type church that would strain out a gnat but swallow a camel; but do not want to become a church open for anything and everything.
SLOVAK REPUBLIC		Based on GC2019 and "Traditional Plan"; would like to remain in the UMC; why would we need to leave the CC-CSE? If "Mediation Protocol" passes, we wish to affiliate with new traditional denomination.
SWITZERLAND	Very diverse within CH; strong willingness to stay together in an inclusive approach;	
CC-WOMEN consultation	Relationship with women from other cultures and circumstances has a positive effect on our faith and helps us to develop personally, in our opinions and our work.	

Version 2 – Feb. 1, 2020



## **Collection of arguments for staying together or separating**

### **Staying Together**

#### **Positive Elements**

##### **Identity**

- History binds us
- CC CSE is about building unity and connexion - about past, present and future relationships
- To keep our Methodist identity → connexionalism
- Stay in a relationship
- Learning from each other

##### **Witness**

- Unity is created in love, not in theological views
- Good testimony with love
- Church can be a great example how to deal with difficult situations and different opinions
- Everybody shall stay in his/her conscience

##### **Institution**

- Keeping status quo → financial and institutional security
- Keep a larger Church in Europe

#### **Negative Elements**

##### **Witness**

- Same Gospel / Scripture, different interpretations → separation of theology and ethics
- Negative impact on individual countries
- Blocked by the topic of homosexuality
- Undermines our credibility and mission in the national context

##### **Institution**

- It is work intensive and often disappointing
- (if not implementing the Traditional Plan) End of the global Church → stopped relations to USA

##### **Emotions / Freedom of Conscience**

- Fear of pressure on traditional understanding
- Bad with bad compromises

# Separation

## Positive Elements

### **Witness**

- More time for mission
- Concrete answers to LGBTQ+ topics
- Ending struggles/war

### **Emotions / Freedom of Conscience**

- Ends feeling of pressure from others
- Everybody can live according to his/her conviction

## Negative Elements

### **Identity**

- We lose something, which is central/crucial for Methodism
- Lose the personal and congregational relations / We lose a brother/sister
- Lose mutual support

### **Witness**

- Bad witness inside and to the outside → not able to keep unity
- Now we split because of homosexuality – what will be next?
- We give room for lovelessness and follow nationalist tendencies of our time
- Polarization will continue

### **Institution**

- Each new part will be even smaller than now
- Serious financial difficulties → new design of national structures
- New organizational structures / lots of negotiation
- No future perspective offered



Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche Gebiet von Mittel- und Südeuropa  
Eglise Méthodiste Unie Région de l'Europe du Centre et du Sud  
United Methodist Church Area of Central and Southern Europe

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## **Attachment 4**

To Leaders in the United Methodist Church  
in Central and Southern Europe

Zurich, January 8, 2020

### **Receiving the mediation protocol with a grateful, yet grieving heart**

Dear United Methodists,

At the initiative of central conference bishops, a very diverse group of leaders began to meet in summer 2019. The leaders have come from all sides of the debate on LGBTQ-members in the UMC, as well for as against the Traditional Plan approved by General Conference in February 2019. With the help of a professional mediator, this very diverse group finally came to a unanimous agreement and published a "**Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation**", on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019. The protocol and a press release can be found in English at: "[Mediation-Protocol](#)". From Europe, Bishop Christian Alsted was a member of the group and I want to thank him for bringing our European perspective actively into the discussion.

As your Bishop, I have received the mediation protocol with a grateful, but at the same time also grieving heart. At all of the last General Conferences, we as bishops have experienced that narrow margins of vote on issues of deeply held faith convictions will only further more conflict. It will not build up the community of the church for living its mission. Therefore, I am grateful for the mediation protocol as a way out of an impasse into which General Conference has maneuvered itself. I support the mediation protocol for allowing helpful decisions at General Conference 2020. However, I do so with a grieving heart. We have to confess that we will fail to keep the unity in the bond of peace.

The United Methodist Church in Europe is very diverse. Three of the four episcopal areas, ours included, are themselves very diverse, sometimes as a diversity between different countries and their particular legal, cultural and religious contexts, sometimes as a diversity within a country. The Eurasian area is the only one in Europe where there is no such diversity within the same episcopal area.

In the three episcopal areas which are in themselves diverse, we as bishops have engaged in discernment processes with the leadership in our respective areas on how to remain as closely related as possible despite the deeply held diversity of faith convictions with regard to our ministry with LGBTQ persons. I continue in hope and prayer that these processes of dialogue and consensus building lead to maintaining the unity in the bond of peace despite the option of separation offered by the mediation protocol.

All superintendents and bishops in Europe met in early December 2019 for their regular meeting. Two leaders, one from the British and one from the Irish Methodist Church led the reflections and discussions on a much broader topic of "Leadership in a Time of Crisis". Together, we celebrated worship and shared in Holy Communion. With a grieving heart, I am recognizing that it may have been the last time to do so as a unified United Methodist Church.

I do not know what delegates will finally decide at General Conference 2020 and at our forthcoming Central Conference in March 2021 and at Annual Conferences. I will continue the journey with the hope and prayer that we find other solutions than separation. I understand the mediation protocol also as a chance that the "Post-separation United Methodist Church" will acknowledge and put in place a world-wide connective structure that allows for the contextuality needed for keeping the unity in the bond of peace in a region of multiple diversities like Central and Southern Europe.

At the beginning of this New Year, I greet you, United Methodists in Central and Southern Europe, with a combination of two liturgical calls that rise from my heart: "Come Holy Spirit, come" and "Lord, have mercy on us".

Bishop Patrick Streiff

## European Methodist Council

The annual meeting of the European Methodist Council (EMC) for 2019 take place in Centro Ecu-mene in a city near Rome, Italy from 14<sup>th</sup> till 17<sup>th</sup> of September. The Wesleyan Church were voted in and welcomed as members of the EMC. EMC welcomed Kathryn Harte as the new Support Officer. In her report she shared about some of the tasks of her first months in the role including onboarding visits. She shared about plans to develop an EMC Logo and strapline, production of an introductory video to the EMC and development of the website and social media platforms. Kathryn asked EMC members to pass on the following information to her: 1. Any stories highlighting how churches around Europe are part of God's mission and more specifically about how our cooperation has brought about mission. 2. Contact details of communicators in their conference.

### Some important points:

**I. Community agreement.** Despite signing the Community agreement in 2016 EMC have not necessarily done a lot about it. Chair asked member churches to have a conversation about this in their own conference and to come back next year prepared to contribute.

**II. Current Developments in EMC** member churches with implications for the EMC. Bishop Streiff shared a summary of the current situation in the UMC as follows:

- At the Special Called Session of Conference 2019 a 52,3% majority voted for a Traditional Plan.
- It has created huge division in all the conference areas in Europe.
- In UMC C&SE there is a danger that the church will split.
- In UMC Germany they would like to find a way to stay together.
- In UMC NE & E, Eurasia cannot see a possibility to be together in a church with those who don't have a traditional approach. This conference wants to create study groups/round tables where people can continue to be in discussion to find a way forward together.
- At the next central conference in Europe they will need to look at changes to their book of discipline. They remain the same until then. The deadline has passed for petitions to the General Conference 2020 but there is still a process to bring new material.

### III. Other important developments in Europe

**A. Methodist Church in Britain.** Interchangeable ministry with the Anglican Church. The earliest that this might move forward is 2022. The Marriage and Relationships Task Group presented a report to the 2019 Conference with recommendations about various issues to do with relationships in general and marriage in particular.

**B. UMC Germany:** 2021 is a special ecumenical year and there will be event in Karlsruhe, Germany. All interested in this event should get information from Uwe Onnen. Links will be included on our website.

**IV. Working groups.** Support Officer's will to support working groups through setting up online meetings and taking minutes.

**V. Festivals.** European Methodist Festival -Staunen was supported from EMC with total cost to EMC €78400. **There are no upcoming plans for a European festival.** The Executive encourages member churches to set aside money to send people to the World Methodist Conference 2021 in Gothenburg, Sweden. EMC in cooperation with EMYC to send as much as possible young people there. EMC recommendst to its member churches to increase advocacy of the 2021 Conference and consider contextually appropriate ways of raising funds beginning as soon as possible to enable as

many members to attend as possible and to pass on the names and contact details of those you think might be able to help lead/facilitate some of the sessions, or lead workshops etc.

**VI. Learning grant.** The Executive proposed a learning grant scheme offering travel grants to encourage individuals from a member church in one region to attend learning events organised in another region. These grants would give up to €200 to individuals with ten grants being offered each year. That money will not be carried over year by year. Applications for learning grants will go to the Support Officer. Appropriate events will be advertised on the website. Member churches to be informed about this.

**VII. Fund for Mission In Europe -FMiE.** Urs Schweizer will not be continuing as the FMiE manager and that discussion is ongoing to find the best way to cover the different aspects of this role. FMiE is ready to shift the accounting to Germany. A working group has been set up to consider if any of the tasks can be simplified. This would include exploring if the Support Officer can take on some of the work.

**VIII. Elections.** Bishop Harald Rückert and Doug Swanney were unanimously elected as incoming co-chairs of the EMC. Bishop Christian Alsted, Bishop Sifredo Teixeira and Emil Zaev remain on the Executive Committee till 2021. Margarita Torodova was proposed and elected as member of the Executive Committee until 2021.

**IX. Other Matters. A. Methodist Week at Taize.** Rev Julian Hamilton (Methodist Church in Ireland) has developed a Methodist week in Taize for summer 2020. He is sourcing funding to allow those from across Europe to be present. There will be a specific programme for Methodist young people and they will also take part in the regular life of Taize. **B. EMC 2019 "Pledges on Climate Change"**. The document will be e-mailed to EMC members and publish it on the EMC website.

**X. Next EMC Meeting:** September 5 -8, 2020 Germany.

*Skopje, 27.2.2020,  
Emil Zaev*

## Connectional Table

### U. S. Regional Conference

The Connectional Table published in September its petition to create a U.S. Regional Conference. The U. S. Regional Conference will comprise the current U.S. jurisdictional conferences. This proposal aims to ease the burden of U.S. legislation on General Conference and give U.S. churches parity with those in central conferences for example for doing work on the adaptable portions of The Book of Discipline. The U.S. Church currently has no venue other than General Conference for considering its legislation. This proposal will shorten the duration of General Conference and save the church millions of dollars. It will enable the church to live more fully as a world-wide church. The General Church has spent too much time on administrative, tax, legal and benefit matters that only impact the United States. It will give the church in the U.S. a structure to deal with its unique missional challenges and to do its visionary, strategic and administrative work. This will free the general conference to focus its work on world-wide concerns and to become a forum that leads the church forward in God's mission.

The proposal is designed to be implemented in two stages. Stage I forms a committee of the General Conference, with legislative function, to deal with U.S. region – adaptable disciplinary provisions, U.S.-related resolutions, and non-disciplinary petitions concerning U.S. matters. Stage II forms the U.S. Regional Conference, after which the Stage I committee will end its work, and creates a temporary Interim Committee on Organization to organize the Regional Conference. The U. S. Regional Conference will convene following the GC2024

### New Chair 2021-2024

The Council of Bishops has elected Bishop Mande Muyombo as the new chair of the Connectional Table for the 2021 – 2024 quadrennium. Bishop Muyombo will succeed Bishop Christian Alsted, who has served as chair since 2016. Bishop Muyombo is the Resident Bishop of the North Katanga episcopal area. Prior to his election to the episcopacy, Bishop Muyombo served in various positions at the General Board of Global Ministries, including as the Executive Director of the Global Mission Connection and as Assistant General Secretary of Missions and Evangelism. Prior to these positions, he served as Chancellor of Kamina Methodist University, located in the North Katanga province. Bishop Muyombo was elected to the episcopacy during the Congo Central Conference in 2017. He is the youngest episcopal leader in the Africa central conferences.

### Finances

The budget of the Boards and Agencies in the quadrennium 2021-2024 will be shortened by 23%. This is justified with the aim to provide the Annual Conferences and local churches in the USA with more financial space for their mission. Whether this reduction will be maintained, however, is questionable in view of the probable split of the UMC.

### Emerging

The Connectional Table launched "Emerging", a digital collection of essays, articles and other content discussing what may be taking shape in the life of our connection as a result of the outcome of the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference.

The purpose of the website, [www.emergingmethodism.com](http://www.emergingmethodism.com), is to be a venue of conversation including voices from a multiplicity of viewpoints. The hope is that it will help lead us to forge a compelling consensus toward what to teach, how we teach, who we are, and how we will continue to live together in ministry. It is not a forum for debate or for proposals about structure, but a space to invite critical thinking and reflection on what is emerging in Methodism.

The project draws inspiration from Isaiah 43:18-19: "Don't remember the prior things; don't ponder ancient history. Look! I'm doing a new thing; now it sprouts up; don't you recognize it? I'm making a way in the desert, paths in the wilderness."

The following topics should be reflect:

- Leadership: Our Call
- Ecclesiology: Our Church
- Theology: Our Beliefs
- Missiology: Our Mission
- Polity: Our Structure
- History: Our Story

*Stefan Zürcher*

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## **In Mission Together**

### General Development

In Mission Together continues to be a program through which many deep friendships are established and sustained. In 2019, there were also once again a number of encouraging visits, joint mission activities, moments of mutual prayers, and other expressions of helpful partnerships between local churches in the USA and in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. In addition, the IMT Facebook page helped to provide interested people in the USA and in Europe with the latest information on the development and the activities of the UMC in our Central Conference. This is good news.

On the other hand, the number of partnerships slightly decreased in 2019 (AL -1, BG -1, CZ -1), and the total amount of donations was also considerably lower than in previous years. There may be different reasons for this development: the difficulty to raise awareness for the IMT partnership program in the USA; the challenge for local churches in the USA to pass on the responsibility to new people after the departure of key persons of existing partnerships (pastor, lay leader); the general situation in the UMC, which impacts many areas of our church life...

Having mentioned the general situation in the UMC and its potential implications, it has to be added that we do not yet know whether the position of the IMT Coordinator (currently held by Matt Elliott) will exist in the future, as well. But if we want to see the IMT partnership program further develop beyond General Conference 2020, we might need to think about how to better raise awareness in the USA anyhow.

### IMT Mission Summit 2019

The IMT Mission Summit 2019, which took place in October 2019 in Louisville, KY (USA), was on the one hand an event shaped by helpful presentations by the European delegates and by trustful, encouraging conversations. For me, it was really amazing how much people were willing to listen and to share.

On the other hand, the gathering failed to attract many newcomers – most participants already had some IMT experience (either by having participated in a country visit or by already being involved in a partnership). It was thus rather some kind of «family reunion» than a «market» attracting new people (maybe this helped to have these trustful conversations).

A potential next IMT Mission Summit (no conversations have taken place in regard to a date or a place) will require more than just the preparation of another event of its kind – also for the reason of being good stewards of financial and time resources.

On a positive note: The UMC in Eastern Europe and the Balkans contributed more towards the travel expenses related to this IMT Mission Summit than ever before. This is reason to thankfulness.

And it has to be added with appreciation and thankfulness that the time the European participants (Rareş Călugăr, Tsvetan Iliev, Jennifer Moore, Vladimir Fazekas, Kristóf Sztupkai, Lenka Procházková, Jana Křížová, Adrian Myslinski) sacrificed for visiting local churches before or after the IMT Mission Summit was most helpful to strengthen existing partnerships.

As far as I know, however, no new partnerships have been established as a result of these visits.

*Urs Schweizer*

*European representative in the IMT EEB Coordinating Team*

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## **Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters**

The Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters (StC-CCM) is a committee of General Conference. Questions related to the work outside the US need to pass through the committee before they can go to the floor of General Conference. The committee meets during General Conference and also in between the sessions of General Conference.

From 2016 to 2020 Bishop Ciriaco Francisco (Philippines) chairs the StC-CCM, Bishop John Yambasu (Sierra Leone) is the vice-chair, Deanna Stickle-Miner (U.S.) is the secretary. Members from the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe are Bishop Patrick Streiff, Superintendent Petr Prochazka (CZ) and Christine Schneider-Oesch (CH-FR-NA).

The StC-CCM met three times: In February 2017 in Atlanta (U.S.), in February 2018 in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), and in March 2019 in Manila (Philippines). In addition, the Africa sub-committee of the StC-CCM met three times in Africa to consult with representatives from all Annual Conferences on the continent.

During the quadrennium 2016 - 2020 the St-CCM had the following tasks:

1. Work out a proposal for a world-wide Book of Discipline (BoD) reflecting the global nature of our church.
2. Propose the placement of new Bishops in Africa in accordance with the GC 2016 decision that five new Bishops be assigned to Africa.
3. Episcopal Assessment of the Philippines Central Conference
4. Review and action on legislation assigned to us by the General Conference.

The St-CCM accomplished and/or decided the following:



### **World-wide Book of Discipline**

Members of the St-CCM worked in three teams, they were joined in this task by representatives from other bodies of the general church. They addressed the sections of the BoD assigned to them and created proposals for most parts. The St-CCM was ready to submit legislation to GC 2020. However, after the special called GC 2019 the Committee decided, not to do so. A climate of mutual trust would be needed for deliberations and decisions on a new BoD. In the face of current tensions such a climate does not exist at the time being. The Committee remains convinced that there is a need for a new BoD but it does not believe that any proposals to that effect would have a chance of being adopted at GC 2020. There will be conversation about the topic at GC 2020 and afterwards there will be a feedback process in the annual conferences.

### **New Bishops for Africa**

The St-CCM proposes the following:

- There shall be a new Central Conference (CC) in Africa: The current Africa CC which includes a vast number of countries in the southern and eastern parts of the continent shall be divided in a Southern Africa CC and an East Africa CC.
- The five new Bishops shall be assigned to the African CCs as follows: one Bishop for West Africa, two Bishops for Congo, two Bishops for Africa CC (i.e. one each for the new East Africa and Southern Africa CC).

Members of the Africa task force were involved in a process of reconciliation in Burundi. The church which had been divided over conflicts for many years came back together and celebrated its reunification at a special called annual conference.

### **Philippines Episcopal Assessment**

Members of the Committee visited the three episcopal areas in the Philippines. Their findings were very positive: The UMC in the Philippines is strong and healthy, there is good cooperation at every level. There were questions asked, however, on the number of annual conferences. The three Bishops supervise between five and twelve annual conferences each. Team members wondered whether a reduction of annual conferences would not be beneficial.

Final remark: Much has happened since GC 2016 assigned the above-mentioned tasks to the St-CCM. A split of the UMC is looming on the horizon and this leads to much uncertainty. Among many other questions we don't know what financial possibilities the remaining part of the current UMC will have in the future. It therefore remains to be seen whether GC 2020 will implement decisions taken in 2016.

*Christine Schneider-Oesch  
February 11, 2020*

# **General Board of Global Ministries**

## **Mission Goals of Global Ministries**

Make disciples of Jesus Christ

Strengthen, develop, and renew Christian congregations and communities

Alleviate human suffering

Seek justice, freedom, and peace

## **Vision for Global Ministries**

As the mission and humanitarian assistance agency of The United Methodist Church, Global Ministries is the leading United Methodist body equipping, strengthening, and transforming people and communities for God's mission around the world.

In its work making disciples of Jesus Christ, Global Ministries facilitates mission so that churches and faith communities grow and flourish; justice, freedom, peace, health, and well-being prevail across racial, cultural, national, and political boundaries; and people of all faiths live in dignity and security, including where they face humanitarian disasters and their aftermath.

## **Achievements 2017-2020**

The 2017-20 Quadrennium was a time of celebrating Methodism's mission heritage and preparing for the church's role in God's mission tomorrow. Global Ministries marked the bicentennial in 2019 of the formation of the first missionary organization in its legacy, the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. A bicentennial world conference in April 2019 was entitled "Answering the Call: Hearing God's Voice in Methodist Mission Past, Present, and Future." The conference celebrated the long and rich history of active mission participation by Methodists from Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America. Laity and clergy from Methodist churches based throughout Europe participated and helped observe the history and potential of Methodist mission.

To guide its work in the Quadrennium, Global Ministries adopted a new strategic plan focusing on four missional priorities: 1) missionary service, 2) church growth and development, 3) disaster response, and 4) global health. A key component called for building relationships among global mission partners in the central conferences to help enable how they establish, lead, and grow the church in their regions. Global Ministries created a new Global Mission Connections unit, further bolstering its work in Central and Southern Europe. Within this work, for example, among a range of activities, Global Ministries facilitated with Reutlingen School of Theology the Institute for Multicultural Ministry, training designed especially for multicultural pastors and lay leaders at the Educational Center of the Germany United Methodist Church.

## **Missionaries**

During the Quadrennium, 650 persons served as missionaries in 76 countries. Global Ministries commissioned 260 young adults, ages 20-30, to serve two-year missionary assignments as Global Mission Fellows. Global Mission Fellows serving in Central and Southern Europe gathered in Ireland to explore new and deeper mission partnerships in the region.

Approximately 300 Nationals in Mission served annually in their home countries with financial support from their communities and Global Ministries. These Nationals in Mission supported innovative ministries on evangelism and church growth; advocacy and justice for the poor and oppressed; women, children, and youth; and community development and health care.

## **Disaster Response**

An integral part of Global Ministries, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is the means through which United Methodists collectively pray, act, and give for the relief of suffering without regard to religion, race, nationality, gender, or sexual orientation. Founded in 1940 to care for war refugees in Asia and Europe, the agency has grown to include ministries responding to persons, families, and communities affected by armed conflict, climate change, homelessness, intolerance, migration, and natural disasters. It also provides support for numerous global health ministries and projects addressing poverty. UMCOR administers its work through four program areas: International Disaster Response, United States Disaster Response, Sustainable Development, and Global Migration.

Work with migrants is the oldest component of UMCOR. With 70 million migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees on the move and homeless because of natural disasters, wars, poverty, and intolerance around the world, migration grew during the Quadrennium as a major concern of Global Ministries and UMCOR. During the Quadrennium, Global Ministries and UMCOR assisted migrants in or from Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Brazil, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Iraq, Jordan, Mexico, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Uganda, Ukraine, and the United States.

The work incorporated a justice- and mercy-based approach to migration, with emphasis on human rights, alleviating human suffering, and addressing the causes of migration in all its forms. The approach seeks to reach the most vulnerable and provide food, water, shelter, clothing, and health care without discrimination, honoring migrants' right to stay, safe passage, welcome, and/or return with dignity.

## **Global Health**

Following its role in the last Quadrennium as the implementing arm of The United Methodist Church's Imagine No Malaria campaign, Global Ministries launched at the 2016 Portland General Conference, a new denominational signature health initiative, Abundant Health, with a goal of reaching one million children with lifesaving interventions by 2020. The motivation for Abundant Health emerged from a survey of persons in 59 countries. The results identified several top health challenges, including maternal and child health, hunger and nutrition, and access to health care. For all areas, the most vulnerable include underserved, minority, and low-income populations.

The Abundant Health Initiative has reshaped United Methodist health ministries in all regions. The goal of reaching one million children will be met or surpassed by General Conference 2020.

## **Challenges**

In 2017, The United Methodist Church had a vital, palpable sense of unity in mission. As the Quadrennium began closing, Global Ministries renewed its encouragement of the church to lean further into mission to preserve the unity of the church, as well as its global nature. Disunity in the denomination had begun threatening the framework at the very heart of the church's life: participation in God's mission, the *Missio Dei*. In response to a deep sense of uneasiness, Global Ministries' directors initiated an invitation for unity in God's mission following their April 2019 meeting. "United in God's Mission" beckons all to join in God's mission of saving, healing, and transforming, regardless of the form their church takes in the future.

*Andreas Stämpfli*

## Commission on theological education in central conferences (CCTEF)

The commission met a third time on February 17-20, 2020 in Orlando, Florida. In the years 2017 and 2018, the commission enjoyed a high contribution rate to the apportionments in the US, but the rate dropped in 2019. The drop to approx. 85% was not as dramatic as the intermediate results after General Conference in February seemed to announce, but they nevertheless led to a disbursement for projects in 2020 of only USD 1.7 instead of 2 million out of the collections from 2019. No one can at present tell how high the apportionment rate will be in the collections for 2020 (the last of the four years of the present quadrennium since General Conference 2016). However, it has also to be added that the collection rate from central conferences towards "General Administration" unfortunately has been only at about 40%. If it had been as high as in the US, additional funds would have been given to CCTEF for theological education.

In its meeting, the commission first decided on the distribution key for the funds. Because of the lower amount of funds to distribute, it decided not to lower the minimum amount for each episcopal area (USD 50.000), but only the additional elements of the distribution key. The European episcopal areas only receive the minimal amount which means that the same amount was at disposal for distribution as in the previous years. The commission again proposed that each region would contribute a "tithing" to the Endowment Fund for Theological Education in Central Conferences.

The following amounts were approved for projects in the CC-CSE (in USD):

Bulgaria	1.000
Czech Republic	8.000
Hungary	16.800
Poland	8.500
Serbia	2.500
Slovakia	1.200
Methodist e-Academy – translation of texts	2.000
In favour of the Endowment Fund	10.000
<b>Total</b>	<b>50.000</b>

The fourth and last meeting of the present quadrennium will probably be in February 2021 and distribute the money which was collected in 2020 in the US. It will be possible to submit projects beginning in mid-November 2020.

*Bischof Dr. Patrick Streiff*

## Conference of European Churches

To set priorities for the work of the Conference of European Churches (CEC), focusing on the theme "Together in Hope and Witness" – CEC Governing Board met from 15 to 18 May 2019 in Strasbourg, France.

The important areas in CEC's strategic work plan for 2019-2023 include promoting peace, justice and reconciliation in Europe, strengthening ecumenical fellowship and promoting the mission of the Church, and raising churches' voice in Europe and the European Institutions.

Particular attention was paid to the involvement of young people in the development of CEC's strategic plan. Ecumenical youth representatives were invited to the Governing Board meeting in Strasbourg, where they actively contributed to CEC's future work.

The Governing Board then voted on setting up the five thematic groups: Education, democracy and diversity; Ecclesiology and mission; Economic and ecological justice and sustainable future; Science, new technologies and Christian ethics; Human rights.

Serious consideration regarding the implementation of CEC's strategic aims also led the Governing Board to conclude that a new general secretary, with different skills and experience, was needed in order to drive the work before CEC's next General Assembly. To this end, the board took the difficult decision to end Fr. Heikki Huttunen's contract with effect from 20 May 2019.

Dr Jørgen Skov Sørensen has been appointed as the new general secretary of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) during the meeting of the Governing Board on 20-22 November 2019. Born in Kolding, Denmark, 55-years-old Skov Sørensen comes to CEC with a vast experience in theology, mission, ecumenism, leadership, communication and management.

During the same meeting the members of the thematic reference groups were appointed. Daniel Topalski was appointed as member of the TRG on Human Rights.

*Daniel Topalski*  
*January 2020*

# **Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)**

## **1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Council Meetings**

Following its appointment at the CPCE/GEKE General Assembly in September 2018, the new council began its work with the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting being held in Vienna in February 2019. Both council members and proxies were invited. David Turtle and Jørgen Thaarup (European Methodist Council representatives) were present.

Work directives to be dealt with in the current term of the council include:

- Christian Speech of God
- Practice and Theology of the Lord's Supper
- Sexuality and Gender
- Democracy as a challenge
- Consequences of church communion
- Mixed economy of church
- The church in rural areas
- Women in church leadership

An advisory board on 'Migration and Church Communion' was established. The General Assembly had seen a commitment from CPCE and the Pontifical Council for promoting Christian Unity to further discussion and a framework for this was agreed.

Other issues such as an appropriate marking of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Leuenberg Agreement in 2023 and a Protestant Conference for Ecumenical Issues in Europe were discussed.

A gathering of Synod Members from CPCE churches was organised to take place from 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 in Bad Herrenalb, Germany with the subject 'The mission of the Protestant churches in European societies'. All CPCE member churches have been invited to be represented.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> council meeting of this session was held from 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> October 2019 in Cambridge. David Turtle was present. Some time was spent in discussing revisions to 'Being Church Together', the strategy document which will guide the council over this session.

The 3 main aims remain the same:

1. The Protestant churches deepen their church communion
2. The Protestant churches promote church unity
3. The Protestant churches serve society

Some of the objectives falling under these aims were refined and discussion took place around what projects would best facilitate the achievement of these objectives.

Preliminary groups were established to consider 'Sexuality and gender' and 'Christian talk of God'; reports from work processes already in place were received and examined; a presentation was made by representatives of the Anglican communion in relation to ecumenical partnerships; and reports were given on meetings of CPCE regional groups.

Events planned for the coming months include:

- 'Church in Rural Areas'. A summer academy for pastors planned in partnership with the Conference of Churches on the Rhine from 23<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> August 2020 in Liebfrauenberg.
- 'Desire to lead', a networking and training event for women who have recently assumed a position of leadership in their church or are potential candidates for such roles will be run from 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020 in Vienna.

- A reference group of young theologians (under 32 years) is being established and member churches are encouraged to suggest participants.

The council was meeting in the UK during the midst of deep uncertainty regarding the trajectory of Brexit. It issued a statement entitled 'Church communion in divisive times'. [http://bit.ly/divisive\\_times](http://bit.ly/divisive_times)

The General Assembly had instructed the council to pursue the harmonisation of the name of CPCE/GEKE across its official languages. This had led to the proposed change of the English name from 'Community of Protestant Churches in Europe' to 'Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe'. This proposal has been sent to all member churches requesting feedback before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

*David Turtle,  
CPCE Council Member*

## **CPCE Regional Group South-East Europe**

### **Report on the meeting of the CPCE Regional Group South-East Europe 2019 in Salzburg**

Do we find statements about democracy in the Bible? Do we find stories that tell of democratic action? Based on the testimony of the biblical texts, the members of the Regional Group South-East Europe set about implementing their work assignment to deal with the Protestant understanding of democracy. The General Assembly of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), which met in Basel in 2018, had given this work assignment to the regional group for the next six years.

Extremely helpful for the beginning of a determination of the relationship between biblical texts and the understanding of democracy was the lecture by Prof. Dr Christian Strecker of the Augustana University Neuendettelsau. Strecker pleaded for the early Christian congregations to be understood as communities in which, as a consequence of the gospel of Jesus Christ, essential characteristics of social identification are abolished (cf. Galatians 3:28: "Here is neither Jew nor Greek, here is neither slave nor free, here is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus"). This new form of community thus consciously opposes the structure of society with an anti-structure. The resulting tension we still find in Christianity today, and in one way or another it plays an essential role in the relationship between churches and states.

The regional group met for the first time in Salzburg (Austria). The open and constructive discussions clearly showed that many different factors contribute to our own understanding of democracy and that there is therefore also a diversity of views and attitudes within the churches represented. The CPCE's claim is to live "reconciled diversity". This spirit was perceptible throughout the whole conference. A positive basic attitude to democracy was evident throughout the exchange. Bishop Michael Bünker (Evangelical Church A. B. in Austria, former General Secretary of the CPCE) expressed it in his sermon as follows: "Democracy preserves freedom and enables people to take responsibility. We are free to work responsibly for good cooperation. For God calls us to sanctification and Christ has freed us to freedom.

In the coming years, the regional group would also like to meet more frequently in more eastern countries. Firstly, to follow the invitations of different churches in different countries. On the other hand, also to experience different political situations on the spot. May God's Spirit of freedom and love continue to lead us into such lively and inspiring encounters!

*Pastor Novica Brankov (UMC in Serbia)*

*Pastor Martin Obermeir-Siegrist (UMC in Austria)*



# VI. Statistics

## based on the Annual Conferences 2019

<b>Bezirke</b> <b>Gemeinden</b> <b>Glieder</b> <b>Gottesdienste</b>											
	Bezirke	Gemeinden	Bekennende Glieder	Getaufte Glieder	Freunde	Total Pers.	Gottesdienstbesuch Erwachsene	Gottesdienstbesuch Kinder	Bekennende Glieder pro Bezirk	Bekennende Glieder pro Gemeinde	
<b>nach Ländern</b>											
Albanien	3	4	166	2	50	218	220	70	55.3	41.5	
Algerien	4	4	152	0	32	184	195	20	38.0	38.0	
Belgien	1	1	45		15	60	25	15	45.0	45.0	
Bulgarien	9	31	1'141	45	696	1'882	822	300	126.8	36.8	
Frankreich	19	19	1074	7	503	1'584	864	180	56.5	56.5	
Kroatien	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
Nord-Mazedonien	7	11			2'000	2'000			0	0.0	
Österreich	7	8	737	485	329	1'551	297	61	105.3	92.1	
Polen	20	37	1'895	255	251	2'401	?		94.8	51.2	
Rumänien	1	3	29	1	85	115	66	14	29.0	9.7	
Schweiz	69	107	4'971	499	3'272	8'742	3'989	818	72.0	46.5	
Serbien	9	14	416	107	256	779	375	45	46.2	29.7	
Slowakische Republik	7	14	267	161	162	590	266		38.1	19.1	
Tschechische Republik	15	19	879	191	455	1'525	624		58.6	46.3	
Tunesien		1				0					
Ungarn	12	32	490	542	894	1926	1'089	353	40.8	15.3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>12'262</b>	<b>2'295</b>	<b>9'000</b>	<b>23'557</b>	<b>8'832</b>	<b>1'876</b>	<b>67.0</b>	<b>40.2</b>	
<i>Vorjahr 2018</i>	177	309	12'825	2'191	7'207	24'223	9'505	1'976	69.5	40.8	
<i>Differenz +/-</i>	+6	-4	-563	+104	1'793	-666	-673	-100	-2.5	-0.6	
<b>nach Konferenzen</b>											
Prov. JK Österreich	7	8	746	485	329	1'560	297	61	106.6	93.3	
Prov. JK Bulgarien-Rumänien	10	34	1'195	46	781	2'022	888	314	119.5	35.1	
JK Schweiz-Frankreich-Nordafrika	92	132	6'407	506	3'822	10'735	5'073	1'033	211.6	186.0	
JK Tschechien-Slowakei	22	33	1'179	352	617	2'148	890	0	53.6	35.7	
Prov. JK Ungarn	12	32	509	542	894	1'945	1'089	353	42.4	15.9	
JK Polen	20	37	1'925	255	251	2'431	?		96.3	52.0	
Prov. JK Serbien-Makedonien	16	25	434	107	2'256	2'797	375	45	27.1	17.4	
Albanien und Kroatien	3	4	169	2	50	221	220	70	55.3	41.5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>12'564</b>	<b>2'295</b>	<b>9'000</b>	<b>23'859</b>	<b>8'832</b>	<b>1'876</b>	<b>712.4</b>	<b>476.9</b>	

<b>Pfarrpersonen Mitarbeitende</b>								<b>Beginn der Arbeit</b>
	<b>Personen in voller Verb. zur JK aktiv</b>	<b>Mitglieder auf Probe + a.o. Mitglieder aktiv</b>	<b>Lokalphastoren aktiv</b>	<b>Laienmitarbeiter aktiv</b>	<b>Volle Verbindung + a.o. Mitgl. i. Ruhestand</b>	<b>Clergy aktiv</b>	<b>Clergy total</b>	
<b>nach Ländern</b>								
Albanien	0	1	2	0	0	3	3	1922/1990
Algerien	1	0	1	2	2	2	4	1886
Belgien	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1920/2008
Bulgarien	8	2	10	2	2	20	22	1857/1989
Frankreich	7	1	4	2	11	12	23	1791/1868/1907
Kroatien	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1923/1995
Nord-Mazedonien	1	0	3	2	2	4	6	1873/1921
Österreich	5	0	2	1	2	7	9	1870
Polen	21	5	0	1	4	26	30	1895/1920
Rumänien	2	0	1	0	0	3	3	2011
Schweiz	55	7	24	0	51	86	137	1840/1856/1866
Serbien	8	0	3	1	1	11	12	1898
Slowakische Republik	5	2	4	17	1	11	12	1924
Tschechische Republik	10	1	6	1	4	17	21	1920
Tunesien	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	
Ungarn	9	1	3	2	6	13	19	1898/1905
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>302</b>	
<i>Vorjahr 2018</i>	<i>134</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>205</i>	<i>291</i>	
<i>Differenz +/-</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>-4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>11</i>	

<b>Bekennende Glieder:</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Differenz</b>
Prov. JK Österreich	746	748	738	732	742	746	4
Prov. JK Bulgarien	1'306	1'297	1'290	1'277	1'220	1'195	-25
JK Schweiz-Frankreich	7'345	7'107	6'932	6'812	6'605	6'407	-198
JK Tschechien-Slowakei	1'137	1'147	1'157	1'125	1'160	1'179	19
Prov. JK Ungarn	452	456	467	479	477	509	32
JK Polen	2'158	2'248	2'146	2'083	2'105	1'925	-180
Prov. JK Serbien-Mazedonien	502	497	489	467	457	434	-23
Albanien und Kroatien	132	132	142	142	169	169	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>13'778</b>	<b>13'632</b>	<b>13'361</b>	<b>13'117</b>	<b>12'935</b>	<b>12'564</b>	<b>-371</b>
+ Bulgarien							
+ Nord-Mazedonien	1'500	1'000	1'000	1'000	1'200	1'200	0
<b>Total Gesamt</b>	<b>15'278</b>	<b>14'632</b>	<b>14'361</b>	<b>14'117</b>	<b>14'135</b>	<b>13'764</b>	<b>-371</b>
<i>Änderung in %</i>	<i>-1.15</i>	<i>-4.23</i>	<i>-1.85</i>	<i>-1.7</i>	<i>+0.13</i>	<i>-2.62</i>	

# VII. Financial reports

## Statement 2017 - 2020

Treasurer: Iris Bullinger

<b>Einnahmen</b>	<b>Budget 2017 - 2020</b>		<b>Rechnung 2017</b>	
Beiträge Jährliche Konferenzen				
Schweiz	180'000.00		45'000.00	
Übrige Länder	61'000.00	241'000.00	15'207.48	60'207.48
Diverse Einnahmen		2'000.00		9'322.00
<b>Total Einnahmen</b>		<b>243'000.00</b>		<b>69'529.48</b>
<b>Ausgaben</b>				
Zentralkonferenz inkl. Protokoll	60'000.00		45'784.76	
Sitzungen Büro/Exek. inkl. Prot.	55'000.00	115'000.00	0.00	45'784.76
AG Theologie u. Ord. Dienste	8'000.00		1'927.75	
AG Kirche und Gesellschaft	3'000.00		0.00	
AG Kinder und Jugend	3'000.00		0.00	
AG Liturgie	3'000.00		785.60	
AG Kirchenordnung	3'000.00		0.00	
AG Frauendienst *	0.00		0.00	
AG Bischofsamt	1'000.00		0.00	
Reserve für a.o. Aufträge	2'000.00	23'000.00	0.00	2'713.35
Superintendententreffen	30'000.00		2'836.83	
Seminare	0.00	30'000.00	0.00	2'836.83
Beiträge der Zentralkonferenz an:				
Weltrat	15'000.00		2'921.40	
Europäischer Rat	29'000.00		6'149.73	
Kinder- und Jugendrat (EMYC)	20'000.00	64'000.00	4'386.80	13'457.93
Verschiedenes				
Druckkosten	2'000.00		0.00	
Bibliothek / Archiv	30'000.00		7'500.00	
Übrige Kosten	2'000.00	34'000.00	1'739.30	9'239.30
<b>Total Ausgaben</b>		<b>266'000.00</b>		<b>74'032.17</b>
<b>Einnahmen</b>		<b>243'000.00</b>		<b>69'529.48</b>
<b>Ausgaben</b>		<b>266'000.00</b>		<b>74'032.17</b>
<b>Einnahmen-Überschuss</b>				
<b>Ausgaben-Überschuss</b>		<b>-23'000.00</b>		<b>-4'502.69</b>

\* Die Kosten der AG Frauendienst werden vom FrauenNetzwerk der EMK Schweiz getragen.

<b>Einnahmen</b>	<b>Rechnung 2018</b>		<b>Rechnung 2019</b>	
Beiträge Jährliche Konferenzen				
Schweiz	45'000.00		45'000.00	
Übrige Länder	15'250.00	60'250.00	17'061.49	62'061.49
Diverse Einnahmen		370.85		291.20
<b>Total Einnahmen</b>		<b>60'620.85</b>		<b>62'352.69</b>
<b>Ausgaben</b>				
Zentralkonferenz inkl. Protokoll	0.00		0.00	
Sitzungen Büro/Exek. inkl. Prot.	16'181.36	16'181.36	28'738.86	28'738.86
AG Theologie u. Ord. Dienste	3'216.40		1'907.64	
AG Kirche und Gesellschaft	0.00		0.00	
AG Kinder und Jugend	0.00		0.00	
AG Liturgie	2'638.40		2'133.45	
AG Kirchenordnung	0.00		0.00	
AG Frauendienst *	0.00		0.00	
AG Bischofsamt	0.00		0.00	
Reserve für a.o. Aufträge	0.00	5'854.80	0.00	4'041.09
Superintendententreffen	5'293.70		12'515.70	
Seminare	0.00	5'293.70	0.00	12'515.70
Beiträge der Zentralkonferenz an:				
Weltrat	2'999.99		2'928.45	
Europäischer Rat	6'652.47		6'322.44	
Kinder- und Jugendrat (EMYC)	4'755.60	14'408.06	4'598.40	13'849.29
Verschiedenes				
Druckkosten	527.90		340.65	
Bibliothek Archiv	7'627.50		7'500.00	
Übrige Kosten	9'040.15	17'195.55	511.48	8'352.13
<b>Total Ausgaben</b>		<b>58'933.47</b>		<b>67'497.07</b>
<b>Einnahmen</b>		<b>60'620.85</b>		<b>62'352.69</b>
<b>Ausgaben</b>		<b>58'933.47</b>		<b>67'497.07</b>
<b>Einnahmen-Überschuss</b>		<b>1'687.38</b>		<b>0.00</b>
<b>Ausgaben-Überschuss</b>				<b>-5'144.38</b>

\* Die Kosten der AG Frauendienst werden vom FrauenNetzwerk der EMK Schweiz getragen.

<b>Einnahmen</b>	<b>Rechnung 2020</b>		<b>Konsolidiert 2017-2020</b>	
Beiträge Jährliche Konferenzen				
Schweiz	0.00		135'000.00	
Übrige Länder	0.00	0.00	47'518.97	182'518.97
Diverse Einnahmen				9'984.05
<b>Total Einnahmen</b>		<b>0.00</b>		<b>192'503.02</b>
<b>Ausgaben</b>				
Zentralkonferenz inkl. Protokoll	0.00		45'784.76	
Sitzungen Büro/Exek. inkl. Prot.	0.00	0.00	44'920.22	90'704.98
AG Theologie u. Ord. Dienste	0.00		7'051.79	
AG Kirche und Gesellschaft	0.00		0.00	
ag Kinder und Jugend	0.00		0.00	
AG Liturgie	0.00		5'557.45	
AG Kirchenordnung	0.00		0.00	
AG Frauendienst *	0.00		0.00	
AG Bischofsamt	0.00		0.00	
Reserve für a.o. Aufträge	0.00	0.00	0.00	12'609.24
Superintendententreffen	0.00		20'646.23	
Seminare	0.00	0.00	0.00	20'646.23
Beiträge der Zentralkonferenz an:				
Weltrat	0.00		8'849.84	
Europäischer Rat	0.00		19'124.64	
Kinder- und Jugendrat (EMYC)	0.00	0.00	13'740.80	41'715.28
Verschiedenes				
Druckkosten	0.00		868.55	
Bibliothek / Archiv	0.00		22'627.50	
Übrige Kosten	0.00	0.00	11'290.93	34'786.98
<b>Total Ausgaben</b>		<b>0.00</b>		<b>200'462.71</b>
<b>Einnahmen</b>		<b>0.00</b>		<b>192'503.02</b>
<b>Ausgaben</b>		<b>0.00</b>		<b>200'462.71</b>
<b>Einnahmen-Überschuss</b>		<b>0.00</b>		
<b>Ausgaben-Überschuss</b>				<b>-7'959.69</b>

\* Die Kosten der AG Frauendienst werden vom FrauenNetzwerk der EMK Schweiz getragen.

## Balance sheet of December 31, 2019

	Fr.	Fr.
<b>Aktiven</b>		
Zahlstelle EMK	157'564.12	
Guthaben	4'961.30	
<b>Passiven</b>		
Kreditoren / Trans. Passiven		3'978.97
Rückstellungen		0.00
Eigenkapital		163'690.83
Ergebnis		-5'144.38
<b>Total</b>	<b>162'525.42</b>	<b>162'525.42</b>

*Plan-Ies-Ouates, 28. Januar 2020, Iris Bullinger*

### Auditors Report

On behalf of the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe, I have revised the financial statements for the third year since the last Central Conference (the budget is drawn up for the entire four-year period between two Central Conferences).

The accounts for 2019 close with a loss of CHF 5'144.38 (cumulative loss for 2017 - 2019 of CHF 7'959.69). The stated equity capital as at December 31, 2019 amounts to CHF 158'546.45.

I have audited the opening and closing balance sheet, checked the annual accounts for the profit and loss accounts on a random basis and ascertained that the accounts have been kept clean and correct.

The undersigned certifies the accuracy of the 2019 financial statements and balance sheet as at December 31, 2019 and requests that the Treasurer, Iris Bullinger, discharge should be granted and thanked for her clean and diligent work.

Zurich, February 29, 2020

The auditor:  
Adrian Wenziker

# VIII. Institutions of Central Conference

## elected for 2017 - 2021

<b>Büro</b>	Pastor/-innen:	Laien:
Bischof, Vorsitz	Patrick Streiff	
Stv. Vorsitzende		Helene Bindl (AT)
Sekretär	Markus Bach (CH)	
Kassierin		Iris Bullinger (CH)

### **Exekutivkomitee**

#### ***Stimmberechtigte Mitglieder:***

Bischof, Vorsitz	Patrick Streiff	
Stv. Vorsitzende		Helene Bindl
Sekretär	Markus Bach	
Kassierin		Iris Bullinger
JK Österreich	Sup. Stefan Schröckenfuchs	Helene Bindl
JK Bulgarien-Rumänien	Sup. Daniel Topalski	Desislava Todorova
JK Schweiz-Frankreich-Nordafrika	Sup. Claudia Haslebacher	Lea Hafner
JK Tschechien-Slowakei	Sup. Štefan Rendoš	David Chlupáček
JK Ungarn	Sup. László Khaled	Henrik Schauermann
JK Polen	Sup. Andrzej Malicki	Olgierd Benedyktowicz
JK Serbien-Makedonien	Sup. Daniel Sjanta	Daniela Stoilkova
Vorsitz AG Bischofsamt	Sup. Jörg Niederer	

#### ***Mit beratender Stimme:***

Bischof im Ruhestand	Bischof Heinrich Bolleter	
Frankreich und Belgien	Sup. Etienne Rudolph	
Algerien und Tunesien	Freddy Nzambe	
Tschechien-Slowakei	Sup. Petr Procházka	
Nord-Mazedonien	Sup. Marjan Dimov	
Albanien	Sup. Wilfried Nausner	
Rat für Finanzen und Administration		Adrian Wenziker (CH)
Rechtsrat		Christa Tobler (CH)
AG Theologie u. Ordinierte Dienste	Stefan Zürcher (CH)	
AG Kinder und Jugend		Boris Fazekas (RS) oder Irena Stefanova (BG)
AG Kirche und Gesellschaft	David Chlupáček (CZ)	
AG Frauendienst		Monika Zuber (PL)
Koordinatorin des Frauendienstes		Barbara Bünger (CH)
AG Liturgie	Stefan Weller (CH)	
AG Kirchenordnung u. Rechtsfragen	Daniel Topalski (BG)	

## Rat für Finanzen und Administration

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Vorsitz

Adrian Wenziker (CH)  
Stefan Hafner (CH)  
Daniel Burkhalter (CH)

## Pensionsbehörde

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Bischof Patrick Streiff

Adrian Wenziker (CH)  
Stefan Hafner (CH)  
Daniel Burkhalter (CH)  
Marcel Rüeegg (CH)  
André Töngi (CH)

Zusätzliche Fachperson:

Pension Benefits Officer:

## Untersuchungsausschuss

---

JK Österreich

Stefan Schröckenfuchs

Roland Siegrist

JK Bulgarien-Rumänien

Mihail Stefanov

JK Schweiz-Frankreich-Nordafrika

Hanna Wilhelm (Einberuferin)

JK Tschechien-Slowakei

Petr Procházka

JK Ungarn

László Khaled

Grethe Jenei

JK Polen

Sławomir Rodaszyński

JK Serbien-Makedonien

Ana Palik-Kunčak

### Ersatzmitglieder:

JK Österreich

Martin Siegrist

JK Bulgarien-Rumänien

Margarita Todorova

JK Schweiz-Frankreich-Nordafrika

Gunnar Wichers

JK Tschechien-Slowakei

Pavel Procházka

JK Ungarn

Zoltán Kovács

JK Polen

Olgierd Benedyktowicz

JK Serbien-Makedonien

Marjan Dimov

## Berufungsausschuss

---

JK Österreich

Wilfried Nausner (Einberufer) Gerhard Weissenbrunner

JK Bulgarien-Rumänien

Mariela Mihaylova

JK Schweiz-Frankreich-Nordafrika

Etienne Rudolph

JK Tschechien-Slowakei

Pavel Hradský

JK Ungarn

Henrik Schauer mann

JK Polen

Józef Bartos

JK Serbien-Makedonien

Marija Parnicki

Lokalpfarrer - Local Pastor

Ruedi Stähli (CH)



**Ersatzmitglieder:**

JK Österreich		Hayford Boateng
JK Bulgarien-Rumänien	Margarita Todorova	
JK Schweiz-Frankreich-Nordafrika	Theo Rickenbacher	Marc Berger
JK Tschechien-Slowakei		Josef Thal (CZ)
JK Ungarn	Márton Hecker	
JK Polen		Bozena Daszuta
JK Serbien-Makedonien	Lila Balovski (RS)	
Lokalpfarrer	Ľuboš Tagaj (SK)	

**Rechtsrat**


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Vorsitzende	Martin Streit (CH)	Christa Tobler (CH)
	Lothar Pöll (AT)	Philipp Hadorn (CH)
	István Csernák (HU)	

**Ersatzmitglieder:**

Jean-Philippe Waechter (FR)	Bernhard Pöll (AT)
	Regula Dannecker (CH)

**Anwalt**


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Anwalt	Daniel Topalski (BG)
Ersatz	Markus Bach (CH)
	Petr Procházka (CZ)
	Gábor Szuhánszky (HU)
	Etienne Rudolph (FR)

**Arbeitsgruppe Bischofsamt**


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JK Österreich		Helene Bindl
JK Bulgarien-Rumänien		Desislava Todorova
JK Schweiz-Frankreich-Nordafrika	Jörg Niederer (Vorsitz)	
JK Tschechien-Slowakei	Štefan Rendoš	
JK Ungarn		Henrik Schauerermann
JK Polen	Andrzej Malicki	
JK Serbien-Makedonien	Daniel Sjanta	

**Arbeitsgruppe Theologie und Ordinierte Dienste**


---

Stefan Zürcher (CH - Vorsitzender)  
Michael Nausner (AT)  
Zoltán Kovács (HU)  
Daniel Sjanta (RS)  
Edward Puślecki (PL)  
Jana Daněčková (CZ)  
Vladimir Zhelezov (BG)  
(und 1 Vertretung aus der Zentralkonferenz Deutschland)

## **Arbeitsgruppe Kirche und Gesellschaft**

---

Marietjie Odendaal (CH)  
David Chlupáček (CZ - Vorsitzender)  
1 Person vakant

## **Arbeitsgruppe Kinder und Jugend**

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Irena Stefanova (BG - Co-Vorsitzender)  
Boris Fazekas (RS - Co-Vorsitzender)  
und die Delegierten der Länder an den EMYC

## **Arbeitsgruppe Frauendienst**

---

Monika Zuber (PL - Vorsitzende)  
Maria Đurovka-Petraš (RS)  
Gabriella Kopas (SK)  
Murielle Rietschi Wilhelm (CH)  
Zentralkonferenz-Koordinatorin: Barbara Büniger (CH)

## **Arbeitsgruppe Liturgie**

---

Stefan Weller (CH - Vorsitzender)  
Esther Handschin (AT)  
Sylvia Minder (CH)  
Peter Caley (CH)  
Jana Křížova (CZ)  
Erika Stalcup (CH)

## **Arbeitsgruppe Kirchenordnung und Rechtsfragen**

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Daniel Topalski (BG - Vorsitzender)  
Petr Procházka (CZ)  
Serge Frutiger (CH)  
Wilfried Nausner (AT – AL)

# Delegations of the Central Conference CSE in worldwide Commissions and Working Groups

## European Level:

### European Methodist Council (EMC) and Joint Commission of UMC in Europe

Bischof	Patrick Streiff	
	Margarita Todorova, (BG)	David Chlupáček (CZ)
	Andrzej Malicki (PL)	Emil Zaev (MK)

### European Commission on Mission (ECOM)

Connexio Co-Vorsitzender		Daniel Hänni (CH)
Connexio Geschäftsführer		Ulrich Bachmann (CH)

### Fund for Mission in Europe (FMIE)

Bischof	Patrick Streiff	David Chlupáček (CZ)
Geschäftsführer, beratend		Andreas Stämpfli (CH)

### Europäisches Laienseminar

Bettina Weller (CH)

### Methodist e-Academy (Governing Board)

Bischof	Patrick Streiff, Vorsitz	
	Ivana Procházková (CZ)	
	Daniel Topalski (BG)	
Koordinator, beratend		David Field (CH)

### Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa - GEKE (Süd-Ost-Europa)

Martin Siegrist (AT)  
Novica Brankov (RS)

### Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa - AG Kirchengemeinschaft

Jana Křížová (CZ)

### Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen (KEK)

Ständiges Ersatzmitglied des Verwaltungsrates      vakant

### Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE)

Mitglied Exekutivkomitee      Boris Fazekas (RS)

## Worldwide Level:

### Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters

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Bischof	Patrick Streiff	
	Petr Procházka (CZ)	Christine Schneider-Oesch (CH)

### Connectional Table

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Stefan Zürcher (CH)

### General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM)

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