

Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference

Documents concerning election of a bishop at the 2.-6. April 2025 Central Conference.

Copenhagen, March 2024

Dear Annual Conferences and members of the 2025 Central Conference.

To prepare you for your important task of electing a new bishop for our church, we have put together this package of documents relating to the nomination and election of a new bishop for the Nordic, Baltic, and Ukraine Area of our Central Conference.

Our hope is that by reading this material you will be well informed about the election itself and the qualifications to look for in candidates for the episcopacy.

The documents are as follows.

1. **Nomination and election of a new bishop.** This document contains the Book of Discipline paragraph 405 that sets out the rules and practices for the nomination and election of bishops in The United Methodist Church. This is the process we are going to follow. Note the important change from the last episcopal election: New candidates can be nominated throughout the whole process.

All nominations must be sent to the Central Conference office: office@umc-ne.org.

The time limit for nominees that will be included in the conference material is December 31st, 2024.

2. **The next bishop of the Nordic, Baltic, and Ukraine Area.** The Committee on Episcopacy has developed this list of “tasks and challenges” to supplement the general description of the “Specific Responsibilities of Bishops” in the Book of Discipline.
3. **Specific Responsibilities of Bishops.** This document contains paragraphs 414-416 of the 2016 Book of Discipline that describes what the ministry of bishops contains.
4. **A list of the information items** about the nominees that nominators must send to the episcopal office in Copenhagen when they make their nomination.

We invite you to read this material and to pray with us that The Holy Spirit will guide the church, through your wisdom, to find the right leader for the coming years.

If you have any questions, please contact the Chair of the Committee on Episcopacy Per-Endre Bjørnevik, at per-endre.bjornevik@lyse.net

In Christ

Committee on Episcopacy
of The Nordic, Baltic, and Ukraine Area

Nomination and election of a new bishop

The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference 2025

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

¶ 405. Election and Consecration of Bishops

1. Eligibility—All ordained Elders under the age of sixty-eight in full membership with a United Methodist annual conference and in active service are eligible to the episcopacy.
2. Term—
 - a) In Northern Europe and Eurasia a bishop is elected for a first term of eight years. A bishop can be reelected for a second term of four years. A bishop who has served a second term and will reach the official retirement age in his or her country within the following quadrennium can be reelected for a third term of four years.
 - b) An elder between the ages of sixty-four sixty-eight can only be elected for a term of four years.
3. Nomination—
 - a) An annual conference, in the session immediately prior to the next regular session of the central conference, may name one or more nominees for episcopal election. Also, members, groups of members, disciplinary entities, and organizations within The United Methodist Church in Northern Europe and Eurasia can place a nomination. All nominations shall be made in writing to the central conference committee on episcopacy within a time limit set by the central conference council.
 - b) A nomination must be made distinctively for one of the two areas.
 - c) All nominations shall be accompanied by a presentation of the candidate in writing – half a page A4 (500 words, 30 lines). The chairperson of the central conference committee on episcopacy must approve the presentation before further distribution. Presentation of persons nominated within the set time limit will be published in the pre-conference material.
 - d) Similar procedures shall be developed for persons nominated by ballot who receive ten votes or 5 percent of the votes cast, and the information shall be made available to the delegates at the site of the conference.
 - e) The Northern Europe and European United Methodist magazines and web pages will follow the nomination process on their own initiative from a journalistic perspective. Both nominators and nominees can make themselves available for additional information.
 - f) Nominators, in cooperation with the central conference committee on episcopacy, shall make it possible for the nominees to be present at the central conference.
 - g) A public presentation and hearing will be held at the central conference.
 - h) Debate and election speeches are allowed until the nomination is closed.
4. Process—
 - a) Election is by closed ballot and takes place in a session set by the central conference.
 - b) Tellers elected by the conference will count the votes.
 - c) Delegates, in electing bishops, shall give due consideration to the inclusiveness of The United Methodist Church with respect to sex, race, and national origin. In addition, consideration shall be given to the nature of superintendency as described in ¶ 401.
 - d) The ballot is secret and personal. Delegates cannot be bound to vote for any specific nominee.
 - e) Two thirds of given and valid votes are necessary to elect a bishop.
5. Consecration - of bishops takes place at the session of the conference at which election occurs or at a place and time designated by the conference. The consecration service may include bishops from other jurisdictional and central conferences. At least one elder and one lay shall participate in the consecration. It is strongly urged that the consecration service also include representatives from other Christian communions, particularly those with whom we have a formal agreement that includes the mutual recognition of ministry and ordination.

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

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

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

Tasks and challenges of our future bishop

1. Lead the church in mission.

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

2. Leadership in different cultures

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

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

3. A leader for all

From the October 2023 consultation in Riga, we have a momentum towards mutual recognition between different theological positions. Throughout the episcopal area there are different theological understandings of several topics among those, human sexuality. We wish and hope to be able to live together in one church, where each Annual Conference can decide its own policy on matters relating to human sexuality. All our people independent of their theological position need to know that their ministry is welcomed and appreciated in the church. We need a bishop that supports this mutual respect and helps us find a way forward together.

4. A European leader

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

5. Leading in a time of war and humanitarian crisis

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

Specific Responsibilities of Bishops

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

¶ 414. *Leadership—Spiritual and Temporal*

1. To lead and oversee the spiritual and temporal affairs of The United Methodist Church which confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and particularly to lead the Church in its mission of witness and service in the world.
2. To strengthen the local church, giving spiritual leadership to both laity and clergy; and to build relationships with people of local congregations of the area.
3. To guard, transmit, teach, and proclaim, corporately and individually, the apostolic faith as it is expressed in Scripture and tradition, and, as they are led and endowed by the Spirit, to interpret that faith evangelically and prophetically.
4. To travel through the connection at large as the Council of Bishops (¶ 422) to implement strategy for the concerns of the Church.
5. To teach and uphold the theological traditions of The United Methodist Church.
6. To provide liaison and leadership in the quest for Christian unity in ministry, mission, and structure and in the search for strengthened relationships with other living faith communities.
7. To organize such missions as shall have been authorized by the General Conference.
8. To promote and support the evangelistic witness of the whole Church.
9. To discharge such other duties as the *Discipline* may direct.
10. To convene the Order of Deacons and the Order of Elders and work with the elected chairperson of each order.
11. To promote, support, and model generous Christian giving, with special attention to teaching the biblical principles of giving.

¶ 415. *Presidential Duties*

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

is geographically located in a remote location from other districts of the annual conference. When any of these conditions exist, the bishop, in consultation with the congregational development area of the annual conference, may designate any district a mission district. The mission district may be organized in the same manner and have the same rights and powers as any district.

5. To appoint the district superintendents annually.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. To keep and maintain appropriate supervisory records on all district superintendents and other records on ministerial personnel as determined by the bishop or required by the *Discipline* or action of the annual conference. When a district superintendent is no longer appointed to the cabinet, the bishop shall give that person's supervisory file to the superintendent of record. Supervisory records shall be kept under guidelines approved by the General Council on Finance and Administration. The supervisory records maintained by the bishop are not the personnel records of the annual conference.

Presentation of nominees for episcopacy

Please send information concerning your candidate in relation to the items below. The whole document must not be longer than one A4 page.

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

E-mail of the central conference office: office@umc-ne.org

Name and picture:

Address, E-mail, and telephone number:

Education:

Speaks the following languages:

Annual Conference:

Year of ordination:

Appointment history:

Present appointment:

Important roles/ministry outside appointments:

Literary production:

Particular skills and interests: