

Report

Annual Conference with Theobalt contact persons
Visby, 6th – 8th of September 2002

The following churches were represented:

ELC of Finland, Kaarlo Kaliala; Orthodox Church of Finland, Rauno Pietarinen; ELKRAS, Alexander Pastor; ELCIR, Alexander Priloutski; Russian Orthodox Church, Elena Speranskaya; ELC of Estonia, Patrik Göransson, Estonian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate, Leonti Morozkin; Orthodox Church of Estonia, Mattias Palli; Roman Catholic Church in Latvia, Karlis Cerans; ELC of Lithuania, Darius Petkunas; Roman Catholic Church in Lithuania Kestutis Rugevicius; ELC of the Augsburg Confession in Poland, Ireneusz Lukas; Roman Catholic Church in Poland, Jacek Wojtkowski; EKD/ELC of North Elbia, Wolfgang Vogelmann; Roman Catholic Church in Germany, Stephan Dreyer; ELC of Denmark, Ruth H van Gilse; ELC of Sweden, Biörn Fjärstedt, Ragnar Svenserud, Kristina S Furberg, a total of 19 persons (hosts included).

The next conference for contact persons is planned to take place in September 2003. An invitation has been issued from the ecumenical council in St. Petersburg.

Outing to Churches on the South of Gotland

The conference commenced with an outing by buss to the central and south of Gotland. The group visited the churches of Väte and Fröjel under the expert guidance of Licentiate of Philosophy Åke G Sjöberg. Sjöberg is among other things Chairman of “The Cooperative Association for the Care and Preservation of Gotland’s Churches”.

The outing ended with dinner at Herrvik, an old fishing village on the east coast of the island and later, evening prayers in the parish church of Östergarn.

Impressions and experiences after the passed year as a contact person and reflections on the future

It was discussed how Theobalt can be a positive factor in the near future, when the European Union draws a new dividing line between Russia and the rest of the Baltic area. From the Russian Orthodox participant it was said that the Russian Orthodox Church is interested in the development of the other European countries and that it is a good idea to use Theobalt as a channel for information and relationships. One of the reasons given for this was that in Theobalt there is a unique space for the churches and it’s representatives to speak unofficially with each other. It was also stated that Theobalt wants to offer a platform for the churches to meet and that issues of contemporary Baltic life and society always are on the agenda.

From EKD and Hamburg it was reported that a new contact person will be elected. The reason is that the present contact person is involved with a project of immigrant churches in the harbour area of the city.

A new member in the network was suggested, the Roman Catholic Church in the Nordic countries. The bishop of Visby could send an invitation to the Nordic bishop's council who could send one mutual representative.

Information about studies

Peter van Tour, project manager of "Baltic School of Early Music" informed the participants about plans for a two-year course on Early Music for 30 students from the Baltic area. For more information, click [here](#).

The participants were informed about a Consultation on Care and Preservation of Church buildings. The Consultation will be held on Gotland in October of this year and invites experts on renovation and conservation and theologians respectively.

Patrik Göransson from St. Michael's Swedish Church in Tallinn informed about ongoing plans for restoring and reopening the Residential Study Centre in Tallinn/Haapsalu, which was closed down during the Soviet occupation. The study centre specializes in language studies but is planning for a wider range of topics. More information can be given through Patrik: patrik.goransson@eelk.ee He also spoke about possible cooperation with the Residential Study Centre in Fårösund, Kustparksskolan. (<http://www.kustparksskolan.nu/>).

Information about other networks

bien

The participants were informed about the ecumenical youth festival, held in Visby during one summer week 2002. It was organised by bien – Baltic intercultural and ecumenical network in cooperation with the Diocese of Visby, the Cathedral parish in Visby and Corpus Christi Roman Catholic parish on Gotland. Two hundred young people from all around the Baltic Sea and from the three main Christian traditions met under the guiding theme "On the move" with reference to Luke 24.

For more information: <http://www.bienweb.org/>

Emergency Preparedness

Military Chaplain, Per Anders Sandgren presented some questions concerning a newly formed network dealing with Emergency preparedness in the Baltic Sea region. The network includes representatives from different authorities; police, rescue service, customs and military among others. There is also an interest to engage the churches in the area. The Church of Sweden has decided to take part in the network and will of course welcome other churches that wish to join. For more information click [here](#).

Upcoming events within and without the network

Alexander Pastor from St. Petersburg spoke to the group about the upcoming 300-year anniversary of his town. He said that for a long time St. Petersburg has been multicultural and multi-confessional. There is also good cooperation between the different Christian traditions, through an ecumenical council. The council invites the contact persons for Theobalt to meet in St. Petersburg for the annual conference 2003.

There are plans to organize it as a seminar in September or October for around 50 persons, the contact persons and a number of youth delegates. The Lutheran Archbishop Kretschmar and Russian Orthodox Father Artemij Skripkine wish the seminar to be a common initiative.

He also spoke of plans that are already taking form concerning a bien festival in the old town of Ladoga in 2004.

Kaarlo Kalliala of the ELC in Finland informed the group of a coming event in Turku, Finland 8th – 11th of May 2003. It is a Baltic forum for NGOs. He proposed that Theobalt should be present during the forum, for example as host for an evening prayer.

Ireneusz Lukas of the ELC of the Augsburg Confession in Poland informed about a follow-up of the Theobalt V conference, which is to be held in Warsaw. It will be a meeting between the three church traditions in Poland, all very different in structure, size and financial situation. It is planned to take the form of a seminar, organized by the Theological seminar and will be held in April 2003. The theme will be “Human dignity as the base for political and social order in a uniting Europe – a Christian perspective”.

Ragnar Svenserud, Diocese of Visby informed the group about the Conference of European Churches’ (CEC) general assembly in Trondheim, Norway 25th of June – 2nd July 2003. For more information see: <http://www.cec-kek.org/>

Theme of the coming conference Theobalt VI

The next major Theobalt conference is planned to take place in the summer of 2004. The contact persons discussed different suggestions of Themes for the conference:

- Church and Democracy – a Christian reflection on the Constitution of the European Union
- Minority and Majority – On Migrant Churches
- Intercultural dialogue in the Church – the Challenge of secularisation

The suggested themes will be presented to the steering committee at the annual meeting in February 2003.

Conclusion of the Conference

After the Saturday session and Vespers in the Cathedral, alternately Mass in the Roman Catholic parish the Bishop Biörn Fjärstedt invited the contact persons to a buffet dinner in his home.

On Sunday Service was celebrated according to tradition, after which the conference ended.