

THEOBALT

Standing committee

Meeting, the 24th - 25th of January
at Stjärnholm, conference centre of the Diocese of Strängnäs, Sweden.

Participants

Rt Rev Biörn Fjärstedt, moderator	Church of Sweden, Diocese of Visby
Rev Kestutis Rugevicius	Roman Catholic Church in Lithuania
Father Warsanofiusz Doroszkiewicz	Orthodox Church in Poland
Rt Rev Jonas Jonson	Church of Sweden, Diocese of Strängnäs
Rev Mette Trankjaer	Lutheran Church of Denmark
Rt Rev Ilkka Kantola	Lutheran Church of Finland
Rev Andrei Elisseev	Russian Orthodox Church
Rt Rev Jacek Jezierski	Roman Catholic Church in Poland
Rev Ragnar Svenserud, secretary	Church of Sweden, Diocese of Visby,

Friday, the 24th of January

The standing committee was invited to a seminar together with the deans of the Diocese of Strängnäs. Father Jan Buckowski from the Roman Catholic congregation in the neighbouring town of Nyköping was also invited to take part in the seminar. Bishop Jonas opened the seminar and welcomed the participants. To begin with he presented his diocese briefly, after which the participants from Theobalt gave a short presentation of their Churches.

Besides offering an opportunity to meet from different parts of the Baltic, the purpose of the seminar was to focus on the situation of the Christian traditions in the area. The presentation of the Churches and the following common discussion were summed up in five points:

- Christian education in a transitional period of society
- Diaconal work – an indispensable contribution of the churches
- Relations between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches
- Re-evangelisation – a common challenge for the Baltic Churches
- Belonging but not believing – people's attitude to Christian traditions today

The seminar then was divided into three groups for further discussions on the five issues.

Saturday, the 25th of January

1. Report on activities 2002

The report had been sent to the members of the committee in advance. Some comments were made:

- *Theobalt V – a follow up in Poland*: At its meeting last year the committee had declared that Theobalt V, dealing with the role of the churches in relation to the enlargement of the European Union, ought to be followed up on national levels. The

recommendation was to start in Poland. Consequently, a planning meeting took place in Warsaw in April 2002. The three Theobalt contact persons in Poland participated together with Ragnar Svenserud, co-ordinator of Theobalt. Plans were made for a consultation in Warsaw in November 2002. The suggested theme was: *Human dignity as the base for political and social order in a uniting Europe – a Christian perspective*. Due to unforeseen reasons the consultation has been postponed till April 2003. Bishop Jacek undertook to investigate the present plans.

- *Seminars and meetings*: A written report from the consultation on care and preservation of church buildings were distributed. The arrangement had opened up for contacts and a kind of network between people working with these matters in the different churches. It was also reported about the symposium in the Baltic in June 2003 arranged by the Religion, Science and the Environment on the initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. The planning committee had a meeting in Visby in December 2002. Ragnar Svenserud has been invited to join the planning committee.
- *Finances*: The report about the finances gave opportunity for a longer discussion on the identity of Theobalt and its legal status. Theobalt is more and more asked for and involved in different arrangements and projects in the Baltic area. This leads to a greater demand for sufficient financing and a stronger structure. The question was raised whether Theobalt could remain a network co-ordinated within the general work of the diocese of Visby or if a separate legal status is required, making Theobalt more like an independent organisation. It was generally stressed that Theobalt should remain a network with the co-ordinating responsibility entrusted to the diocese of Visby. Size, form and costs for administration must remain at a minimum. However, some aspects have to be paid attention to in particular:
 - the financing has to be secured; the statement of accounts should be clearly presented
 - the concept cannot be resting only upon individual persons, but must be a formally integrated part of the task of the diocese of Visby
 - it is a common responsibility for all network churches to maintain and develop the network with a clear mandate to the standing committee and through the system with contact persons.

2. 2003 – planned and possible events

A list of particular events together with a description of the running work point by point during 2003 had been distributed before the meeting. The support of language courses in co-operation with Nordplus – a joint organisation between the Scandinavian faculties of theology - was approved. The purpose is to arrange courses in the Russian and English languages for Russian and Scandinavian students. It has also been suggested that Theobalt participates in ‘Baltic Forum for NGOs’ in Turku in May. Bishop Ilkka will investigate the basis for a closer contact with this network and a possible participation.

3. Baltic School for Early Music

Theobalt has been asked to support this project for music students from the Baltic area. The contribution requested from Theobalt is assistance with marketing activities towards the network churches plus some general information and administration. Financial means will have to be applied for from other sources. The activities will be located to the study centre in Fårösund on Gotland, which is a partner to Theobalt within the programme of intercultural and ecumenical communication. The purpose of the Baltic School for Early

Music is to arrange two years courses in early music connected to liturgical traditions from eastern as well as western parts of the Baltic area.

4. Participation of the general assembly of CEC (Conference of European Churches)

The participation will be within the Partners' programme of the general assembly and in co-operation with the Council for Christian Churches of the Barents region (SKKB). A short presentation of SKKB was given by Bishop Jonas. The assembly takes place in Trondheim, Norway on the 25th of June – the 2nd of July 2003.

The purpose is to present the network to the church representatives and visitors. That will be done in the form of an exhibition connected with a booth plus a workshop. The theme for the workshop is suggested to be 'Facing common challenges around the Baltic Sea – a Mare Ecumenicum'. Moderator: Bishop Jonas. Rev Andrei, who is member of the planning committee, will join the Theobalt arrangement at the assembly. It is preferred that there will also be a Lutheran and a Roman Catholic representative from the network.

The planning work will be done by the staff of the diocese of Visby in co-operation by the diocese of Luleå as representatives from SKKB.

5. Theobalt V

The committee noted that in 2004, when the next general Theobalt conference will take place, there are two factors that have to be particularly observed and related to:

- 1) The Constitution of the Union, which should have been adopted by then;
- 2) The enlargement of the Union around the Baltic sea is effected;

The committee members agreed on that the next conference should deal with the role of the churches in the new situation of the Baltic societies after the enlargement of the union. It was left to the diocese of Visby to develop the details of the programme including proposing the theme.

Some aspects were noted:

- * The union started as a moral project, but has developed into an economical platform
- * Some people feel threatend by the development of the union
- * Christian values interpreted by the churches may disagree with the union's interpretation
- * The interaction of European values, Christian values and Human values.

Some tentative themes were mentioned more or less clearly formulated:

'Christian values – supporting and challenging the EU'

The impact of the Constitution should be focused in one way or the other,
Unity in diversity within the Christian traditions - a contribution to society?

Possible key note speakers:

Bishop Hilarion, Brussels, representative of the Russian Orthodox Church to the EU
Grace Davie, Exeter university

Ragnar Svenserud