

The Ministry as Bishop and Leader within the United Methodist Church

A revised study report for use in the Baltic and Eurasia

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Preface

Every Church has a structure of leadership. In its origin it might be carefully prepared and theologically based. Or perhaps it was shaped by outstanding leaders, who practised the leadership of the Church at the time when structures were formed. Every church will develop a tradition of leadership and leadership execution, irrespective of how the structures of leadership was initiated. Tradition is not only adherence to old customs, in particular tradition are experiences accumulated and deliberately preserved. The traditions of leadership within the United Methodist Church (UMC) are accumulated in the Book of Discipline. The readjustment of the Book of Discipline every 4th year by the General Conference demonstrates that the UMC regularly intensifies its experiences, its tradition and evaluates the part of its tradition, which can be dated several years back, by reorganising and altering the practice of leadership of earlier times. Thus, the structure of leadership absolutely is a part of the valuable tradition of the Church but simultaneously a structure in process of improvement.

During all periods of time the Church will be challenged to have a clear awareness of its leadership. This awareness will force the Church to the biblical texts in search for the consequences of an understanding of the underlying meaning of leadership of God's People. Naturally, this reflection on the biblical texts causes a special attention towards John Wesley's and the first Methodists' understanding of the biblical texts, and an acceptance of the ancient Church's Apostolic practice in preference to private casual ideas.

The Central Conference of the UMC in the Northern Europe constitutes two Episcopal areas: The Northern Europe (Nordic and Baltic Areas) and the Eurasia (Moscow Area). The study report on The Episcopal Office from 1995 was largely written from the view of the situation

in the Episcopal area of Northern Europe. The UMC in Eurasia was very young at that specific time and the Committee on Episcopacy considered this study report of no present interest for the Eurasia area.

The history of Methodism in Russia can be dated back to the mission of BA Carlsen in St. Petersburg in approximately 1889, and the Czar's recognition of the Episcopal Methodist Church in Russia and Finland in 1892 gave a possibility of expansion the following year. Compared with other European countries this recognition was very early and very remarkably liberal compared to the historical state of the Orthodox Church in the Czarist Russia. Independent of the mission in the area around St. Petersburg German Methodist preachers came to the German speaking workers in Kaunas and Vilnius in 1904 and founded a mission which gradually spread to White Russia. In 1907 the Methodist Church in Russia was growing in such an extent that Dr. George A. Simons was appointed superintendent with headquarter in St. Petersburg. The Episcopal Methodist Church continued its work up to the revolution in 1917, which caused a substantial change in the working conditions of the Church. Superintendent George A. Simons stayed in St. Petersburg until 1920 where he was to move the headquarter of the Church to Riga in Latvia. Deaconess Anne Eklund stayed in St. Petersburg until 1927, however from 1930 a leadership of the Methodism in Russia was no longer to be found, and the political conditions caused Methodists either to ally themselves with other denominations, congregate as a resistance church or give up. The structured and organised ministry of the Church ceased.

When UMC in 1992 was restored in Eurasia, in succession to the emergence (appearance) of a number of Methodist congregations during the previous couple of years, it was in fact a resumption (reopening) and a continuation of the work, founded 100 years earlier. But, as an organised congregation did not exist and no public service had been held for more than 50 years, what really happened was a new plantation of Methodism in a country, where a direct and living connection back to the roots of Russian Methodism did not exist. In the reestablishment of UMC in 1992 the Church had to draw on support from the leadership of the Global Methodist Church, just as every mission area may use the global and connective leadership to get started and to establish itself. After the first period of establishment every missionary church will reach a certain degree of maturity, where the tasks of forming its own leadership and encouraging its own leaders to be qualified personnel resources are of importance. In 1995 it was time to begin a study of the Episcopal Leadership of the Methodist Church within The Northern and Baltic Areas. The Committee on Episcopacy decided in October 1998 that it was a natural step to continue this process in Eurasia with a new revised edition of the 1995 study report The Ministry as Bishop and Leader within the Methodist Church.

The reestablishment of UMC in 1992 in Eurasia caused that a working Church do exist today. Continuously, members are developed into leaders of all kind of tasks within the Ministry of the Church. Leadership is not only a matter of persons performing management, it is just as much a matter of nurturing the necessary personnel resources for the services of the Church. The Church shall be the heart of moulding and development of future leaders after the model of leadership, developed by the Church itself. The management of society, whether the managers are politicians or businesspeople, are not to be copied or imitated by the Church. The theology and the goal of the Church are to form and develop men and women into the Ministry of leadership of the Church in a certain country and culture. Thus the demand for focusing on church leadership and structure will be of importance after the reestablishment of the Church, which is the fact in UMC in Eurasia today. It is possible now to read the Bible and to understand the Wesleyan inheritance from an Eurasian point of view. And through

study, prayer and conversations about the means of grace, which the Community of Believers constitute, the Committee on Episcopacy invites every member of UMC in Eurasia to participate in further development of a genuine Christian leadership reflecting both the characters of the peoples of Eurasian and a true contrast to the World, where people do not live in accordance with the Gospel.

The Episcopal Methodist Church & the Episcopal Office

The Methodist Church was constituted as an independent organisation at the Christmas Conference in Baltimore in 1784. At this conference the movement, formerly understood as Methodism, were formed into a Church. Naturally the Methodists had a structure, a management and a plan of organisation before the Christmas Conference, but they were a movement within the Anglican Church and they recognised the Anglican Church's structure, clergy and episcopacy. The origin of the UMC was the Christmas Conference in Baltimore 1784.

Also the Doctrinal standard as an Episcopal Church origins from the Christmas Conference in 1784. The constitution of the Methodist Episcopacy and the Methodist Church took place at the same conference. Both the Church and the Episcopal Office rendered visible and manifested themselves through the ordination of Francis Asbury as Bishop. Thus it does not make any sense to ask when the Methodist Church instituted the Episcopacy. The truth is: No Episcopacy without the Church and no Church without Episcopacy.

Even if a clarity of the unity of the Methodist Church and the Episcopacy do exist, it is impossible to find the same clarity in the understanding of the Episcopacy.

The name of the Church strongly stresses the Episcopal view. Before 1784 the word *Methodist(s)* was applied to the people in the movement, and the conference was called "Conversations between the Preachers in connection with the Rev. Mr John Wesley". But from 1784 the name *The Methodist Episcopal Church* was used in ordinary language and as the formal name of the conferences.

Already during the Christmas Conference Dr Thomas Coke taught the attendants that the term The Methodist Episcopacy was indefinable because we have an Episcopacy but no Bishop. In the minutes from 1784 to 1787 Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury were addressed as Superintendents. In the minutes from 1788 their titles were changed to "Bishops" without indication of any reason. When John Wesley became acquainted with this he responded extremely sharp and warned in a letter: "For Christ's sake put a full end to this!" In the minutes from the following year there is no reference or comment on Wesley's letter, but the title "Bishop" is exchanged with the original "Superintendent". Hereafter persons who are exercising the Episcopal Office are mentioned. Now the name of John Wesley has been added and so it remains during the rest of his lifetime without further protests from John Wesley.

It should be noted which words and which exchanges in the wordings the disciplinary questions contain:

In 1789, in the first minutes after Wesley's protest, the original question has been re-worded into two questions. It is asked who exercise the Episcopacy in Europe and in America and the names Wesley, Coke and Asbury are answered in said order. Then it is asked who is appointed by the General Conference to superintend Methodism in America and hereto only the names Coke and Asbury are answered. This split into two differently worded questions

indicates on one hand that Coke's and Asbury's superintendence and leadership are comparable with the leadership John Wesley has exercised in Great Britain for years. This is where the acceptance of John Wesley's factual leadership of British Methodism, as an Episcopal ministry, comes in and thus it can be described as exercise of an Episcopal Office; an Office which obviously continued in America by the ministries of Coke and Asbury. On the other hand the independence of American Methodism is emphasised by election on the General Conference of personnel to superintend within a certain geographical area (Who have been elected to superintend in America?). The General Conference's right to elect and empower persons to exercise an Episcopal Office stresses the authority held by the Church, as an assembly, compared with the authority of individual leaders. The geographical bounds are also a reduction of the authority given to superintendents. Already in 1787 similar functional and limiting understandings of the Episcopacy were hinted at in the bracketed remark "when present in the States", which followed the name of Thomas Cokes in the answer to the question Who serves as superintendents. Naturally, this meant that the Methodists in America was to understand that Coke could only exercise leadership when he was present in the United States. And furthermore a non unimportant aspect in the answer was the consideration to British Methodists' fear that Coke, on his travels outside America, should use or arrogate power to ordain preachers or organise a church-formation in areas where the Anglican Church office was intact. On the contrary the absence of a working Church including ordained leaders to serve the people was of substantial importance for the decision to form the Episcopal Methodist Church in America.

This apparent uncertainty in the understanding of what an Episcopal Church structure contained and which status a person in an Episcopal Office held, naturally originated from the contemporary Anglican meaning of the words "Bishop" and "Episcopal". The Episcopal Methodist Church has its source from the Anglican Church, which, according to Wesley, was the best constituted national Church in the World. But to the picture belongs the fact that Wesley and his closest successors took the initiative to form a church where the analogies to the Anglican structure and offices are clear, but where the content is so strongly reformed through its origin in the Early Church and the Biblical Scriptures, that the Church in reality is structured quite differently than the Anglican Church's single-stringed structure and distinct Episcopal hierarchy. And therein is the explanation why Wesley - on one hand gave the order to form the Episcopal Methodist Church in America, with a clear tripartite office: Deacon, Elder and Episcopal, and his elaborated Church handbook, *The Sunday Service 1784*, which included all necessary rituals for ordinations - and on the other hand protested strongly against any use of the title "Bishop" because it caused some false associations to the Anglican Bishops and a wrong understanding of the Episcopacy. The Methodist understanding of the Episcopacy can be characterised as moderate compared with the Anglican and the Roman Catholic model.

Various Models for Church Structure and Principles of Leadership

In the Bible and in the Early Church (the first three centuries) there are three models of management and church structure. In excess of the Episcopal model, where the leadership is collected in one character, there are the Presbyterian and the Congregational or democratic models. The growth of the Episcopal Methodist Church shows that all three principles of leadership are suitable, although history shows that the tension between the three have not always been fruitful and positive. But it is of importance that within the Episcopal Methodist Church the Episcopacy is growing through dialogue and in balance with the two other principles of leadership. In John Wesley's leadership of the British Methodism and through his long

and careful preparation of liberation of the American Methodism we clearly notice that all three principles of leadership are appropriate.

On American soil it ought to be noticed that the foundation of the Episcopal Methodist Church took place simultaneously with the foundation of the United States of America, when the Constitution (1787) was formed, which have influenced both ways. From various parties have been argued that especially Reformed and Methodist theology and theory have exercised profound influence on the elaboration of the political system in USA. On the contrary the first implementation of the tripartite power, convincingly introduced by the French enlightenment philosophers, certainly has influenced the Episcopal Methodist Church's view on the ideal structure of leadership and power. Wherever Wesley and his close colleagues were very much acquainted with the Episcopal, Presbyterian and Congregational principles of leadership, the continuation of these principles have been influenced by the balance of power between the legislative, the executive and the judicial power, which was complied with by the political system in the USA. In that way the Episcopacy got an extra accentuation of executive power in dissociation from the Conference, where on the contrary the legislative element was consolidated.

The **Presbyterian** thought (theology) was alive in British Methodism from a very early time. Since 1744 several preachers exposed pressure on John Wesley to make him exercise the authority to ordain; an authority many people were theologically convinced he held. Such an outstanding theologian and leader as John Fletcher had urged John Wesley to use his authority to ordain, as early as 10 years before this authority was exercised. However, the opinions among the leaders of the movement were sharply opposed. Especially, Charles Wesley opposed violently several times, and in many letters he warned John Wesley against the effect of the preachers' ambitions and the American Methodists want of independence. The disagreement between the two brothers as to this matter was clearly manifested when Coke was set apart (consecrated and inducted) in Bristol. John Wesley elaborated *The Sunday Service*, published the book and executed the induction of Coke in his new office in anticipation of the foundation of the Episcopal Methodist Church in America *without* inviting or informing his brother Charles, even though Charles lived in Bristol where the induction took place. Charles would never support and still less assist in such an action, and afterwards in public he sharply took issue with John Wesley's action.

In the letter John Wesley in September 1784 gave Thomas Coke to the Americans he wrote that reading Lord Peter King's book convinced him that he as a presbyter in the Anglican Church held the authority to ordain. Also his reading of Bishop Samuel Stillingfleet had contributed to this conviction. The problem is that the words presbyteros and episkopos in the Bible and in the Early Church were used almost synonymously. Two different orders or offices is not the point but the distinction of two branches of the ministry. A presbyter and a bishop hold the same office and hold the same authority. A presbyter, who services as a bishop, is still a presbyter and officiate as such, but is in addition obliged to supervise other congregations. Generally, the authority to ordain is exercised by a bishop according to the Church order for management. The validity of the ordination however, is not qualified by the performance of a bishop. The Episcopal authority is not to be passed on from bishop to bishop, as the Episcopacy is not different from but a part of the sole office in which the ministry as presbyter is included. In the significant Bishopric in Alexandria in the ages of the Early Church for example, the regular practice was that the group of presbyters elected and inducted the bishop. It was not the retiring bishop who passed his authority on to the new bishop. Every time the process will be in progress within the group of presbyters, who have the full

power to elect, ordain and induce. A community of presbyters, a so called presbytery, have the deciding vote. When the presbytery had set apart one to be leader of the group of presbyters of the same standing, it was the duty of the bishop set apart to exercise authority to ordain. Still it was the presbytery who held the power to elect and examine persons for deacons, presbyters and bishops. (In a pure Episcopal church structure the Episcopacy is a separate class with supreme authority to appoint the inferior clergy.) With reference to this theology John Wesley writes about himself that he holds precisely the same power to ordain and to pass on the power to ordain, as the Archbishop of Canterbury holds. Thus the conclusive argument for Wesley is not whether he holds the authority, but whenever it is right and necessary to exercise this authority. The right moment will occur, if the Anglican bishops do not exercise their duties according to Wesley's view or are prohibited from exercising their authority. And this was exactly the situation in the independent America. Earlier Wesley applied the Bishops in London and Canterbury to ordain the Methodist preachers both in England and in the American colonies, but without any result. In 1784 he considered the Bishops to have missed their chance and that they would do more harm than good. Therefore he stated that the Methodists cannot take their stand on any liable, existing Episcopacy. In this situation John Wesley assembled a small presbytery in a private home in Bristol. At first two lay people were ordained to presbyters and entered into the presbytery, secondly the presbytery consecrated and inducted Dr. Thomas Coke as superintendent for the Methodists in America, with the exact instruction to ordain Francis Asbury as presbyter and to induct him as superintendent and form an independent church in America. For Wesley it was the presbytery, at least three presbyters jointly, who held the authority. And as long as British Methodism was a part of the Anglican Church it were the Anglican Bishops who quite orderly held the office to supervise and the duty to ordain. But if the bishops are prohibited from or, for various reasons, abstain from exercising their duty a presbytery has the full power to exercise the Episcopal office. Thus John Wesley did not plead for the Episcopal authority, in an high church understanding, even if he describes the supervision and leadership he exercises on Methodist societies as a scriptural episkopos, but he asserted that he already held the full power and was entitled to exercise his power if necessary. And for America the necessity arose in 1784. The next ordinations Wesley exercised were to induct presbyters at first in Scotland and Ireland and at last also in England. John Wesley ordained 25 presbyters before he died in 1791.

In America the Presbyterian model won support especially in the areas where the Calvinistic influence was important. (The conception of presbyterian is often understood as being identical with calvinistic because the Calvinistic Churches have a presbyterian church structure). Both before and after the foundation of the Church in 1784 several ordinations were exercised in areas where groups of preachers, not all presbyters, formed a presbytery and exercised ordinations. The ordinations exercised by Thomas Coke at the Christmas Conference in 1784 were to be compared with Wesley's ordination of Thomas Coke and the other two presbyters in Bristol. Coke did not exercise any ordination alone, but the present presbyters participated. And as the preachers were ordained to presbyters they participated in the following ordinations. Thus Coke did not with a claim of Episcopal succession pass on the Episcopal authority alone, but as a leader he assembled and conducted the present presbyters in the induction of Francis Asbury. To stress this understanding, please note, that the minutes from the conference says that if the persons, who hold the Episcopal Office, should disappear or die, it is unnecessary to find a Bishop who again can institute the Episcopacy in the Church. *Eo ipso* the Church does exist, the constitution of the Church includes the Episcopacy and by virtue of the presbytery, the Church can elect and induct persons to the Episcopal Office. And in the

same way every candidate to every ordained office can be elected by the presbytery after which the Bishop can exercise the ordination.

The **congregational or democratic** thought (theology) is characteristic of a principle of leadership where the decision-making process moves from the bottom to the top. With a starting point in the ordinary ministry (1st Peter 2:9) a larger or minor group of associates and followers were invited to participate in the decision-making processes. Thus Church power does not decent from the high office to the low. The hierarchy or power is turned upside down and moves from the bottom to the top.

Beyond dispute John Wesley was the leader of British Methodism. He listened to other peoples pieces of good advise and arguments but he alone made the decisions. Early in the history of the movement Wesley assembled his preachers to a conference where preaching, dogma and strategy were debated. In conformity with the brotherhood in the Holy Club Wesley developed an intensive group dynamics with the freedom to introduce and test various views. But Wesley was not a democrat and the decisions were his alone.

Wesley himself was surprised that he lived for such a long time. Therefore we find that he several times considers and makes plan for the management of Methodism after his death. During a certain period he considers to find a person, who can continue the movement in accordance with his own open, but authoritarian principles of leadership. Both his younger brother Charles Wesley and the outstanding theologian John Fletcher occur as possible successors. But during the last teen years of John Wesley's lifetime it is, after all, the conference, thus a democratic body, that shall be the authoritative body in succession of Wesley. As mentioned, Wesley had assembled his preachers to consultative conferences since a few years after the outbreak of the revival. These conferences grew into large and widely constituted conferences, which Wesley assembled during his lifetime and which continued after his death. But approximately teen years before his death Wesley constituted and published a conference of 100 persons, The Deed of Declaration, which really was the authority who were to lead British Methodism after Wesley's death.

The decision to found an independent church in America was made by Wesley himself. And the initiative to the necessary ordinations in Bristol and the content in the authoritative letter to the Americans were all actions, solely made by Wesley himself. However, in America were the fulfilment of these commands against the democratic principle of leadership. Indeed Wesley was regarded as a scriptural Bishop and his order to Coke to ordain Asbury carried weight; but Asbury refused to receive the ordination, unless he was democratically elected to the office. Therefore the lay preachers were assembled in order to perform the election, and only one month after Coke's meeting with Asbury the ordinations and induction could be executed. The final result was the same as what Wesley had ordered, but thus the conference, as the decision-making authority, was constituted. The Episcopal structure where one Bishop elects another was broken by the democratic principle. Even though the Christmas Conference in Baltimore in 1784 is not regarded a General Conference, the Christmas Conference in reality continued as the First General Conference in January 1785. Thus it was carried into effect that the General Conference shall follow the democratic rules and hold the supreme decision-making authority both in doctrinal and in church juridical issues.

However, the tension between the Episcopal Office and the General Conference increased within the Episcopal Methodist Church. The wing called the Republicans argue for more power to the General Conference. For instance it was stated that the broadness within the

Church ought to be expressed in the structure of the conference, so lay representatives including women were assigned seat and vote in the conference. Thomas Coke as one of the superintendents supported these efforts. But in 1792, the year after John Wesley's death, the discussions degenerated into a confrontation, where the power of the superintendents and the authority of the General Conference were turned against each other. The Republicans tabled the proposal that the General Conference should hold the power to withdraw a superintendent's appointment of a preacher for a certain area, if the preacher found the conditions for this specific appointment wrong and asked for another nomination. The result was that the General Conference confirmed the superintendents' sole power to appoint. Thus the democratic General Conference limited its own power and stated the sole authority of the Episcopacy within its field of responsibility.

However, the confrontation is of interest because it led to a schism where one of the leading preachers, James O'Kelly together with other preachers constituted the opinion-forming group in an independent Methodist Church without Bishops, in which church the democratic principles of leadership were effected radically. The fraction stated that the Episcopal Methodist Church did not want to adjust itself to absolute democracy, which was a claim in the free American world, but in a disguised form had passed on the Anglican official hierarchy. They pleaded to be more in accordance with John Wesley's theology regarding the position of the superintendents than Francis Asbury, who liked to call himself Bishop and in practice had taken an Episcopal Office and status inappropriate for a protestant church. The exchange of the title superintendent to Bishop can be traced back to Asbury's revised Discipline from 1787. During a long period in the 19th century the title "General Superintendent" was used about Bishops, and "District Superintendent" about superintendents. Most of the fraction's accusations were taken up for renewed consideration many years later and carried through in the Episcopal Methodist Church, and the break was healed through union of churches.

Personal Penetration in the Office

It is beyond any doubt that the dislike of Asbury's exercise of his Episcopal Authority was a urgent reason for this first serious and shaking schism within the history of American Methodism. More than anyone else Asbury has formed the Episcopal office. He was masterful and pursued his aim to the limit. Probably, Wesley had chosen Asbury because he fulfilled Wesley's own ideal of a leader. What Wesley meant to Britain, Asbury meant to America. As mentioned, Asbury was not without critics but at the same time he derived support from the absolute majority. The results of his exceptional clever leadership gave Methodism an explosive extension and formed a Methodism, which became a true child of the New America.

John Wesley and Francis Asbury were so outstanding leaders that they, as ideals, have influenced history up to our time. Many Bishops and leaders have felt the burdens of being examined and compared with these two fathers of the Church. And even if the ideal of leadership in fact changed a short time after their death, they still hold a strong position in the Methodists' conception of ideal leaders. In qualitative proficiency as in quantitative actions most Bishops would decline to be compared with Wesley and Asbury. Their qualifications as strategists and leaders have often been described. Further to this came their incomprehensible energy and capacity of work, combined with that they freely lived in celibacy and could use all their time to lead the Methodism. Their heavy demands on their own capacity of work, and the demands for continual travels influenced to some extent their choice of confidential associates that they expected the same behaviour of them. This can be noted from cases where

confidential associates, who start a family or accept a rectory and hereby are hindered in the continual travel activity, as an office as superintendent implies, are looked at as had they brought themselves in a position, which reduced their qualifications and possibilities as leaders. Not only in America can be found examples of confidential and ordained itinerant preachers, who must leave their offices. In England such an outstanding preacher as John Fletcher must tolerate to be judged by this standard, and his name is not to be found among the 100 preachers, who constitute the conference which shall succeed to the leadership of Wesley.

In America Francis Asbury was the unchallenged leader and neither Coke nor O'Kelly or other outstanding persons, could weaken his position. Therefore the General Conference's absolute authority over the Episcopacy was without real importance. The concept of the time limited Episcopate naturally did not exist then, but repetition on every General Conference of the question "Who is elected Bishop" stresses the General Conference's authority to evaluate the Bishops' discharges of their offices every fourth year, and it necessary to omit re-election of the same persons. In Asbury's lifetime this authority to evaluate and re-elect was without real meaning and even if the discussion of electoral periods and time limited Episcopates are of a new date, it was not before 1928 that the General Conference omit to authorise a person to continue his office as Bishop. But in these first General Conferences decisions and in the elaboration of the moderate and functional Methodist Episcopacy no position was taken to the present-day question of the time limitation of an Elder's office as Bishop.

Alterations in the Offices

Since the growth of Methodism both in Great Britain and America all offices have gone through heavy developments and alterations. Wesley looked upon himself as the person who had an activity, a movement. As Methodism grew, Wesley connected a few associates to himself, Assistants. Every Assistant had the responsibility for a district with many Societies (congregations). Usually the Assistant were ordained, who together with a number of associates or Assistant Preachers made up the team of Preachers, who constantly travelled around and preached the Gospel in the Societies (congregations). The Assistant and the Assistant Preachers were all Itinerant Preachers, and exactly this collective service of a district was of importance for Wesley because, as he claimed, he had never met a preacher who possessed all the necessary qualities, but he had experienced that among a group, consisting of at least three preachers, all necessary qualities would generally be available for the district. Every Society (local congregation) was led by a Lay Preacher and an Exhorters or a Stewards, who had the responsibility of all practical matters. The lay preacher is the most comparable with a duly pastor of a local church. He was resident, and he and the exhorters and stewards were in contact with the members and secured continuity within the Society (congregation). The British system followed the first preachers in America. Thus Francis Asbury for example was appointed Assistant by Wesley many years before he was ordained. In America Methodism spread over enormous areas, and the various offices were influenced by the great distances and the consequently increased interval in the service. The local and resident lay preachers and leaders were of substantial importance for the continuous activity of the congregation and the function of the class system. Also in America were those non-ordained leaders what we today call pastoral leaders of the local church. In England the districts were so small that the Itinerant Preachers in one day could walk from one place to another and return to the first place again. In America however, the districts were so large that there could be months between the visits of a Itinerant Preacher, and even longer time before the same Preacher arrived to the same place again. In addition to the induction of Coke and Asbury as

superintendents, a number of lay preachers were ordained Deacons and Elders at the Christmas Conference in 1784. But the ordained office whether it was Superintendent, Elder or Deacon meant for years travel activity from one place to another and the service was very different from what we today call parish work. The Itinerant Preachers talked with all local leaders, lay preachers, exhorters, stewards, class leaders, Sunday school leaders, leaders of social activities in order to guide, encourage and supervise the work. Furthermore an non inessential part of the office as ordained Preacher or Bishop was to officiate in the congregations they visited. When the Church was founded in America, the country had for several years only been served by a few Anglican and even fewer European Preachers or had been totally without clerical service. Thus the growth of Methodism was coloured by a constant lack of ordained Preachers, who could meet the demand for ministrations, baptism, holy communion, funerals, weddings. It was a characteristic for the itinerant ordained Preachers and Bishops that they in addition to preaching the Gospel, supervision and encouraging the leaders were responsible for the ministration, baptism, holy communion e.g. Only many years later, when the Church no longer had to follow the flow of settlers westward and the number of ordained increased, Preachers as well as Bishops became residents. The ordained Elders undertook the tasks as duly pastor of a local church, and the districts became conferences and jurisdictions. The demand for administration grew, the economy made it possible to constitute institutions and large activity on district and conference level, and the office of supervision was added great administrative and organizational responsibility.

The Northern Europe Episcopacy

In Europe the Episcopal supervision was not nearly as important for the establishment of the Methodist Church as it was in America. In the 19th century many Europeans emigrated to America. The hard conditions of life in fast growing populations and conflicts between various religious groups forced many people to leave their native country. From 1830 – 1880 most emigrants came from the North and West European countries, and from 1870 – 1920 people emigrated especially from the South and East European countries. In America the European immigrants became acquainted with Methodism, and some took spontaneously back to their native countries in Europe in order to impart the new faith. Lay and ordained Preachers did missionary work and founded congregations. Naturally, Episcopal supervision was exercised, but up to 1900 various American Bishops took turns in supervising the Northern Europe conferences. These Bishops did not talk the national language and were thus unable to preach the Gospel, officiate and participate in the missionary work as the Bishops did in America. The visiting Bishops linked up the Church and strengthen the small churches' feeling of self-worth. But it can hardly be argued that there existed any Episcopal presence or that the Episcopal Office played a central part. The General Conference decided in 1900 to place a missionary Bishop in Zürich with Europe as his field of responsibility. The first two Bishops in this field were the Americans: John H. Vincent (1900 – 1904) and William Burt (1904 – 1912). When John L. Nuelsen in 1912 was elected to hold the Episcopal Office in Zürich, Europe got the first European Bishop, who was born in Europe and spoke several European languages. The Church in Europe had matured to an extent where it could nurture its first leader to the Church's highest office. In 1920 Northern Europe was segregated into an independent Episcopal Office with the Dane Rev. Anton Bast as Bishop. Thus Northern Europe got a leader who could talk several local languages, which was of great importance at conferences and in the ministry, but leave this out of account as it only lasted a few years. Only from 1946 it can be argued that the Northern Europe conference had a Bishop, who was set apart (elected) among themselves and who did live among his countrymen and

participated in the ministry of the Church in the local language, and furthermore held the Office as Bishop. It can be argued that the Episcopal Office has been exercised best through the Superintendents, who from the very beginning were elected among the national Ministers in the country, where they should serve. In the same way as the countries in Northern Europe got their national Superintendents, and regarded this to be locally influenced leadership, Russia got its own Superintendent in 1907. The German-American Dr. George A. Simons resided in St. Petersburg until 1920 and he soon managed to preach and officiate in Russian.

It is not out of question that Methodists in Europe have drawn their understanding of the Episcopacy from other churches with comparable conditions of leadership. Thus the Methodist Episcopacy in the Northern Europe and the Baltic Areas have been forced to sustain measurement by the standard of the Lutheran Episcopates, and furthermore the comparison with other free Churches' general secretaries and their productions of activities and programmes. In Russia the dominance of the Orthodox Church has been the background on which Methodism should make an image of its own.

The re-establishment of UMC in Eurasia became visible in 1992 through the placement of a Bishop in Moscow. Already a couple of years earlier the missionary work was started. A number of congregations worked on various locations in Russia. According to the history of Methodism, it was quite outstanding that the General Conference decided to call a Bishop to supervise this missionary work. When Europe was Christened missionary Bishops were recognized where Christianity forced and was challenged by paganism. The nomination of a UMC Bishop in the Moscow Area in 1992 was however an important signal to the global UMC and to the people of Russia. Within the UMC, missionary work was regarded top priority all at once, and immediately the new Bishop was its visible spokesman. In Russia the intention to be represented on the highest clerical level signalled seriousness towards the Orthodox Church's leadership. From the beginning UMC could meet the Russian national Church on the (same) Episcopal level. It was as well a point that the first UMC Bishop in Eurasia resided in the centre of power, Moscow, and was an international person and not Russian. "Eurasia" is, like the "Soviet Union" and the "SNG-countries" names for political units consisting of various nations with various ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. During this phase of reorganization, which began when the Soviet Union broke down, it was important that the UMC Episcopal Office did not personify any ethnical conflict. At the same time the position of Moscow in the new political system was important. Thus the Episcopal Office in the Moscow Area is not a national Russian Office but an international Office both within and outside the borders of the area.

The General Conference's nomination of a Bishop in Moscow also stresses the fact that the UMC Bishops state a global Episcopal function. Every UMC Bishop is elected to supervise within a certain area as well as to form the Council of Bishops, which hold the global Office. Thus the Bishops are General Superintendents, which means they shall supervise the whole Church globally. The General Conference's nomination of a Bishop to Moscow signals that the UMC recognizes its obligation to exercise the Episcopal supervision in Eurasia. Thus the collective Episcopal responsibility of the Church includes the missionary work already started.

The various principles of leadership, as the Episcopal leadership participate in unity with in America, does not exist to the same extent in European Methodism. Thus the development of the status and function of the Episcopal Office have not met a satisfactory interplay.

The **democratic** structure of leadership has formally been represented in the Church through the system of conferences from the Pastoral Conference in the local congregation via the Annual Conference on the national level to the Central Conference of the Area. But compared with the top priority and the responsibility of leadership, which the democratic structure of leadership had in American Methodism, the pictures of the European structures are weak. When Methodism came to Europe the democratic joint responsibility had to be developed from the bottom, while the Episcopacy was adapted in the form and with the content the American Methodism had produced. In Europe Methodism was spread, especially to the low social sections of the populations and people from these communities did not have the best educational qualifications to construct and manage a church structure. And the long termed economic dependency of the American mother church did not create a broad freedom of action en route for complete independence and responsibility. During the last 50 years the West European UMC conferences, including their Boards and Councils, naturally have exercised a substantial function of leadership, but thus the democratic tradition of leadership and display of power can be characterized as extremely weak in this Church, who globally claims it wants to be in the head of democracy, training of people to individual opinion-shaping and competency for joint responsibility. In the light of history Europe has a short and not rather admirable democratic tradition. The development of the West European democracy is a little longer than the development of the East European democracy. In Northern Europe the nations' democratic traditions have been in progress since the 1850'ies. But in large parts of West Europe the democratic training of people was destroyed by successive totalitarian regimes. Methodism and a few other Protestant Churches have tried to be democratic refuges, where members were taught in taking responsibility and decision-making. But due to the nations' unfavourable conditions for democratic ideas, the Methodist congregations, as refuges for development of democracy, have only shown low results. Summing up, it can be argued that the general ministry (the ministry of all christians) has carried too small a lot of the responsibility of leadership and has been too weak an adversary for the Episcopal leadership. For UMC in Eurasia the situation is, as it was in Northern and Western Europe one or two generations ago. UMC is, in its total function, a school for development of democracy, and in this school it is important that the development starts from the present position of the members an congregations. The aim of a successful Episcopal leadership will always be to encourage and assist the democratic leadership to be optimum assistants in the management of the Church.

Also the **Presbyterian principles of leadership**, which certainly not was unimportant when Methodism came into existence, have had a weak position compared to the position it could have had. Now and then Methodists negatively have called the Methodist Church for the clergies' church. And so it seems to be in some part of the Church structure, but according to the superior structure of leadership and the Episcopal leadership the Presbyterian principles of leadership are weak. After all, the Presbyters, whom we often call Elders or Ministers, are the most important group of leaders within the Church, and form, with a few exceptions, the total number of the Church's employees. A large majority of the Church's economy is used to support this group. And the largest part of the Church's collected activities are exercised through these employees. The reason why it can be argued that the group of Elders have been to weak in their leadership compared to what could be expected from a comparison with the growth of Methodism in England and America is due to various conditions. First the Elders' educational level. In Europe the Methodist Ministers often were people, who, without any noticeable education; developed their knowledge and faculties through the practical parish work. Often with admirable results, especially in anticipation of the fact that in many places, revival groups negatively considered education to inhibit a burning preaching. Later, more

adjusted conditions and educational claims are introduced. All European Annual Conferences have experienced some outstanding and at times very dominating leader characters among the Elders, but generally the group of Elders have consisted a weak team of leadership, who only to a very small extent have been able to qualitative balance, inspire and challenge the Episcopal leadership. In the re-established UMC in Eurasia there were of course not the sufficiently potential leaders, who could realize the ideal of a Presbyterian team of leaders. It is a time consuming project for a church to develop and nurture presbyters. The UMC in Eurasia do already possess potential leaders, who are in the process of development. In the years to come the Church shall nurture leaders to a still larger extent.

The lack of harmony between the three principles of Church leadership has underlined the Episcopacy and disappointed and frustrated the other instances, who carries responsibilities as leaders. Somehow this has promoted an unwholesome hierarchic interpretation of the Methodist Church Structure as the Episcopacy has been forced to carry the burdens caused by the weak leadership of the two other groups. Naturally, the Episcopacy is the highest level of leadership within the Methodist Church. But when expectations, claims and frustrations are passed upward by all instances and at last are placed on the Bishop's table, as was he the managing director, the wrong picture has been drawn of the Episcopacy as well as of the leadership of the Church as such. The Episcopate will officiate differently due to which extent the other teams of leadership will exercise their responsibilities.

The Bishop Expresses the Church's Unity

In one important aspect the Episcopacy in the Northern and Baltic Area is of a superior quality which is special, compared with other Episcopates. The Northern European Central Conference has since 1924 consisted of the Annual Conferences in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the Baltic countries. All Churches are small and even though the language borders are relatively small, every Annual Conference has its own language and public mentality. The history of Methodism in the first generations is common to all the Annual Conferences within the Central Conference. Nevertheless today there are great differences between the Annual Conferences, because Methodism in the various countries have been influenced variously by pietism as an example, other Anglo-American free-church-movements or the national State Churches. The Episcopacy has in an outstanding manner expressed the Unity of the Church and succeeded in keeping a common Methodist identity within the Northern European area. Naturally, the Episcopacy has not created this Unity by itself but the common Episcopacy has, through history more than anything else, been the connecting link within the area, as well as outwardly, especially toward the mother Church in America. Contrary this strong link has implied that the ties to Methodism in the other European countries have been and still are weak. The identity is to be found within the Northern Europe community and in the certitude of a global community. A European Methodist identity has never been developed.

In the transitional period between the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the new mission in Russia in 1992 the Bishop for The Northern Europe and Baltic Area was loaded by the duty to supervise the new congregations in the former Soviet Union. Thus the General Conference decided that the new area, called Eurasia, from 1992 should have the state as Missionary Area and be lead by a missionary Bishop who should be elected by and attached the Northern Europe Central Conference. The missionary work, which started a couple of years earlier, was spontaneously initiated by various people. Some congregations already worked when the General Conference acknowledged its responsibility and gave the

ongoing work the status of Missionary Area with an Episcopal Supervision. This change of structure was necessary in order to relieve the pressure on one Episcopal Office. Furthermore, the renewed activity within all the three Baltic countries including re-establishment of congregations and Annual Conferences had already caused extra work for the Episcopacy. In the years to come supervision of the Baltic will demand extra work performed by the Episcopacy, but on the long term it can be expected that the Methodist Church in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania shall develop an organisation including self-rule so they to a larger extent might take the responsibility for their own work.

The new Episcopal Office in the Moscow Area has the same positive quality as the Episcopal Office in the Northern Europe and Baltic Area, as it comes to the unity of the UMC within the Area including the outwardly expression of unity. Like the Northern Europe and the Baltic, Eurasia consists of an area with many nations, ethnics, cultures, languages, religions and public mentalities/spirituality. Furthermore Eurasia is loaded with the burdens of various political power structures for centuries, which have forced these independent people into one nation. The inherited historical contradictions within the nation are not reduced by partly identical religious borders, where Orthodox Christians face Roman Catholic Christians or where Christian nationalities face Muslim nationalities. Among the non ethnic Russian but Orthodox groups of people there has been a predisposition to form loyalty connections to the Greek Patriarch rather than the Patriarch in Moscow. The UMC Episcopacy has succeeded in expressing the unity of the Church without being understood as an external power, who represents another nationality or foreign power, in any ethnical area. In the future the Episcopacy in the Moscow Area will have the very important task of proclaiming and working seriously for the unity of the Church, but simultaneously the Episcopacy must avoid to be regarded as a Western culture's imperialism in Eurasia.

Further to the obviously positive effects of the organisation of the two UMC Episcopal Offices within the Northern Europe Central Conference, said organisation also causes problems of a quite special nature. Compared with the size of Methodism, the number of congregations and Ministers and the size of the economy the Episcopal Offices are rather small. Compared with other Churches and compared with other Episcopal Offices within the global UMC, the size of the Church within the Northern Europe Central Conference ought not burden the Episcopal Office. But the geographic dimensions of the two areas and the widespread congregations make it impossible to imagine one satisfactory Episcopal Office (presence and supervision). One thing is, if a Bishop really could meet the demand of visiting the national Methodists and the local leaders. It is difficult to imagine that one Bishop should be able to hold a close and frequent contact with Ministers and leaders, where visions for missionary work and parish work can be developed through direct dialog, and personnel development can be improved through a close relationship between Minister and Bishop. Another thing is that the Annual and Districts Conferences, because they also are national or language borders, are structured and have representations in accordance with the actual national and language demands; demands which would not occur if all the Annual Conferences within the Central Conference spoke the same language and had the same national borders. Every language area constitutes a national Church with the necessary instrument of infrastructure, but simultaneously every language area constitutes a very small part of the Church that the national instrument has only a weak power of penetration and are dependent on very few employees or on volunteers only.

The Time Limited Episcopacy

The problem has been known for years. In 1985 the Northern Europe Central Conference decided to time limit the Ministry as Bishop. This limited the period, where one human being would be burdened by the heavy travel activity, which is a necessity in exercising the Episcopal Office in the area. And this gave a possibility for frequent elections of Bishop which causes two positive qualities. For the whole Church electing a Bishop has a beneficial effect, and the re-election of a Bishop demonstrates the Church's approval of a Bishop. The relationship between the elector and the elected is influenced positively by the fact that a re-election is to come. Another issue is that the introduction of electoral periods enables a person, who accepts the Episcopal Office, to organise and use his administrative resources fully and then retire, without a feeling of failure and after that a new person with new energy can exercise the Office during the next demanding period. However, the introduction of electoral periods is not without problems. It can be difficult for a retired Bishop to return to regular parish work. It can be difficult for assistants to change the relations toward a person with a Bishop's knowledge and personal capacity, who returns from the Bishop's Office to an inferior Office. The Methodist Church's theological understanding of a moderate and functional Episcopacy, where the Bishops do not form a special order or class but remain Elders with a special administrative office, ought to be a solid background for the time limited Episcopacy. Time limited Episcopacy are known from other Churches throughout the world. Especially in Asia and in Latin America. In some places they have firm electoral periods with the possibility for unlimited re-elections. In other places there is a limitation for the number of years one person can serve as Bishop. In the Northern Europe Central Conference a new elected Bishop will be elected for a period of two four-years periods (8 years). After these two periods the Bishop can be re-elected for one new four-years period. If however the Bishop in question will reach the normal pension age during the four-years period, which will follow his four-years re-electoral period, a further re-election of the Bishop will be possible, and he will then serve in a longer period than the 12 years, which is considered to be the maximum and natural period for a Bishop to serve. The General Conference authorized the Northern Europe Central Conference to perform the election in 1993 of the Bishop for the Moscow Area. This arrangement was of temporary character. The Bishop for the Moscow Area was elected for four years. In 1996 the Moscow Area's place in the Northern Europe Central Conference was finalised by the General Conference; this does also concern the role of the Committee on Episcopacy. This caused that the Northern Europe Central Conference's rules of time limitation were valid also for the Moscow Area. The election of the Bishop for the Moscow Area in 1997 was, if it turned out to be a re-election, for one four-years period because the Bishop in force was elected in 1993. In case of an additional re-election of the Bishop in force at the Central Conference in Helsinki in March 2001 this election will also be for a four-years period, and thus he will reach the maximum service period of 12 years counted from 1993 to 2005. In case of election of a new Bishop the electoral period will be 8 years (two four-years periods), confer Article 537.3.b in the Northern Europe Central Conference's Book of Discipline ("Metodistkirkens Lære & Kirkeordning 1997").

The Geographic Extension of the Areas

The enormous dimensions of the geographic areas are a serious problem for the two Bishops. On the conceptual level it has been discussed whether the Bishops should have a general substitute, a praxis used for instance in the Catholic Church. A general substitute is an Elder, who on full or part time is closely connected to the Bishop's office without any formal

authority, but who can be the Bishop's substitute on the office as well as in the travelling service, with exactly that power to represent and make decisions as the Bishop gives his substitute in each occasion. The general substitute is not a vice Bishop but more than an extra help at the office. Two principal issues speak against the introduction of a general substitute. The first issue is that such a praxis easily can develop a kind of Episcopal order of succession, so to understand that in case of an exchange of Bishops, the general substitute, who will be familiar with the Office and the area, and then have a preference to other Elders; and thus the election of Bishop will be moved from the Central Conference to the Episcopal Office (the Bishop in force through his appointment of a general substitute). The other issue is that the Superintendents in a way already constitute a part of the Episcopacy and are obliged to exercise the supervision in their local district. The Episcopacy is at present constituted of one Bishop and a number of Superintendents. In the variable evaluations of the Episcopacy very little attention has been paid to the Superintendents. The description in the Book of Discipline of the Superintendents' authority and tasks is an unambiguous description of the Episcopal supervision and responsibility of leadership. But the difference between a Bishop and a Superintendent is so important in the conceptions of the Methodists that only very few people will realise that the two kind of services together constitute one and only one Office. A strengthening and vitalization of the concrete tasks of the Superintendents and their visibility in the national leadership would be an strengthening of the Episcopacy. If not a number of Superintendents could have close personal contacts, where visions and plans for each congregation can be exchanged and where local Ministers and leaders can be encouraged and developed then it is without meaning to hope that one single person in the Episcopal Office should be able to fulfil some of these expectations. A reevaluation of the Superintendency ought to determine the administrative functions, which at the present is a burden on the Superintendency, that could be performed in an other way. Tasks as budget negotiations, reception of reports from the congregations to be passed on to the Church Board and the Annual Conference. The most important tasks for the Superintendents are to encourage the Ministers, discussion and evaluation of the activities in each congregation, and preaching and assistance in connection with planning of the congregation's missionary work. A strengthening of the Superintendency is not only a question of how the Superintendents and the Bishop jointly value their specific tasks. Naturally this could be useful, so the Superintendents are encouraged to meet the needs and decide more cases, and thereby prevent a problem from being pushed on to an unnecessary high level in the hierarchy. The Church Board, the Board of Evangelism and the Annual Conferences must be aware of how the Superintendents are used and what the Church can expect from this part of the Episcopacy. Also the Superintendency is time limited. The normal period for a Superintendent is of 6 years. If the situation so indicates the period can be extended to 8 years. The same person can only serve as Superintendent during two periods and thus with a pause of at least 3 years between the periods, confer article 418 in the Northern Europe Central Conference's Book of Discipline ("Metodistkirkens Lære og Kirkeordning 1997").

In the evaluations of the Episcopacy, which have been performed in the Central Conference during the last 30 years, some countries have mentioned a demand for a more visible attitude of the Church toward the national context. This emphasis on the national level could be realized in a leader, a collecting representative, who with power of penetration could be the outwardly spokesman and be responsible for the Church's policy-making. The need is still declared but the work for a solution is not substantial. The Episcopacy is formed as a non-national office and is not in contact with each country's situation, just as the Office do not possess the necessary resources to perform such a function. And the national leadership, such as the District Council (national Church Boards) and the Superintendents, do not feel

they have the authority or are entitled to act, as the leader or the management, towards the national challenges. As mentioned this demand has returned again and again but a sufficient solution has not been found. It is unsatisfactory that these unfulfilled expectations shall be floating in space, although they are floating closer to the Episcopal Office than to any other leading instance. Once for all it shall be stated that the Episcopacy cannot and shall not meet all the Annual and District Conferences' needs for national and regional representations. But the Episcopal Office with support from the Committee on Episcopacy ought to encourage and develop more satisfactory solutions for each country. It is of importance that the regional Church leaders are placed with background in both a strong local Church and close to society's centre of power for example in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan.

The Nature and Content of the Episcopal Supervision

The Church's collected understanding and experiences of the nature and content of the Episcopacy are summoned in the Book of Discipline 1996 of the United Methodist Church. Due to the clearness, selected sections are quoted below:

§ 401

Task - The task of superintending in The United Methodist Church resides in the office of bishop and extends to the district superintendent, with each possessing district and collegial responsibilities. The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. From apostolic times, certain ordained persons have been entrusted with the particular tasks of superintending. The purpose of superintending is to equip the Church in its disciple-making ministry. Those who superintend carry primary responsibility for ordering the life of the Church. It is their task to enable the gathered Church to worship and to evangelize faithfully.

It is also their task to facilitate the initiation of structures and strategies for the equipping of Christian people for service in the Church and in the world in the name of Jesus Christ and to help extend the service in mission.....The formal leadership in The United Methodist Church, located in these superintending offices, is an integral part of the system of an itinerant ministry.

§ 402

Guidelines for Superintending in this Age - The demands of this age on the leadership of bishops and district superintendents in The United Methodist Church can be seen in mode, pace, and skill:

1. *Mode* - Leaders need to be able to read consensus and integrate it into a living tradition, to be open to the prophetic word, to be skilled in team-building, and to be effective in negotiation. The style of leadership should rise out of nurtured and cultivated spiritual disciplines and patterns of holiness, for the Spirit is given to the community and its members to the extent that they participate.

2. *Pace* - Beyond formal systems of accountability, leaders need to open themselves to forms of accountability that they cultivate for themselves through a support group. Such a group can listen, can help, and can clarify, as well as participate with the leader, as he or she thinks through time demands and constraints is the process of sorting out of priorities. Appropriate time must be taken for reflection, study, developing friendships, and self-renewal.

3. *Skill* - Among the skills needed by leaders are spiritual discipline, theological reflection, building the unique inclusive community of the Church and of the larger

community as well. Reading the signs of the times, analyzing, designing strategy, assessing needs, organizing a wide range of resources, and evaluating programs and personnel are yet other skills crucial for leaders.

Specific Responsibilities of Bishops

§ 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.

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.

8. To promote and support the evangelistic witness of the whole Church.

10. To convene the Order of Deacons and the Order of Elders and work with the elected chairperson of each order.

§ 415

Presidential Duties

1. To preside in the General, 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.

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.

5. To appoint the district superintendents annually.

6. To consecrate bishops, to ordain elders and deacons, to consecrate diaconal ministers, to commission deaconesses and missionaries.....

7. To fix the appointments of deaconesses and missionaries.

§ 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.....

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.....

4. To fix the charge conference membership of all ordained ministers appointed to ministries other than the local church.....

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

§ 417

Selection, Assignment.....of District Superintendents

Inasmuch as the district superintendency is an extension of the general superintendency, the bishop shall appoint elders to serve as district superintendents. Prior to each appointment, the bishop shall consult with the cabinet.....for the purpose of determining leadership needs of the annual conference and the district....

Specific Responsibilities of District Superintendents

§ 419

The district superintendent shall oversee the total ministry of the clergy and of the churches in the communities of the district in their missions of witness and service in the world:

a) by giving priority to the scheduling of time and effort for spiritual leadership, pastoral support, supervision, and encouragement to the clergy and to the churches of the district;

b) by encouraging their personal, spiritual, and professional growth;

c) by encouraging their personal commitment to the mandate of inclusiveness in the life of the church;

d) by participating with the bishops in the appointment making process;

e) by enabling programs throughout the district that may assist local churches to build and extend their ministry and mission with their people and to the community;

h) by assisting the bishop in the administration of the annual conference.

In the context of these basic responsibilities, the district superintendent shall give attention to the following specific fasks.

§ 420

Spiritual and Pastoral Leadership

The district superintendent is responsible for giving spiritual leadership to clergy and laity in the churches of the district. The district superintendent should model and encourage spiritual formation through the practices of personal prayer, Bible study, communal worship, service, and frequent participation in the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion.

1. To give pastoral support and care to the ordained, licensed, consecrated, and commissioned personnel and their families by traveling through the district, preaching, visiting, and maintaining the connectional order of the Discipline.

2. To counsel with clergy and with consecrated and commissioned personnel concerning matters affecting their ministry and personal life.

3. To encourage the building of covenantal community among the clergy and among consecrated and commissioned personnel for mutual support and discipline; to build systems of mutual support for clergy and diaconal families.

§ 421

Supervision

1. To work with pastors, diaconal ministers, and charge conferences in formulating statements of purpose for congregations in fulfilling their mission and with committees on pastor-parish relations to clarify the pastors' and diaconal ministers' priorities for ministry.

2. To establish a clergy understood process of supervision for clergy of the district, including observation of all aspects of ministry, direct evaluation, and feedback to the clergy involved.

4. To make specific provision for the supervision of probationary members and local pastors appointed within the district and for building clusters for supervision with the assistance of mentors.

§ 422

Personnel

1. To work with pastors and diaconal ministers, committees on pastor-parish relations, and congregations in interpreting the meaning of ministry and in identifying and enlisting candidates of the highest quality for ordained ministry, with special concern for the inclusiveness of the Church with respect to sex, race, and national origin.

2. To work with the committee on ordained ministry in enabling a meaningful and appropriate examination of candidates into ordained ministry; to issue and renew licenses to preach when authorized; to keep careful records of all such candidates; to maintain regular communication with all candidates in order to advise and encourage them in spiritual and academic preparation for their ministry. The district superintendent shall not serve as chairperson of the committee on ordained ministry.

§ 423

Administration

1. To schedule and preside, or authorize an elder to preside, in each annual charge conference or church conference within the district.

5. To cooperate with....the local church boards of trustees or building committees in arranging acquisitions, sales, transfers, and mortgages of property; and to ensure that all charters, deeds, and other legal documents conform to the Discipline and to the laws, usages, and forms of the county, state, territory, or country within such property is situated and to keep copies thereof.

8. To receive a plan for the cultivation of giving from each congregation that includes promotion for current and deferred financial support in local churches for district, conference, and denominational causes.

9. To develop with appropriate district committees strategies that give careful attention to the needs of churches of small membership and to the formation of cooperative ministries.

11. To recommend to the bishop for approval, after consultation with the churches involved, any realignment of pastoral charge lines and report to the annual conference.

12. To serve within the district as acting administrator of any pastoral charge in which a pastoral vacancy may develop or where no pastor has been appointed.

§ 424

Program

1. To oversee the programs of the Church within the bounds of the district in cooperation with pastors and congregations.....

2. To work cooperatively with the conference council on ministries or alternative structure in all program concerns of the Church

5. To participate with the cabinet in submitting to the annual conference a report reflecting the state of the conference, with recommendations for greater effectiveness.

Expressions of Superintendency

§ 426

The offices of bishop and district superintendent are linked with each other....The interdependence of the offices calls for a collegial style of leadership. However, both the office of bishop and that of district superintendent are embedded in their own contexts, (the Council of Bishops and the Cabinet).

§ 429

Cabinet

1. District superintendents, although appointed to the cabinet and assigned to districts, are also to be given conferencewide responsibilities. As all ordained ministers are first elected into membership of an annual conference and subsequently appointed to pastoral charges, so district superintendents become through their selection members first of a cabinet before they are subsequently assigned by the bishop to service in districts.

2. The cabinet under the leadership of the bishop is the expression of superintending leadership in and through the annual conference. It is expected to speak to the conference and for the conference to the spiritual and temporal issues that exist within the region encompassed by the conference.

3. The cabinet is thus also the body in which the individual district superintendents are held accountable for their work, both for conference and district responsibilities.

4. In order to exercise meaningful leadership, the cabinet is to meet at stated intervals. The cabinet is charged with the oversight of the spiritual and temporal affairs of a conference, to be executed in regularized consultation and cooperation with other councils of the conference.

Theory and Praxis

The Discipline's description of the Episcopal and the Superintendent ministries and the collected Episcopal Office, which these two ministries constitute, is expansive and clear. Another thing is how the practical life looks like. Without doubt both clergy and lay members would be enriched by a close study of the order we already have, but do not exercise in an optimal manner. It is without doubt that the balance between the Cabinet on one side and the Church Board and other Annual Conference bodies on the other side will develop positively, if higher demands were made mutually by the parties, and if the parties would keep their attention to the tasks and the power already expressed in the rules.

Besides both the Episcopacy and the Superintendency are superior ministries, and it can be expected that these offices will be occupied by persons with the strongest personal characters within the Conference. Thus the Discipline and descriptions are something. Another thing is how this strong personal character influences and fill the Office. Persons, who offer themselves for election to leading offices, will always possess a personal impact in relation to every job description. Precisely the personal impact will be one of the criterions for a person's qualification to one of the mentioned leader jobs. Said in another way: If anybody think it is possible to decide, minutely and down to the last detail, what a Bishop shall do exactly, they will not get a leader but an administrator, and it will be difficult for qualified candidates to act in narrow frames without the maximum free flow for initiatives. What the Church can do and ought to do is to stress, which personal qualifications and the principles of leadership the Church expect from its leaders. The Church has to develop its own criterions in relation to the surrounding society. First and foremost the persons, who stand for the highest offices, must be influenced by true humility and a natural understanding that the most important content of the

Office, is to serve, and not to possess power. History shows that every hierarchy of power, in which the intention is to exercise power from the top and downwards, is in danger of corruption. The Episcopacy has been given much power and authority which can and must be used, if the situation so demands. But the Episcopacy is working well when it brings the other structures of leadership into flower. And the Episcopacy is strongest, when its power is unnecessary, and it can make room for development of other groups of leaders. The Church must actively form and choose persons, with the wanted understanding of the criteria of Church leadership, when it gives them the authority related to the Ministry of a Bishop and a Superintendent. The criteria for leadership within the UMC are emphasized in the Book of Discipline 1996 in a new section about Servant Leadership, § 110 – 120, where good “ministry is defined by its faithful commitment to servant leadership following the example of Jesus Christ, by its passion for the hallowing of life, and by its concern to link all local ministries with the widest boundaries of the Christian community.” Compared with top leaders in other organisations and firms it would be natural for a Bishop to introduce his own ideas and plans for the near future for the Committee on Episcopacy for a critical examination. Through such a dialog it will be possible to respond directly on the actual leadership of the Bishop. In the practical, variable and continuous examination of the actual exercise of the Bishop’s leadership, the Committee on Episcopacy must give the necessary constructive criticism and be in dialog with the Bishop, when the Bishop looks for guidance and when the Committee members evaluate the Episcopal leadership of their own Annual Conference.

1. The Practical Balance between Democratic Decision and the Bishop’s Pastoral Authority

There will always be two opposite expectations of the Bishop’s conduct of the Annual Conference, and completely dependent on the content of an actual case, the meaning of how the Bishop exercises his mandate at best will vary. On the one hand the Bishop shall be the shepherd in the front of his flock, who personally marks the opinion-making process and the decisions, but on the other hand the Bishop must also be the strong leader, who inspires security and encourages independent decisions. In one case the Bishop is expected to mark and form the conference’s decision-making process, in other cases the Bishop is expected to promote a high quantity of democracy in the decision-making process. Not only the very different cases at table cause different borders, but also the change of time and exchange of Bishops create difference in the understanding of where the border shall be.

2. The Priority of Tasks within the Episcopacy

Priority of the Bishop’s time and engagement will always depend on the total work pressure and the changing needs in every annual Conference. Personnel care, work on material of inspiration and actions plans, and visible-making activities of the Church leadership are principally more important than administration, visits of gesture, and reception tasks. The declared demand for the Bishop to set the direction and be in front, are so important that the necessary time hereto must be secured.

3. Travelling Days

The work pressure in the form of travels has the Bishop himself in a way the power to manage solely. But in relation to the Methodists’ expectations it could be useful, if the Committee on Episcopacy and the Bishop jointly decide on a level for the yearly travel activity, on an

average in the four-year period. The level could be 150 travel days per year. Every Conference could be assigned a number of days calculated after the need of last year. Thus every Annual Conference was forced to value, at which occasions the Bishop's presence would be most important. As it is now, only the Bishop knows the difficulties of the travel scheduler, and when no estimate is made of each national country's use of the Bishop's time, it cannot be avoided that the person, who calls first, even regarding an issue of no special importance, easier than the person, who calls later regarding an issue of great importance, will get an appointment.

4. Weeks Scheduled for Administration

In order to secure the Bishop peace for work, reflection and office hours, it could be useful to reserve fixed weeks for administration for example two weeks in autumn and two weeks during springtime. These weeks should be inviolable, as were the Bishop travelling. And the fixed weeks should be announced in all Northern, Baltic and Eurasian Church Papers with a notice that these weeks were reserved, especially for personnel talks.

5. The Balance between Tasks within and outside the Area

Of course the Bishop's tasks are primarily within the area, but the Bishop must also meet the demands for participation in the leadership and supervision of the global Church. The balance between the tasks within and outside the area must be under continuous consideration. The result shall not be that the quantity of time used on the Bishop's tasks within the area, is reduced with the time used for travel activity without the area. The Episcopacy is the leading connecting link to the International Church, and this connection is of various importance. For example is the Bishop loaded with the many new tasks and problems to be solved in the whole Eurasia, but if the Bishop did not have the formal and personal connections to USA, the enormous support received from American Methodists would probably have been of quite another quantity. On his travels outside Eurasia the Bishop represents UMC in Eurasia, and this representation may secure the Church spiritual and economic support.

The Committee on Episcopacy

Naturally it can be said that the Bishop is under guardianship, when or if other people have to make continuous valuations of cases, as mentioned above, and other matters. The present praxis of the Bishop's report to the Central Conference clearly shows that even the Bishop himself is very conscious of these considerations and compromises within his Office. This does not change the fact that the Committee on Episcopacy to a high degree is the closest base of support, where development of the Episcopacy can be discussed. It must be strongly emphasized that the Committee on Episcopacy is responsible for, what might be the weak field of the Episcopacy, namely to inform every Annual Conference's boards continuously of how the Episcopacy's gives priority to its tasks, travels, use of time and about the nature and state of the Episcopacy.

According to the Central Conference's Book of Discipline ("Metodistkirkens Lære og Kirkeordning 1997") § 537.35.b the Committee on Episcopacy is obliged:

a) To support the bishops of the areas in the oversight of the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Church, with special reference to the areas where the bishops have presidential responsibility.

- b) To be available to the bishops for counsel.
- c) To assist in the determination of the episcopal needs of the areas and to make recommendations to appropriate bodies.
- d) To keep the bishops advised concerning conditions within the areas as they affect relationships between the bishops and the people of the conference agencies.
- e) To interpret to the people of the areas and to conference agencies the nature and function of the episcopal office.
- f) To engage in annual consultation and appraisal of the balance of the bishops' relationship and responsibilities to the areas and annual conferences, central conference, general Church boards and agencies, and other areas of specialized ministry, including, at all levels, concern for the inclusiveness of the Church and its ministry with respect to sex, race, and national origin, and understanding and implementation of the consultation process in appointment-making.
- g) To report needs for episcopal leadership to the central conference

The Continued Proces of Study

1. The Central Conference Committee on Episcopacy

A continued study of the Episcopacy and Superintendency must be related to the Committee on Episcopacy, who can pursue the process to other bodies within the Church and perhaps recall responses. The best way of pursuing the process is that the Committee members primarily further the discussions and intentions of the Committee on Episcopacy to these Church bodies, whom the Committee on Episcopacy wants to participate in the process, and the reports and other writs are used as an help in this personal communication.

2. Northern Baltic and Eurasian Superintendents' Meeting

A continued study of the Episcopacy will obtain full value if the Superintendency is regarded as a part of the Episcopacy. Thus the Northern, Baltic and Eurasian Superintendents' meetings could study the Episcopal service, from the outlines and the introduction the Committee on Episcopacy might present. It is important of course that the Superintendents exchange their experiences of leading the Charge Conferences, administrative duties in order to limit the administrative burdens and give room for personnel care, elaboration of activity plans in the congregations and policy-making on the level of Annual Conferences. Furthermore it is important to discuss how the Cabinet exercise its leadership on Conference level. The Northern, Baltic and Eurasian Superintendents' Meeting's introduction of vitalization of the Charge Conferences should be sent to every Church Board.

3. The Church Boards in every Annual Conference and every Language Area or People

A continued study of the Episcopacy will reach important results if the Church Boards, as the Annual Conferences' executive board, are involved in the practical questions. The Church Boards may value three topics:

1. How do we use the Superintendents? Can they be relieved from practical tasks or can some problems be solved by correspondence? For example approval of the budgets of the congregations? Discussions with the congregations about economics and buildings concerns? What do we first and foremost want the Superintendents to travel for: Real discussions with the congregations and introduction of new ideas about strategy and aims, evangelism, new form for the Sunday worship service and new forms of activity, personnel care, talks with Ministers and their families, lay preachers, lay leaders, chairpersons of boards, leaders of children's and youth's activities??
2. How do we want to take the responsibility for a national marking of the United Methodist Church? Strengthening of one or more persons' position or visibility? Elucidation of the Church's head office, "Cathedral", central board, Church Board, general secretary or ???
3. How do we want to use the Bishop? How do we want to act, if we were given a certain number of days where the Bishop would be present in our Annual Conference area? Do sum up a list of events in the range of priority.

Of course the Church Boards must make their study in co-operation with the Superintendents so the ideas from the Northern, Baltic and Eurasian Superintendents' Meetings and the ideas from each country and its districts may wrestle against each other.

4. Presbyters – Elders

A continued study of the leadership of the Church naturally have to include the group of Elders to the discussion. With a starting point in the Committee on Episcopacy's introduction, the Ministers' Meetings in every Annual or District Conference should increase the awareness of issues regarding the leadership of the Church, and especially put focus on: call - ordination – leader responsibility. Development of the responsibility of the Elders, Presbyters, concentrates especially on a joint leadership, a presbyterium, as the college of Elders is. Competition among the Ministers, personal ambitions and prestige have an negative effect on the development of a joint responsibility among the Elders. In a healthy college of Elders the fellowship will help every Elder to improve his ministry for the Church. The College of Elders is a responsible unit in relation to the other structures of leadership in the Church.

Biblical, Church Historical and Ecumenical Perspectives

A reasoned out view on the local church and the universal Church organisation is hard to call forth from the New Testament. In the Acts Christians are often described as "the ones who gathered". Those who believed and were baptised and were "added". They were persistent in the instruction, fellowship, sharing the bread and prayers. The word "ekklesia" occurs for the first time in the Acts, Chapter 5 in the narrative about Ananias and Sapphira (in the Western

copy of the text the word “ekklesia” occurs already in 2:47). It is clear that what later are called the sacraments: baptism and the Lord’s Supper, were used very early (Acts 2:37–42). But the New Testament (NT) does not inform by whom the baptism and the Lord’s Supper were officiated.

However, it is possible to notice a certain development of the view on congregation and Church in the NT. If it is assumed that Paul is the author both of 1. Corinthians and Ephesians a collation of the two letters shows such an development. From the Ephesians the reader will receive the impression that Paul talks about the Church as universal and larger, than described in 1. Corinthians. The Apostles and the prophets seems also to have stronger and more institutional status. In 1. Corinthians 3:11 Paul says: “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.” In 3:10 Paul refers to himself as the one who lays the foundation “as an expert builder”. In the Ephesians it is said of the Christians that they are “fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household,” and that they are “built on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself as the chief cornerstone.” (Eph 2:19-20).

It is clear that a shift in the views of the Church and of the Office occurs. Wesley writes in his notes: “As the foundation sustains the building, so the word of God, declared by the Apostles and prophets, sustains the faith of all believers. God laid the foundation by them.” Proceeds the reader to the pastoral letters the impression of a still more organised congregation and Church will occur. Timothy is told by Paul to stay in Ephesus to prevent certain men to teach false doctrines. The letter contains descriptions of the necessary qualifications of a Bishop and a Deacon. At the same time Timothy is encouraged to use the gift of grace, he received through a prophet’s word during the Elders’ council, the Presbytery’s touch. A similar note in 2. Tim indicates that Paul possibly participated at this event. The wording indicates a possible understanding as the Presbytery’s touch through my hands. Most people understand this as an act of ordination. However, it is not mentioned to which office this act of ordination was meant: Presbyteros, Episkopos or Diakonos. No ordination for a certain office is mentioned in the NT. The Acts say that the Apostles prayed and laid their hands on the seven who were appointed to serve at the “daily delivery”. Titus is asked to stay in Crete to do what was left unfinished, namely to appoint an Elder in every town, in the same section there is a description of a Bishop’s qualifications. An important question is which office Timothy and Titus actually held: Presbyteroi, Episkopoi, Diakonoi or perhaps just Paul’s empowered messengers.

Summing up it can be stated:

- Ordination to an Office is not mentioned directly in NT
- The Apostles were special witnesses of God’s actions through Christ. A succession by new apostles is impossible
- The next generation of leaders are appointed by the Apostles. Thus Presbyters, Bishops and Deacons were to constitute the local leadership of the new movement

- Laying on of hands is a normal way of praying for power from the Spirit and blessings to come to the person, who is appointed for a special service in the congregation.
- Presbyteros and Episkopos are of the same class. The words correspond to each other in NT. The reason for using the two different words for the same issue can be:
 - 1) Culturally conditioned: **Presbyteros**, Elder, was a concept taken from the Jewish congregation. The name is known from the synagogues long back in times and from the 70 persons Council of Elders, the Synedrium in Jerusalem. **Episkopos**, Bishop or Superintendent is a concept used in the Greek comments on inspectors, military officers, local officials, high ranged messengers and service people, inquisitor. Despite its heathen origin the concept is used a few times in the Jewish translation of the Old Testament from the third century before Christ, the translation called Septuaginta (LXX).
 - 2) Functionally conditioned: Perhaps is the word Episkopos used for an Presbyter with a special service. The leading presbyter within an area.

The Ecumenical document "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" (BEM) sanctioned by the member Churches of the World Council of Churches in Lima 1982 phrases what Ortodoxs, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans and Reformed agree on about leadership and pastoral ministry in the Church. The following extract is taken from the BEM report, chapter 3 about the form of the Ministry:

"During the second and third centuries, a threefold pattern of bishop, presbyter and deacon became established as the pattern of ordained ministry throughout the Church. In succeeding centuries, the ministry by bishop, presbyter and deacon underwent considerable changes in its practical exercise.....In the earliest instances, where threefold ministry is mentioned, the reference is to the local eucharistic community. The bishop was the leader of the community. He was ordained and installed to proclaim the Word and preside over the celebration of the eucharist. He was surrounded by a college of presbyters and by deacons who assisted in his tasks. In this context the bishop's ministry was a focus of unity within the whole community. Soon, however, the functions were modified. Bishops began increasingly to exercise episkopé over several local communities at the same time.....As a consequence, presbyters and deacons are assigned new roles. The presbyters become the leaders of the local eucharistic community, and ad assistants of the bishops, deacons receive responsibilities in the lager area.....The earliest Church knew both the travelling ministry of such missionaries as Paul and the local ministry of leadership in places where the Gospel was received.....In Philippi, the secular terms episkopoi and diakonoi were together used for Christian ministers. Several of these ministries are ascribed to both women and men."

"Although there is no single New Testament pattern, although the Spirit has many times led the Church to adapt its ministries to contextual needs, and although other forms of the ordained ministry have been blessed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, nevertheless the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means for achieving it. Historically, it is true to say, the threefold ministry became the generally accepted pattern in the Church of the early centuries and is still retained today by many churches. In the fulfilment of their mission and service the churches need people who in different ways express and perform the tasks of the ordained ministry in its diaconal, presbyteral and episcopal aspects and functions."

"Three considerations are important in this respect. The ordained ministry should be exercised in a personal, collegial and communal way. It should be personal because the presence of Christ among his people can most effectively be pointed to by the person ordained to proclaim the Gospel and to call the community to serve the Lord in unity of life and witness. It should also be collegial, for there is need for a college of ordained ministers sharing in the common task of representing the concerns of the community. Finally, the intimate relationship between the ordained ministry and the community should find expression in a communal dimension where the exercise of the ordained ministry is rooted in the life of the community and requires the community's effective participation in the discovery of God's will and the guidance of the Spirit."

"*Bishops* preach the Word, preside at the sacraments, and administer discipline in such a way as to be representative pastoral ministers of oversight, continuity and unity in the Church. They have pastoral oversight of the area to which they are called. They serve the apostolicity and unity of the Church's teaching, worship and sacramental life. They have responsibility for leadership in the Church's mission. They relate the Christian community in their area to the wider Church, and the universal Church to their community. They, in communion with the presbyters and deacons and the whole community, are responsible for the orderly transfer of ministerial authority in the Church."

"*Presbyters* serve as pastoral ministers of Word and sacraments in a local eucharistic community. They are preachers and teachers of the faith, exercise pastoral care, and bear responsibility for the discipline of the congregation to the end that the world may believe and that the entire membership of the Church may be renewed, strengthened and equipped in ministry. Presbyters have particular responsibility for the preparation of members for Christian life and ministry."

"*Deacons* represent to the Church its calling as servant in the world. By struggling in Christ's name with the myriad needs of societies and persons, deacons exemplify the interdependence of worship and service in the Church's life. They exercise responsibility in the worship of the congregation: for example by reading the scriptures, preaching and leading the people in prayer. They help in the teaching of the congregation. They exercise a ministry of love within the community. They fulfil certain administrative tasks and may be elected to responsibilities for governance."

For further thorough investigation see: The BEM report (1982), Chapter 3 on Ministry.

Christian Antiquity

The New Testament (NT) texts shows sporadically how ordination, offices and especially administration of the sacraments grew. During the first century however, it becomes more clearly that the Offices are formed and rules for how authorities are passed on to new leaders. Consistency within leadership did not exist like no consistency in the structure for the congregations did exist. It is best to talk about different models of Church organisation, which existed side by side.

Bishop Clemens from Rome wrote about 95 AC a letter to the congregation in Corinth that the Church now had formal offices, that the Bishop in Rome thought he possessed the

authority to intervene on other congregations business, and that there did not exist any difference between Episkopos and Presbyteros.

Bishop Ignatius of Antiochia in Syria was martyred in Rome approximately 110 AC. On his travel to Rome he wrote 7 letters to the congregations in Asia Minor. From these letters it can be noticed that the tripartite office is fully developed with Bishops, Presbytery and Deacons. The congregations must submit to the Bishop and the Presbytery. Deacons and Presbyters shall submit to the Bishop.

In the text *The twelve Apostles Doctrines (Didaké)*, which is ranged higher than many of the Early Church's letters but not found in Constantinople until 1873, we find the most detailed description of Church and congregation discipline. In a chapter the tripartite of the office and their various duties are described: "Do then elect Bishops and Deacons who are worthy for God, meek, not money-lovers but reliable and tested men. For they do also exercise prophetic and doctrinal services for you. So do not despise them for they have honorary posts among you on the level with prophets and the teachers." In all probability the script was written in the first half of the second century.

Thus the development against a Monarchic Episcopacy arises during the second or third centuries. The Bishops are Ministers but do also possess the leader responsibility for an area around the mother congregation. Cyprianus, who is Bishop in Carthage up to 248 AC, is regarded to possess the Episcopal Office in its fully developed form, as the responsible leader for a whole region where he leads the Presbyters, who again lead a single congregation each.

In the first times of Christianity the Church was still threatened by disruptions and false doctrines. Gnosticism was such a threat for centuries. Often the struggle against heretics was a matter of setting limits in the right places. Therefore the Church laid down three norms for the true faith. Firstly it was the genuine canon, that is the correct selection of the Holy scripture. (This is the scriptures we have in the NT today). Secondly, it was the true confession, which means making the recognized confessions. (These are the confessions called Nicænum and Apostolicum). Nicænum was formed and recognized from 325 to 381 AC, and is the confession which unite as well the Eastern as the Western Christianity. This means that Methodists, for instance, who grew up in the Western tradition, and Orthodox Christians, who grew up in the Eastern tradition, have a common confessional background. Thirdly, it was the Episcopacy. Through this fight the Bishop's role expanded into guarantor for the true doctrine of religion. The Bishop's role in the Worship Service was strengthened and in many churches the Lord's Supper could not be celebrated, if the Bishop was absent and could not consecrate the Elements and officiate the liturgy. The Episcopacy was a ministry of doctrine and liturgy.

From Persecuted to State Church

In the first three centuries the Church was marked by persecution, martyrdom, powerlessness, and it was deprived of the control and possibility of out-turned influence, included in the Gospel. Persecution and powerlessness were never able to stifle the Church. According to Wesley a serious stroke against the Church was made by the emperor Constantine the Great around 300 AC "when he called himself a Christian and let a stream of wealth, honour and power flow over the Christians, especial over the clergy." The persecuted Church changed into a persecuting Church.

In the eastern part of the Roman Empire more equivalent patriarchies grew up, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem. From 1589 Moscow obtained status as the domicile of the Eastern tradition's patriarchs. Moscow was called "the third Rome" after the fall of Constantinople, "the second Rome", which had fallen into the hands of the Turkish and thereby into the hands of the Muslims. In the West the Bishop in Rome obtained a special position among the Bishops. At the end of the fifth century Rome's primateship, the pope, was recognized in the West, but was never supported by the Eastern Church. The break, however, between the Eastern Orthodox part and the Western Catholic part of the Church was not finalised until 1054.

The development in West with the Constantinoplsh symbiosis between Church and state resulted in the beginning of the custom of assigning various privileges to the Bishops. They obtained the same range as senators. Earlier the Bishops were recruited from the people and elected by the people, but gradually the Episcopal Office was so attractive and included so much prestige as the aristocracy and the emperor used their influence when an office was vacant. Especially, in the German area the Bishops occupied the squire's and the feudal overlord's places, and the offices were occupied either from the top or by inheritance. It can be said that the Episcopal Office to some extent has contributed to the unity of the Church, but hardly to the guarantee of pureness of the doctrine.

The Orthodox Church

Christianity came to Russia from Byzantium just before 1000 AC. Scar Peter the Great implemented in 1721 a church government which united state and Church in a pure State (National) Church system. A state synod headed by the scar's Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs constituted the Church Management, and as the scar decided who should hold the high Offices the Church in fact was governed by the state. The results of this system were catastrophic after the revolution in 1917, where the national power grew more and more anticlerical. The communist regime however, did allow the Russian Orthodox Church to participate in the World Council of Churches (WCC), and thus in a way was included in the international fellowships.

The Orthodox theology says that the Church consists of two parts, both necessary to the Church: Clergies and lay people. The head of the Church is Jesus Christ, who's substitutes are the Bishops. This deputy role is understood concrete to such an extent, that the Bishops are the fulfilment of Christ's promise to remain by his Church until the end of the world. Thus the Bishops are a necessity for the existence of the Church. Even the Presbyters are unable to watch the herd if the Bishop is absent. The Orthodox Church emphasises the apostolic succession, which means that the present Bishops have received their authority directly and through personal laying on of hands by earlier Bishops and so forth back, in direct line to the Apostles. Although the Bishops are the mainstay of the Church, they do not constitute the whole abundance and activity of the Church. For that purpose also the low clergy and the lay people are needed.

The clerical Office is divided into three main groups: Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons. And every group include people of high and low rang, but of the same ordination. The group of Bishops for example contains Archbishops, metropolitans and patriarchs. To the group of Presbyters belong deans and rectors and to be group of Deacons belong sub-deacons and singers. Presbyters and Deacons are not obliged to be celibates, they are allowed to continue their lives as married husbands, if they married before they were ordained. From Bishops,

however, celibacy is demanded. This means that the Bishops very often are recruited from the monks, but it is possible for a widower Presbyter to become a Bishop. The hierarchical constitution with grades and levels form the Church structure, but lay people do also contribute to many administrative activities and to the elections for clerical Offices. The close relation between state and Church has implied that the Church in addition to its Episcopal leadership also has a managing synod. Within his own Episcopate a Bishop is sovereign in all matters. But the synod range higher than the Bishop and can make decisions binding for the local Bishop. The highest instance in the Orthodox Church is the Ecumenical Council (concilium). All Orthodox Bishops shall be assembled, before a synod can be called “an ecumenical council” and this has been impossible since the end of the eighth century. If however all Bishops will be summed up in an ecumenical council, the council has the authority in all dogmatic and canonical issues.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 the Orthodox Church has been in a position of reorganization:

1. In the settlement with the Soviet period, the Church have to cope with the fact that many of their leaders, first and foremost persons among the Bishops, co-operated with the Communist regime. Some of the leaders might have represented the State government more than the Church. Some of these persons do still hold the highest clerical Offices. To this settlement must be added that the ecumenical agreements and relations built up since the foundation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 are entered into by leaders, who are not automatically supported by the Church. As it is doubted that the leaders have been the right persons, the results of these leaders and their co-operation organizations can also be doubted, these co-operation organizations include the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Council of European Churches (CEC). The ecumenical issue do not have a strong position in the areas where the Orthodox Church is masterful.
2. In the settlement with the Soviet period the Church takes the constructive position of entering into the construction of a new Russian national identity. Included in this national ideological rearmament is the symbiosis between people and Church, between the Russian people and the Russian Orthodox Church. In the same way as many European peoples during the period of reformation created strong national Churches in order to unite the nations and severe from the imperialism and ideology of the Roman Church, the Russian Orthodox Church is placed at the frontier in order to unite the Russian people and fight against the international cultural imperialism.
3. The Russian Orthodox Church's participation in political and historical influence of Russia means that Orthodox Churches in the neighbour countries use the situation to lessen or break the ties to the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate in Moscow. The Orthodox Church in Finland was the first Church to re-establish the contact to the ecumenical patriarch in Constantinople. The same has been done since that by the Orthodox Churches in the Baltic countries.
4. Through various theologians the Russian Orthodox Church passes strictures on itself. The outstanding role in the construction of the modern Russia suggests that the Church is hiding a non theological reasoned discrimination of other Churches and of non Russian peoples.

For the UMC this means that the working conditions in Russia are difficult. The UMC have to develop genuine Russian piety and Christianity without importing Western culture. And the UMC in Russia must be aware that in some cases, the international relations can be a heavy load on the UMC ministry in Russia. It might be useful for the UMC in Russia to notice the difference between the UMC in USA and the UMC in Europe. Methodism came to the European Continent in the mid-nineteenth century. The specific part of Methodism in USA, who was behind the missionary work in Europe, was highly influenced by the Holiness Movement and Holiness Theology, and those receptive to Methodism in Europe often came from the lower social groups in society and pietistic groups. Therefore the modern UMC in USA includes a substantial broader spectrum of various theological and devotional movements, where extremities both on the conservative fundamental wing and the liberal wing go far beyond the spectra of diversity, which exist in UMC in Europe. The UMC in Europe is homogeneous and generally influenced by an evangelical and socially conscious devotion, which absolutely can be a advantage for UMC in Russia to identify itself with, rather than the more insistent American profile both within the conservative and liberal wings.

WCC's eighth general assembly in December 1998 in Harare showed that the Orthodox Church's viewpoints have placed the ecumenical fellowship in a crisis. From the Orthodox side especially the Western Protestant Churches are criticized for dominating through their provocative liberalism. The feminist theology and the presence of female Ministers are understood as a severe provocation by Orthodox leaders. Likewise it is unacceptable that an issue regarding homophily is on the agenda at all. The Orthodox Church feel the pressure from the theological problems they interpret, as problems opposed on them and their members by the Western Protestant Churches. The Methodists constitute a large group within the WCC and thereby in the global ecumenical movement.

Despite the tense ecumenical relations between the Orthodox Church and the Protestant Churches, which includes UMC, there are fundamental theological subjects which can unite the two groups of Churches. A greater attention towards these theological subjects might imply that UMC could be that Protestant Church, which has the best qualifications to become rooted within a nation, formed by Orthodox thinking.

From the Greek 'pleroma' the idea of the abundance of the objects runs like a red thread through all Orthodox thought. In the description of the nature of Christ, it is said that the human, Jesus from Nazareth is the fulfilment of God. The most important task for the Church is to contain the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. And in the description of man's salvation, it is unusual to talk about justification by faith, but of fulfilment of God, which means to be made divine from the Greek word: theopoiæsis. Occasionally, the Orthodox Church is called a Johannine Church, where the ideas of God's seed, God's grain, rebirth, growth, ripeness and other organic biological terms are used in the description of man's salvation, contrary to the Western often partial use of juridical ideas as forgiveness, justification and grace.

John Wesley's teaching on sanctification is very much inspired by the Eastern Fathers. It was from this tradition he learned the Johannines and brought 1st John into focus. In the 30 scriptures on which Wesley build his doctrine on sanctification the Greek word pleroma is often found. Wesley does not speak about fulfilment but of full sanctification and Christian Perfection. He does not speak about divinity, but calls the Christian lifestyle of the Methodist for Practical Divinity. And in the understanding of the Church, the Methodist institutions, and the revival movement Wesley regards these bodies as tools for the appearance and reality of

God's Kingdom in the world. The Methodists' ideas are not copied from the Orthodox Church's theology, but the underlying thought originate from the same inheritance from the Early Church's Eastern Greek theologians. But Methodism is also strongly rooted in the Reformation's thought of justification by faith of the West. This means that the double focus of the Methodism – on justification only by faith and on sanctification and Christian Perfection are a union of the Eastern and Western tradition, which is not developed and integrated in any other theology. UMC in Russia needs qualified leaders to speak prophetically with theological clearness into the Russian context of God's hallowing of people, and who are able to act in such a manner that genuine Methodist identity is growing at the same time as genuine Russian devotion is reformed.

The Lutheran Reformation

Most of Luther's statements about the Office are said in polemical connections. The aim was often to draw a line partly toward the left wing of the Reformation partly toward the Catholic Church's structure of the Office. Especially the Catholic Church's qualitative differentiation between clergy and lay people, evoked Luther's doctrine of the general priesthood, the priesthood of the baptised and believers. In this connection the most important is the sharp distinction between in the meaning of the word priest as sacrificial priest or as Elder, Presbyter. God's people are called priests with Christ as the High Priest, who brings himself as sacrifice for humanity. (Hebrews 4:14, 8:1, 9:11). For the sake of good order administration of the Sacraments were reserved the ordained Presbyter, who was called priest. But the most important task for the ordained is the task as servant of God's Word, the servant of God's holy Scripture and thus the Office is clearly an Office of the Word.

Compared to the Episcopal Office Lutheranism is unclear. Many Lutheran Churches do not have Bishops. The Episcopal Office is exercised in another manner. Like in Germany and in the Northern Countries some Churches do have Bishops, but without the assertion that authority succeeds from one Bishop to another.

The Congregational Churches

The Congregational Churches, like the Baptist Church, the Pentecostal Church and other Free Churches, naturally base their structure on the scriptures from the Bible and the Early Church. The names for the tripartite Office are adapted the local congregation. Episcokos, which by Orthodox, Catholics, Lutherans and Methodists is translated by the word Bishop, is translated to the word Minister. And presbyteros, which in the Early Church was translated to Presbyter or just priest is translated to Elder, elder brother or Council of Elders. And diakonos, which the Early Churches called Deacons is translated to associates or congregation assistants. Orthodox, Catholics, Lutherans and Methodists adapt the tripartite Office to a great unit, a Episcopate, a diocese contrary to the Congregationalists who adapt the same tripartite Office to a single congregation. This means that the Pentecostal minister correspond to a Bishop and a Council of Elders in a Pentecostal Church correspond to the members in the Pastoral Session in the Methodist Church. Many Calvinistic Churches do not have Bishops, but have a Presbytery as the top leader. The Baptist Church strongly emphasize the general priesthood, where clergy and lay people equally participate in a democratic structure of leadership from the bottom and upwards.

Development of the Roman Catholic Church

Immediately before the period of the Reformation and its the discussions of the theology Episcopacy was strongly influenced by a Presbyterian understanding of the Office. The Presbyter's Office was at the centre not the Episcopal Office. At the beginning of the Middle Ages the ordination to the Presbyterian Office was regarded a sacrament, this was not the case regarding the consecration of a Bishop. At the end of the Middle Ages the view on the difference between a Bishop and a Presbyter was almost of administrative character, jurisdictional. The fact the Bishops gradually had become "gentlemen who were engaged in politics and the life of the high states, and even in some cases had become sovereign princes of the Empire" naturally contributed to undermine the state of the Episcopacy within the Church.

At the synod in Trident, where the counter-reformation was to be elaborated, the position of the theology of the Episcopacy were strengthened. Order and discipline within the Church and especially the Bishops' authority should be re-established. The idea that the Bishop was a Presbyter in a special administrative appointment was rejected, and the difference between Presbyter and Bishop was increased.

The first Vatican council (Vat. Concilium I) in the end of the 19th century gave the Papacy its elevated position. The doctrines of the pope's universal primateship and the Papal infallibility when he talks *ex cathedra* were determined, all of it caused a reduction of the importance of regular Bishops, who had to come to terms with a decrease in richness and social states. The positive effects were that the Bishops tasks as spiritual leaders and spiritual advisers were strengthened.

The second Vatican council (Vat. Concilium II) which ended in 1965 implied drastic changes in the life of the Roman Church. The Episcopal Office's origin and its field of responsibility were studied thoroughly. The Bishops are not the Pope's substitute, but every Bishop govern his diocese independently. The Bishops hold a special position as the successors of the Apostles. Every Bishop hold the authority to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments on behalf of Christ, while the Presbyters' authority is based on the Bishop's distribution of authority to the Presbyter, when he is ordained by the Bishop. The council's method of work was a practical adaptation of the dogma of an Episcopal collegiate loyalty, where the pope occupied the position as Peter's successor and the Bishops took the positions as the successors of the remaining Apostles. Every Bishop has the responsibility for his own diocese and for the global Church, but then only jointly with the Holy See.