

REPORT FROM THE 5th ANNUAL MEETING FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS IN EUROPE

from 20 - 23 February 2004 at Magleås Conference Centre, Høsterkøb 6, 3460 Birkerød, Denmark

Thirty-three spiritual directors from ten European countries arrived safely at a sunny day at Magleås - outside Copenhagen. Men and women from different denominations met as an ecumenical "learning group".

After a delicious Danish supper, we went for the Opening Session. Johan Muijtens - one of the three steering group members - welcomed us very hearty. A special welcome went to our two representative guests from "Spiritual Directors International" Liz Ellmann and Carol Ludwig from USA. For our time being together, Johan gently stressed the importance of having a contemplative and listening attitude during our meeting. We were invited to listen and share with one another the wisdom and richness in different experiences and cultures that each participant represents. This Opening Session was concluded with a well prepared Worship in which we prayerfully presented each other to one another.

SATURDAY

Another member of the steering group, Henry Morgan, led us in an organized, but contemplative way through Saturday. In the morning the beautiful weather and surrounding woods were taken into our worship while we as smaller groups walked in silence through the woods. Here and there we stopped and listened to a piece of a well chosen Bible text.

In our first session, the former Danish actor and present priest, Finn Arve, in a vivid and acting way presented to us the ups and downs in the life of the famous Danish poet and folk tales author Hans Christian Andersen (1805 -75) led by H. C. Andersen's big dream: "to become famous". Finn Arve gave us an excellent background for understanding H. C. Andersen's writings, because the author's life experiences flow very much into it. We were moved and inspired by his presentation of Andersen's little poem "The dying child" and the fairy tale "The story of a mother".

In the following session we formed smaller groups in order to enrich one another by sharing our chosen stories from our own culture and countries. We discovered that a lot of wisdom can be found in unique classic fairy tales. They reflect a tremendous imagination of the people. Fairy tales are very old, and at the same time very young and fresh, because they are told over and over again for centuries and from one generation to the next. They carry qualities of immortality.

In the afternoon our facilitator Henry invited us for a short personal reflection on the morning session: "Reflect upon what had impressed us mostly when we were listening to the presentation of H. C. Andersen's writings". As a second step we shared our impression with the person next to us asking ourselves if the classic stories could enrich our ministry.

We continued our sharing in small groups. We tried to work out a description of maximum 15 words about our understanding of spiritual direction. Our phrases were written on the blackboard. By a closer look, we discovered a lot of similarities, but also differences. (see [appendix 1](#))

SUNDAY

On Sunday Ligita Ryliskyte from Vilnius, Lithuania, invited us to a common worship by using art pictures from the well known German artist Sigfried Köder.

Before we started our first session we found a good place outdoors for making a Group photo.

In the morning we continued with the focus on Spiritual direction. We met in triads and spent the time together by giving or receiving spiritual direction in the presence of an observer.

In the afternoon we met in a new group and reflected and shared on the question: "What helps us personally and keeps us alive while we are ministering to other people?". According to the individual's uniqueness and ministry setting we learned a lot from each other's personal experiences.

At the end of the day our "learning group" reflected on the question: "How can a European group / association of spiritual directors support and serve these spiritual directors and others? A lot of items were mentioned. (see [appendix 2](#))

An important question came up at the end of the session: "In which direction wants the group move in the future? What is their vision? These two questions were explored more later on.

Our two representative guests from Spiritual Directors International, Liz and Carol, gave us very good information about their worldwide organisation. In a very enthusiastic way they encouraged our group to continue developing the potential beginning of the European group. With a circle dance we closed our last session.

As on the previous evenings the social gathering was very popular. Every one had brought with them something special to eat or drink. These national specialities were gladly shared and enjoyed indeed. The last evening had a real taste of celebrating our togetherness.

MONDAY

As usual our session started after breakfast and worship.
Business questions had to be discussed:

The question of making the group into a legal organisation.
Questions about the legal foundation as such.
Continue working on a draft for a Constitution for the foundation.
Clarify the link between international – and European organisation.

The spiritual directors present asked the steering group to continue to do the preparation work for creating a legal body. Hopefully at the next meeting in 2005 in Lithuania we will have a legal organisation of Spiritual Directors in Europe which then can be ratified by the members present.

The participants expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the members of the present steering group and not to forget to sr. Susanne Høyenes and her community who had thought of all big and small details in order to make us feel welcome and at home. They succeeded! We feel very much enriched by our "Learning Community" that we formed during these days and look forward to meeting again our friends and colleagues next year.

*Valborg Osterhus
Oslo, 26 February, 2004*

Participants:

Denmark: Susanne Hoyos, CSJ; Regina Konig, CSJ; Emma Martensen, CSJ; Ansgaria Riemann, CSJ

Finland: Pirkko Lehtio; Marjatta Malmberg; Mikko Peura; Sisko Raitis; Lauri Maarala

France: Marie-Geneviève Renaud, FCJ

Italy: Jack Mostyn, CFC

Germany: Regina Baumer; Maike Ewert; Justine McCarrick; Gerri Merkel; Michael Plattig, O.Carm

Lithuania: Sr. Ligita Ryliskyte

Netherlands: Gideon van Dam; Elsbeth Boersma Kemper; Martica van der Meer, SMSJ; Johan

Muijtjens, FIC

Norway: Valfrid Botnen; Hedwig Osterhus, CSJ; Valborg Osterhus, CSJ

United Kingdom: Peter Ball; Maureen Farrell, FCJ; Christine Head, RSCJ; Bernadette Leach, SND;

Henry Morgan; Joyce Priest, SNDN; Will Thompson

USA: Liz Ellmann; Carol Ludwig