

DIAKONIA Prayer letter July 2017

These last few days, more than 400 deacons and deaconesses have gathered in Chicago for the 22nd World DIAKONIA Assembly, exploring the theme, 'Shaken by the Wind'. There have been many highlights: making new friends, learning together, singing, dancing, sharing in worship, tuning our ears to languages and accents not our own, celebrating the 70th anniversary of DIAKONIA. It has been a time to re-collect ourselves in prayer, to re-imagine how the world might be, to re-connect with each other. What a great community this has been. Truly memorable. Photos will be uploaded to the DIAKONIA website and the DIAKONIA World Federation Facebook page - you may be able to see for yourself how wonderful this week has been.

And in the midst of this, we have dared to name some of the chaos 'out there' - policies and practices in the political and business realm that deny human dignity and worth, that diminish the integrity of the earth and care for the environment, that enslave, imprison and denigrate people, that force people to struggle just to survive - rather than flourish. Jesus said, I have come to give you life and life in all its abundance. But, not all leaders make decisions shaped by the values of God's reign. Our speakers have taken us on a journey that speaks truth to power and invites us to tell a different narrative to that of fear, fear which has trumped hope. *(You can read their presentations on the DIAKONIA website, www.diakonia-world.org, and click on Chicago Assembly on the right)*

The caring community that has been created this week has drawn us together in ways that contrast with much of what is happening in the world, where division and suspicion are normal. And so we have treasured our time together, for we have experienced some of the richness and diversity and joy of our global Christian community. We want to hang on to that!

At the same time, we are disciples of Christ, those who are 'sent'. The ministry of diakonia beckons us out into the world where God already is, to be in the world of human concerns and needs, and to be in service in solidarity with others in ways which reflect the special concern of Jesus for them. Our world needs to hear a different story other than fear, retribution, division, hate, violence and chaos, and to know the gospel practices of love, hospitality, peace, joy, generosity are not only possible, but are the only hope for the future.

"The holiest thing we have to offer the world is a 'broken-open' heart, emptied of fear and vengeance, filled with forgiveness and a willingness to take the risks of love". *(Parker Palmer in his book, The Politics of the Brokenhearted).*

We can feel overwhelmed by a world of fear and chaos. Or, we can be open to hearing the message of Jesus who says the reign of God has come into our midst - where peace and justice meet, with the promise of a whole new future for our world graced and animated by the Holy Spirit.

Wherever you are in the world, may the peace of Christ be yours.

Rev (Deac) Sandy Boyce
President, DIAKONIA World Federation