

REGIONAL REPORT JULY 2020 FROM DIAKONIA – DRAE: AFRICA AND EUROPE

Since we last met, in November 2019 in Neuendettelsau, there is one main issue that has been on ours and the world's agenda; the pandemic caused by the covid-19 virus. It has had, have and will have impact on us all. To exemplify I will therefore start my report with an insight from the Deaconesses in the Methodist Church in Nigeria:

“We had a new project in year 2019: kitting vulnerable children with school essentials. Through the project we were providing basic school needs such as School bags, school notes, writing materials, pencils, and biros, school uniforms including shoes and socks for vulnerable children. Before the pandemic we had been able to kit 150 students. Since the pandemic, all schools have remained closed and this has put a hold on all activities.

Since the pandemic broke out, we have noticed a lot of sexual abuse and rape cases involving young girls, ladies, older women and even toddlers and babies. In some cases, some of the victims are even raped to death or murdered in the process. This has become a very urgent concern for the government and various forms of punishment are being suggested for the perpetrators of such evil acts. Meanwhile most of the victims suffer from both psychological and emotional challenges and they therefore need support and counselling. Some of our Deaconesses are now partnering with the State government assist victims of rape through counselling and enlightenment programs.”

MISSION STATEMENT AND STRATEGY

For quite a long time, including two conferences, DRAE has been working on a Mission Statement and Strategy. At the conferences last year, we agreed on the English text and finally we have agreed even on the German text. The statement is attached.

PERSONNEL

The DRAE- region is the outmost largest of the three regions in DIAKONIA. DRAE is divided into 9 subregions or groups as we call it. The members of the ExCo have all responsibilities and tasks included contact and follow-ups in their own region. For each group there is a written report. My report will include highlights from these reports. Five of the members are also part of the ExCo of DIAKONIA WORLD.

At our ExCo meeting 9th July 2020 we discussed the possibility to stay in office for one more year. We all end our terms in 2021, but due to the postponement of the Assembly to 2022 the best way will be to prolong our terms for one year. All the members of the ExCo agreed to this.

Representative	Task	Representing	World
Gordon Pennykid	Treasurer Group 1	UK	X
Marianne Uri Øverland	Regional President Group 2 and 3	Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Norway	X
Birgit Banzhaf	Group 4	KWV Germany, France, Austria, Poland	X
Elisabeth Meier	Group 5	The Netherlands, Switzerland, the EVFD (Europäischer Verband Freikirchlicher Diakoniewerke) and the DGD (Deutscher Gemeinschafts Diakonieverband e.V.):	X
Gwynne Lawlor	Vice Secretary Group 6	Malawi, South Africa, Madagascar, Tanzania, Zambia	
Ibironke Oworu	Regional Vice President Group 7	Cameroon, Egypt, Rwanda, Kenya, Nigeria	X
Armin Raunigk	Group 8	Verband Evangelischer Diakonen, Diakoninnen und Diakonatsgemeinschaften in Deutschland (VEDD), Germany	
Gunhild Heidke	Secretary Group 9	Zehlendorfer Verband für ev. Diakonie (ZVeD), Germany	
Diane Kaufmann	Web officer		
<i>Thorsten Walter</i>	<i>Finances Diakoneo</i>		

Former president of DRAE Janie Martin passed away 27th February 2020 and was buried in Dundee, Scotland. Gordon Pennykid attended on behalf of DRAE. Jane Martin served on the Executive of DIAKONIA for several terms and was the president of DRAE from 1996 to 2001. She also was the English editor of DIAKONIA

NEWS. Last year she was a member of the planning group for the Jubilee Conference.

Rosemary Spiers has taken on the president role in Presbyterian Church Ireland and Mark Evans in the Church of Scotland Diaconate.

Board member Dr. Heinz Thaler of the Ev. Diakoniewerk Gallneukirchen retires. His successor is Dr. Daniela Palk.

The current managing director of the VEDD is Deacon Heidi Albrecht. She will end her contract with VEDD in December 2021 going for retirement. Therefore, the position of the management of the VEDD has to be filled.

With July 2020 Deacon Ulrike Kühn belonging to the Community of female Deacons Rummelsberg is new Superior in Evangelical Order of Deaconess Augsburg. Deacon Ulrike Kühn is successor of Superior Christiane Ludwig who will be retired end of August.

DRAE Exco Member, Gwynne Lawlor, has recently been elected as an Anglican delegate to the Church Unity Commission, which consists of different denominations in the Southern African region.

MEETINGS

REGIONAL BOARD MEETING

14th November in Neuendettelsau, Germany for the change of domicile and the forming of the new constitutions.

STANDING COMMITTEE/ACTING BOARD

In this last period the SC has had no meeting on its own only in connection with the conference and the ExCo-meetings. The main issues have been preparations for the meetings. In the new Constitution the SC has changed its name to Acting Board and consists of the President, the Vice President, the Treasurer and the Secretary.

ECUMENICAL MEETINGS

- **Eurodiaconia:** The AGM was planned for 22th-24th April in Paris with Gordon Pennykid in attendance for DRAE. The meeting was not held due to Covid-19 and is postponed to 2021.
- **World Council of Churches:** The Central Committee was planned for June 2020, first postponed to August 2020 and then to June 2021. Marianne Uri Øverland will attend for DIAKONIA.
- **IDC:** An International Symposium was planned for April 2020 with Sr Elisabeth in attendance for DRAE. It is postponed to September 2021.

EVENT, CONFERENCES AND HIGHLIGHTS

There has been the Annual General Assembly of VEDD in October 2019 located in Hephata. Facing the future, the headline has been „Shaping the future in the community - Communities 2040” guided and accompanied by lecturer Pastor Dr. Dörte Bester, Theological Director Karlshöhe Foundation. The new book from VEDD Series Volume 4 was also presented: "Diaconal Companies and Communities - Partners for successful diaconal work".

Online Seminar of the Kaiserswerther association “The Covid-19 virus has come to stay. “The corona pandemic makes people aware of their finiteness and the vulnerability of a highly complex society and its social systems, said Prof. Ulrich Körtner in the KWV online seminar "Ethics in Times of Corona.”

Community of Emmanuel sisterhood Bafut, Cameroon had their annual retreat from the 25 -29 October 2019 in the Cistercian Monastery at Koutaba led by Rev. Fr. Ignatius on the theme “Be Humble or you stumble”

The European Association of Free Church Social Welfare Organizations had a Conference in September 2019 in Georgia with the theme: "Diakonia in the interreligious context -how we can build trust". The main speaker was Malkharz Songulashvili, the archbishop of the Evangelic-Baptist Church in Georgia. A special example for practiced Diakonia of the Baptist Church in Tiflis, the capital of Georgia, is their exposure to migrants of the last Chechnya war. The Moslem of the North-Caucasus where for centuries the enemies of the Georgian people -now they were at their doorsteps! The congregation decided to care for these refugees. The relationship with these Moslem refugees has changed the Christians in a positive way. The Baptist church has founded an Academy of Peace who promotes the interreligious encounter in Georgia. As speakers were the priest of the Orthodox Church, the Rabbi of the Jewish synagogue, the Sheik of the Shiite group of Muslims in Georgia, the chairman of the Yazidis and the representative of the group of Sunnites Moslems. The conference members visited most of the places of worship of these different groups.

Sisters of the Communauté des Diaconesses de Reuilly, together with other conventual communities, sew cotton protective masks.

CHALLENGES

In the Zehlendorfer Verband (ZV)the topic "DIAKONIA" has been discussed more intensively since the last regional conference with the decision to increase fees. The increase is economically necessary, but also difficult for the ZV. What is the importance of DIAKONIA in the sisterhoods and communities? Especially with the older sisters it has a great importance. But to win new members, both for the communities and for the enthusiasm and participation in DIAKONIA, proves to be difficult. It requires a great personal commitment of time and also of money of

the persons involved, since the ZV cannot cover the conference and travel expenses. But the ZV does not want to look at the topic only from a financial point of view. The world is moving ever closer together, and it is generally not advisable to break off international contacts. The peace aspect is equally important. The ZV urges that the experiences of the international community be transparent, especially for the younger generation. The following questions are raised: What are the powers of action of the Board and the ExCo of DIAKONIA? The ZV proposes a transparent strategic orientation, which also concerns the design of the contributions and the future content of the work.

Furthermore, we are concerned with the diaconal profile in the institutions in which our members work. How can this profile be strengthened? The aim is not only to impart knowledge but also to strengthen the community and to invite people from outside the community. In many institutions the communities still form a theological and religious core and offer educational opportunities. The question is what kind of education is important for us.

NEW APPLICATIONS

The Diaconate in the Scottish Episcopalian Church was received as a new member at the conference. If they have applied even to WORLD, we will recommend them for membership.

Application from **Schwesternschaft Kaiserswerth**. It will hopefully be approved by DRAE ExCo before our WORLD meeting so we can recommend them for membership for the whole of DIAKONIA. The application is attached.

LOGO

The DRAE ExCo has been discussing the new logo, and without doing any formal decision we are prepared for the change and to adapt a new adjusted logo also for the DRAE-region.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

The next DRAE-ExCo meeting will take place on Zoom later this year. The date is not yet set. If possible, the ExCo will meet physical in 2021 preferable connected to a meeting of the WORLD-ExCo.

The next DRAE Conference will take place in Neuendettelsau in 2024, instead of 2023, due to the delay of the WORLD Assembly.

Marianne Uri Øverland
Regional President